SOCIAL ACTION BY YOUTH:
CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

JULIE ELIZABETH MORSILLO

Bachelor of Arts (Multidisciplinary) (Victoria University)
Graduate Diploma in Adolescent & Child Psychology (University of Melbourne)
Master of Social Science (International Development) (RMIT University)

Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Victoria University

Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development
School of Psychology
2006

STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Julie Morsillo, declare that the thesis entitled *Social action by youth: Creating a sense of community,* is no more than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices and references. 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.

Signature …… Date ……

ABSTRACT

The Social Action by Youth (SAY) project provided participants with an opportunity to explore their hopes, celebrate their social identity and address their community concerns by creating participant designed and participant-led community-building and social action projects. The researcher worked in partnership with a community agency in a socially disadvantaged area of Melbourne. An appreciative inquiry approach to action research was taken with three local youth groups who became active co-operative inquirers. The first group of 16 year old school students designed and successfully undertook community-building projects in community arts, including: a drug-free underage dance party, a community theatre group, a student battle of the bands, children's activities in a cultural festival for refugees and designing an Aboriginal public garden. The group of same-sex attracted youth in a social setting chose to address heterosexism in the local community by the workshops and performances of their own drama scenarios at a teachers' forum on same-sex attracted friendly environments in schools. The third group, recently arrived refugee youth from the Horn of Africa in an educational bridging program, organised a celebratory day on their recent educational achievements with food, music and dancing. Participants reported alienation from their local neighbourhoods at the beginning of the research. However, through the process of appreciating their identity and successfully creating community projects, the participants in each group reported feelings of positive identity affirmation and being able to make a difference in their communities. Participants began a social transformation process of developing new positive narratives for an improved sense of community connectedness.

DEDICATION

To all participants, colleagues, friends and family

Who shared visions of a better world

Giving generously of themselves

To help create this research

Thank you all for giving me

a sense of community

along this journey

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to all participants for sharing their youthful exuberance for life.

Heather Gridley, Senior Lecturer Victoria University, must be firstly thanked for inviting me to take this life-enhancing journey of community research, bringing me the most challenging yet fulfilling and enjoyable years of my life. Heather has mentored so many of her students to achieve more than they imagined themselves. I am proud to be one of her students and be counted as a friend and fellow chorister.

Professor Isaac Prilleltensky is to be thanked, for his trust in Heather's judgement by taking me on to do this project that he envisioned, initiated, secured funding and supervised for the first year. Isaac is a visionary with a concern to promote social justice principles. Presenting in New Mexico, USA with him and writing a journal article with him was a real honour.

Associate Professor Adrian Fisher is to be thanked for taking over the role as primary supervisor when Isaac moved on. Adrian has the art of pulling out the writer hidden deep within the student. In my case very deep within, a bit like pulling out a new-born baby reluctant to enter the big wide world. I could not have written this thesis without Adrian's miraculous supervision.

Lesley Hoatson, Acting Head of Social Work, co-supervisor and community worker extraordinaire, who organised the partnership for this project with Good Shepherd deserves much thanks. Lesley provided ongoing supportive supervision when all else around was changing, with Isaac leaving, Adrian on sabbatical leave and our partner agency Good Shepherd being substantially de-funded. She was the solid rock. Now she has gone on to her own new challenging journey into the wilds of Solomon Islands. I am grateful to have shared the action part of this journey with her.

Other Victoria University staff are to be thanked for encouraging me, providing teaching opportunities and offering helpful advice along the way including: *Professor Dot Bruck, Professor Jill Astbury, Dr Jenny Sharples, Dr*

Denise Charmen and Dr Christopher Sonn of the Wellness Promotion Unit; *Anne Graham* on the SAY project steering committee; *Professor Elaine Martin, Lesley Birch, Judith Booth,* of the Post-Graduate Studies Office, especially for publishing me in their *Courageous Research* book; and other staff *Professor Ron Adams* and *Dr Robyn Broadbent*, who are always encouraging; and admin staff, including *Jane, Janine, Carmen, Irene, Leonie, Maureen, Rose, Teah, Vicki* and many others. My fellow PhD students were also supportive, including: *David, Ewen, Kerri, Lyn, Michelle, Steve, Vicki and* especially: *Ruth* for taking me to Sydney to present; *Amanda* for all her encouragement over fine dining by the sea in Williamstown; and *Tara* for time to share our dreams of future possibilities. Thanks also to other research students studying elsewhere, *Louise* a close neighbour and *Jan* in Sydney for writing our *Surviving Research* presentation together. I guess we survived.

Good Shepherd management staff on the steering committee were also very encouraging and supportive, including: *Michael Yore, Marilyn Webster, Kay O'Connell*. Other Good Shepherd staff were also showed interested in the research including: *Julie, Carmen, Helen, Renee and Suzie*. Youth workers in Brimbank were also very encouraging and fun to work with organising a youth festival together, including: *Bronwyn, Carole, Dave, Julia, James, Lynda, Mary, Ryan and Sheranne*. Special thanks to *Jon Reader*, Sunshine Community Police officer, for rescuing me by finding a venue for a student organised dance party.

Jemma Mead of Good Shepherd needs very special thanks for the privilege of working with her and her group of same-sex attracted youth. Jemma is one of the most lovable and highly respected youth workers you could find.

Rick Hudson, a teacher in Brimbank for working with me with the school student group. Such a dedicated and well loved teacher, such a pleasure to work with.

Heather, Mary, Catherine and Cameron, staff of the Western English Language School (WELS) program, for working so well with me with the recently arrived refugee youth from the Horn of Africa.

Sandra DiGiantomasso of Melbourne City Mission is special for organising for me to work with the program for recently arrived refugees. Sandra, always with a smile, is a networker beyond compare.

Diana Berberi, an undergraduate student I taught and now dear friend, who is also a refugee from Africa. Thanks to her for agreeing to work with me with the African youth to befriend, dance and laugh with them.

Community Psychology Masters students whom I taught in 2003 and presented in New Zealand with in 2004, for being the best students a teacher could ask for. Thanks to: *Christine G, Christine M, Craig, Emma, Harriet, Helena, Lauren, Sue, Phil, Tamara, Tymur*. Thanks also to Masters students, *Donna and Vicki* for getting the ball rolling by doing a pilot project leading up to this research. Thanks also to my many undergraduate students for their enthusiasm to learn and the fun we have, exploring interpersonal skills and community development skills together.

Dr David Morawetz for his very generous funding of youth community projects and camps, his friendship and vision through his Morawetz Social Justice Fund. Thanks also to his hospitable partner Jan for her support.

Australian Research Council, for the linkage project scholarship funding for me to undertake this research full-time. It is such a privilege and treasured gift to be given this opportunity. Thanks.

Dr Christopher Duffy, for his caring and insightful supervision of me counselling at the Sunvale Primary School as a probationary psychologist. Christopher and the staff and students at the school, especially the Principal, Alan, taught me what our work is really all about – building trusting relationships.

Dr Joan Beckwith for her extra psychology supervision of me and the time for much appreciated counselling to develop my personal and professional life during the research.

Brunswick Women's Choir, which gave me joy through music and friendship, before and during the early days of this research. Thanks to my other musical

friends *Colin and Jenny Hunter,* who provide me and many others with hospitality and pastoral care when most needed.

Lyn Harasymiw, my equal opportunity and managing diversity work colleague, now dear friend, who has supported me through tough times, encouraged me to develop my creativity, enjoy my garden and walking and generally become more healthy in body and soul.

Family, including my adventurous parents and siblings, my extended family and friends interstate and overseas, my former foster children (and their children), my neighbours, my Moreland Baptist Church community and many friends at Collins St Baptist and Whitley College, who provided much needed support along the journey. A special thanks to my two young adult sons, *Nathan and Ben*, who are my good friends, sharing my ups and downs and always believing in me.

Most of all my ever faithful husband, *Robert Morsillo*, who has been by my side through many adventures for 30 years of married life, being especially supportive for the last three years doing this research. He has provided me with all the encouragement, practical support (including the best computer equipment and proofreading this thesis), intellectual stimulation, endless long walks, good food, interstate and international travel that I have asked for and much more. A kindred-spirit. The love of my life.

Thank you all for sharing your visions to help create this research providing me along the journey with a sense of community connectedness.

TABLE of CONTENTS

TABLE of TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Approach

Exploring ways to express our social identity in order to experience a sense of community within the diverse and sometimes alienating urbanised society can be a complex task. The diversity of our global society provides a substantial range of opportunities for youth. For those who have experienced forms of disadvantage, this diversity and its accompanying fragmentation can prove alienating and even overwhelming, at times.

Youth, usually defined as from age 13 to 25 years old, are in the process of growing from the more protected childhood phase of life within a family unit, to begin to explore their own identity within the complex adult world around them (Argyle, 1967; Bartle-Haring, 1997; Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002; Cieslik & Pollock, 2002; Eckersley, 2004; Erikson, 1968; Garrod, 1992; Heaven, 2001; Kroger, 1996; Wyn & White, 1997). They are in the process of discovering who they are in relation with those around them, and to find their own identity and their own sense of community. They negotiate their way through life by varied means, depending on their social, cultural and economic situations. Youth in disadvantaged communities, with fewer social and economic resources, often find themselves feeling more alienated within their communities, and so can find this identity process more challenging. They often feel powerless to address the social issues confronting their communities (Giroux, 1988; Prilleltensky, Nelson, & Peirson, 2001). Yet, they can envision a better world free from rejection and alienation (Miles, 2002b; Wyn & White, 2000).

As a community psychologist, I have taken the approach that supportive, safe and trusting environments will allow youth to explore their visions of social change, and so create their own a sense of community connectedness within their local community environments. By having opportunities to explore their potential to make meaningful contributions to their local community, young people can work towards improving their own well-being and beginning to address social

justice issues within their local neighbourhoods, resulting in an improved sense of community (Checkoway, 1998; Headley, 2002; Mulvey & Mandel, 2003; Pretty, 2002).

In the *Social Action by Youth (SAY)* research project I utilised appreciative inquiry techniques within an action research framework. Youth with social disadvantage were able to explore their social identity issues and create meaningful community projects. Young people became active participants as they explored ways to have a say in their local community that would make a positive difference. I worked with various groups of socially disadvantaged youth. Participants explored their passions to creatively design and implement meaningful community-building and social action projects.

This community partnership project was developed by the Wellness Promotion Unit, School of Psychology, Victoria University in partnership with Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service, St Albans (City of Brimbank) in the north-western suburbs of Melbourne. I took an ethnographic approach by working closely with local youth groups to participate in making a positive contribution to their local community. I felt a personal connection with this local community of Brimbank, since as I had lived and studied in the area in the mid-1980s. I was an inaugural undergraduate psychology student of Victoria University, and also worked as a cottage parent of local youth, with wards of the state, living in my care, with my own two children who attended the local primary and high schools. For this research I had been invited back to the university to work in the local community again.

In this research, I worked with the various youth groups as they planned, implemented and evaluated their own community action projects. The three participant youth groups were: a culturally diverse class of year 10 students; a social support group of same-sex attracted youth; and recently arrived refugee youth from the Horn of Africa in an educational bridging program. At the completion of the interventions, the participants from each group overwhelming reported positive feelings about their personal skills gained, their relational

teamwork and their community contributions, thus suggesting an improved sense of community connectedness.

Improving the community

In Australia, youth often express feelings of alienation from their local communities, revealing a lack of a sense of community. One study described Australian youth as a *lost generation* (Daniel & Cornwell, 1993). This alienation has been shown in high rates of disengagement from school, in unemployment, illicit drug use and suicide of youth in Australia, especially in socially disadvantaged areas (Victorian Government, 2000; Vinson, 2004).

Youth want to feel accepted and have a chance to celebrate their identity and exuberance for life. Action research with and by youth provides an opportunity to empower youth to begin to creatively explore their hopes for a better world and so begin to feel a sense of community connectedness.

Value of Appreciative Approach to Action Research

Action research with participants can be an empowering form of inquiry often associated with the work of the late Brazilian educator, Paolo Freire. Led by a community "promoter," action research with participants can validate local knowledge, rather than use imported expert knowledge, and is consciously directed toward community action to improve local conditions (Freire, 1970). It can involve exploratory elements of research, where the participants themselves are involved as co-operative inquirers in exploring their own research methods, and participate in community organising, planning and advocacy (Heron, 1996). Practitioners claim that it can, under certain circumstances, help make individuals more self-aware and equip them to cope with and change their world, and that it produces serious and trustworthy knowledge that can open the way for new forms of creative collaboration and alternatives to authoritarian structures and traditional patterns of exploitation (Fals Borda, 2001; Schwab, 1997).

In this research, I incorporated an appreciative inquiry approach adapted from organisational psychology. Appreciative inquiry focuses on asking an unconditional positive question to discover the best of what is, in order to explore

ways to create positive transformations within a group or community (Barrett, 1995; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999; Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001). The aim of this was for participants to explore ways to make a meaningful contribution to their local community and experience an enhanced sense of community connectedness.

Research Concepts

The research utilised an ethnographic approach where I became engaged as the researcher in the culture of the various intervention youth groups. The youth actively participated, so the research was by the participants, rather than for or on them. The participants shared their identity perceptions and their concerns about local community. They explored ways to engage in planning and implementing community projects that they could create and control.

The research was created with the youth participants. It explored ways of articulating the voice of youth, particularly disadvantaged youth. By actively encouraging participants to voice their own interests and own passions for life, I explored with them their concerns and hopes for an improved community. An emotionally safe space allowed free discussion of participants' mutual concerns for their local community. The participants explored ways to work as a supportive group to address their mutual interests and concerns by creating youth-led youth-designed community projects.

In developing the framework for the literature review of this thesis, I sought to provide a way to explore the voice of the youth participants. I considered a number of pathways in describing the diversity of ethnographic data collected during the time of engagement with these youth groups, which included marginalised, and sometimes traumatised, youth. These varied pathways have been explored throughout the thesis.

Alienation of youth, with a lack of sense of belonging, is considered in the literature review of the thesis. The concept of marginalisation of youth involves experiences of alienation and oppression (Conger & Galambos, 1997). While this concept is somewhat negative and problematising of youth in society, it considered as a basis for working with disadvantaged youth. By undertaking this

particular action research, participants explored ways to address their alienation, by making a meaningful contribution to their local community, and so not feel as alienated from it.

The concept of the sense of psychological *well-being* is a positive aspect considered to address the alienation of youth in disadvantaged communities. Socially disadvantaged youth in this research actively explored ways to positively participate in the community and so improve their psychological well-being. Engagement in action research is seen as a positive preventative measure addressing personal mental health issues and possible suicide ideation for some marginalised participants (Atweh, Christensen, & Dornan, 1998; Bradley, Deighton, & Selby, 2004; Hetzel, Watson, & Sampson, 1992). This well-being approach explored ways to assist participants to experience improved personal emotional well-being, and a sense of control at the personal, relational and community levels (Prilleltensky, 2003b). This very positive and preventative well-being concept is a driving force behind this research.

The concept of *empowering* youth through active participation with meaningful involvement in their communities (Zimmerman, 1995) is another positive approach utilised in this current research. This empowering educational approach is addressed in some detail in this thesis. The concept of empowerment can arguably be seen as too individualist and controlling (Carroll, 1994). However, I would argue, as have other researchers, that empowerment of members of disadvantaged communities is necessary to address social justice issues for social transformation (Cadell, Karabanow, & Sanchexz, 2001; Huygens, 1997; Maton, 2000; Mayo, 2000; Rappaport, 1994; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

Using *an appreciative approach* is a central concept in this research (Ludema et al., 2001; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Miles, 2002b). An appreciative approach of affirming and appreciating the best of who they are and dreaming of what they could become, revealed the expectations and courage of these marginalised youth to want to improve their local community (Barrett & Fry, 2002). The participants

in this research explored appreciative and positive ways of actively designing their own community projects.

In the process of undertaking these community projects, it could be argued that the participants were creating a *sense of community connectedness*. The concept of psychological sense of community was defined in the seminal work of Seymour Sarason (1974), with comprehensive definitions developed by David McMillian and David Chavis (1986) and is used in this exploratory research. This concept have been further developed by many community psychologists, including in the work of Julian Rappaport, especially his article on *Community narratives: Tales of terror to joy* (2000) *and* by various researchers in the recent book, *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications, and implications* (Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002).

Thesis Outline

Chapter 1, this introductory chapter is followed by several chapters describing the appreciative approach to action research with various youth groups.

Chapter 2 covers general issues concerning youth in the community, in the post-modern world. Youth who feel alienated within their local communities can envision a better world. They often lack a sense of community in their local neighbourhoods and so seek a sense of belonging from their identity explorations within their youth subcultures.

Chapter 3 discusses youth participation approaches within local communities. Youth, particularly in socially disadvantaged communities, can experience a sense of alienation, but they can be encouraged to engage in meaningful local community programs to improve sense of community connectedness and enhance well-being.

Chapter 4 describes the methodological approach of appreciative inquiry to qualitative action research. Using an action research approach, incorporating appreciative inquiry techniques, the participants became co-operative inquirers with me to explore ways to affirm their identity, express their mutual concerns, in order to plan, implement and reflect on participant-led, participant-designed

community action projects of their choice. The participants' reflections during the process and their evaluations at the end of the process were analysed using a phenomenological framework.

Chapter 5 describes the research with the first group of school students in a mainstream educational setting in a socially disadvantaged area of Melbourne, with the participatory process and the subsequent positive narratives of the various student-designed and student-led community-building projects.

Chapter 6 explores the issues of the second participant group of same-sex attracted youth. They constantly deal with rejection in their heterosexist community. The chapter describes their passion for drama and concern to address heterosexism leading to a social action drama project developed by the participants for a teachers forum on same-sex-attracted friendly environments in schools.

Chapter 7 explores the issues presented by the third participant group of recently arrived refugee youth from the Horn of African. They explored their passion for music and dancing, ways to celebrate their new found freedom, and their opportunities and achievements in education.

Chapter 8 discusses the common and contrasting research issues and evaluations from the three participant groups in relation to their self-reported positive feelings about making a meaningful contribution to the community together, suggesting an improved sense of community connectedness.

Chapter 9 draws conclusions from this research, highlighting relevant learnings for future innovative work for meaningful community participation with marginalised youth and in exploring ways to work towards their hopes for a better world where they experience a psychological sense of community.

The appendices include research materials used and generated, including: consent forms; various activity materials; media coverage of the research; sample project outcomes and participant evaluations by themes.

CHAPTER 2

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

> *Young people . . . are actively immersing themselves in hegemonic visions of the world, because those visions serve the very purpose of allowing them to survive in a so-called risk society (Miles, 2002b, p. 62)*

Psychological Sense of Community

Youth are actively involved in the process of forming their own identities with their peers to experience their own psychological sense of community. They are developing their own visions, their own hopes of an improved world. They have the potential to design and implement local projects as a means of attempting to improve their psychological sense of community, belonging and connectedness to the often alienating world around them (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002; Miles, 2002b; Pretty, 2002).

This chapter explores and critiques the basic concepts of the psychological sense of community and of the universal need to belong. These concepts are related to adolescent developmental processes of social identity formation within the post-modern society.

Youth in socially disadvantaged communities often feel alienated from their neighbourhoods and the broader society. Alienation leads them to seek a sense of community with their peers and to form their own subcultures, with their own hopes, to fulfil their need to belong (White, 1993, 1999). Modern youth take selected aspects from the diverse tapestry of the post-modern world to create their own aspirations of the world to their own advantage (Miles, 2002b). It will be argued that the most marginalised youth, dealing with rejection on an on-going basis, seek peer support with others who are also rejected and together they form a sense of community. Together they form *niches of resistance* to seek enclaves of safety from the alienating outside world (Moane, 2003). These concepts of community will be explored and expanded using an influential multi-dimensional

definition of a psychological sense of community developed by McMillan and Chavis (1986).

The word community can be defined in various ways incorporating the concept of people sharing something in common. A simple way to describe community can be "a group of people sharing common characteristics and interests that live within a larger society, from which these common features distinguish it" (García, Giuliani, & Wiesenfeld, 1999, p. 728). Historically, the word *community* comes from the word *common* or *commune*, meaning "to communicate, to participate, to share with, to have intercourse, to converse, to confer, to communicate, to exercise a right in common, to eat at a common table" (Little, Fowler, Coulson, Onions, & Friedrichsen, 1973, p. 379). The word *community* came to mean: "a body of people organized into a political, municipal or social unity", or "a body or people living together and practising community of goods", that is "common ownership", such as with intentional communities like the Anabaptists holding goods in common in the sixteenth century (Little et al., 1973, p. 379) or the traditional Kibbutz communities in Israel (Brodsky & Marx, 2001; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The concept of community came to mean a common social identity, or a social unity.

The concept of social unity or community has both place and relational aspects, that of structurally coming to a common place and that of interconnecting relationally or functionally in a common space. Gusfield (1975) distinguished the notion of community in two ways, *territorial and geographic notion of community*, of neighbourhood environments and that of *relational* concerned with "quality of character of human relationship, without reference to location" (Gusfield, 1975, p. xvi). Community thus implies both structural characteristics of living in a common place, and relational or functional characteristics of community interactions forming a commonality, a specific culture or subculture (Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Dunham, 1986; Fyson, 1999; García et al., 1999; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Miles, 2002b; Pretty, Andrewes, & Collett, 1994; White, 1993).

The territorial or structural community refers to social structures of people physically coming together in a common place geographically, sharing an environment. The concept of structural community can refer to a local neighbourhood of people living in the same physical environment, who may or may not associate with each other in meaningful ways. Other concepts of structural community refer to common places for specific purposes, such as educational institutions, workplaces and recreational facilities where people have a common place to meet and interact. Structural communities, operating on a multi-level interconnected social system, link individuals together who have characteristics that are both common and unique (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Members of structural communities tend to interact in a dynamic system, where community life integrates the physical aspects of that community and at the same time sets the stage for the developmental process of the functional aspects of community.

Relational or functional characteristics are the existential processes of the community, that is, the results of the interactions between individuals and their environment (Bess, Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002; Brodsky & Marx, 2001; García et al., 1999). Functional elements appear as a result of the structural patterning, in relation to proximity and interactions with neighbours, generating social networks in the life of the community to form a specific culture or life-world of their own (García et al., 1999; Miles, 2002b; White, 1993; Wiesenfeld, 1996). In these processes, affect is involved, in the feelings of the community members for each other and for the community itself. The psychological *sense of community* is a principal organiser of the affective aspects of the members of a community.

The concept of the psychological *sense of community* was defined in the seminal work of Seymour Sarason as "the sense that one belongs to a net of mutually helpful relationships which one can trust in" (1974, p. 156). Sarason believed that the concept of sense of community held the key to understanding one of society's most pressing problems, the dark side of individualism, which he saw manifested as alienation, selfishness and despair (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001). Developing a psychological sense of community provides a reflection of a core value in community psychology, that is, the belief that healthy

communities exhibit an extra-individual quality of emotional interconnectedness of individuals played out in their collective lives (Dalton et al., 2001). Rather than the alienating individualism so often promoted in society (Berman, 1984), Sarason argued that emotional interconnectedness with the concept of belonging, for a sense of community, is the key to a healthy society.

The notion of *sense of community* being a healthy ideal, has been questioned as a value of community psychology. It has been argued that this very sense of collectiveness, can imply sameness, which is a paradox to the promotion of the diversity which is also espoused by community psychology, according to Wiesenfeld (1996). She conceptualises a definition of community belonging that allows for both commonalities and diversity, with individual, *subcultural* and *intragroup* differences, and concepts of *macrobelonging* and *microbelonging*. This thesis will discuss these various levels of sense of community and belongingness.

A *sense of community* definition, based on the work of Sarason, was developed by McMillan and Chavis (1986). They defined a sense of community as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). They developed an expanded model of a psychological sense of community into four dimensions: (1) *membership* – sense of belonging to the group, with a shared history and common symbols, to provide emotional safety for a personal investment to contribute as citizens; (2) *influence* – development of trusting relationships for freedom of expression and empowerment; (3) *integration* – fulfilment of needs for status to demonstrate competence, with shared values as a protection from shame; and (4) *shared connections* – participation in, and sharing of, significant events for both negative and enhancing positive narratives of bonding.

Table 1 outlines the four sense of community dimensions with the various elements of this model of a sense of community as developed by McMillan and Chavis to be explored.

Table 1
Sense of Community Dimensions with Elements

Sense of community dimension	**Elements of sense of community dimension**
Membership	Need to belong
	Shared history
	Common symbols
	Family rituals
	Emotional safety
	Personal investment
	Social responsibility
	Citizenship
Influence	Trusting relationships
	Freedom of expression
	Empowerment
	Collective well-being
Integration	Status
	Social integration
	Resilience
	Shared values
	Youth subcultures
Shared connections	Participation
	Shared events and narratives

Adapted from McMillan and Chavis (1986)

Membership

Need to Belong

The first requirement in the development of a psychological sense of community is the feeling of belonging as an accepted member of a group, according to McMillan and Chavis (1986). This need to belong and be a member of a group, has four elements: to have a shared history; to have common symbols;

to experience emotional safety and acceptance within the group; and to feel motivated to contribute to the group as one has a personal investment in the group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

This need to experience a sense of community with feelings of belonging, is particularly important for youth as they explore of their emerging social identity issues. Human beings have a universal need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Social epidemiology research shows that the need to belong requires two things to achieve satisfaction.

To achieve a sense of belonging, first, the person must have an ongoing series of pleasant, or at least neutral, interactions with the same other person or small set of people. Second, these interactions must occur within the context of an ongoing relationship characterised by mutual caring and concern (Baumeister, Dale, & Muraven, 2000; Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Many theorists have argued for the importance of a basic human need to belong, to be a member of a group. For example, Maslow (1971) argued that after acquiring our basic needs for food, shelter and a safe environment, we then require social contact, with the need to escape loneliness and alienation and to experience love, affection and a sense of belonging.

Other developmental theorists have argued that the need to belong is even more basic than the need for food and shelter. Children need to feel they belong to their family and feel a strong attachment to their caregivers, usually their mothers, from birth (Bowlby, 1969). According to Bowlby's theory, an infant's attachment pattern has long-term effects on the child's development.

The need to belong is one of the universal psychological conditions of life that is conducive to health and well-being according to Australian human ecologist, Boyden (1987). He believed that environmental and lifestyle conditions required for well-being provide a sense of personal involvement, purpose, belonging, responsibility, interest, excitement, challenge, satisfaction, comradeship and love, enjoyment, confidence and security. It could be argued that most of these conditions required for well-being could only be satisfied if one

experienced the sense of belonging first. Without a sense of belonging, it may be difficult to experience the other conditions that Boyden nominates.

Youth, like everyone else, need to feel like they belong as a member of a group. Life's journey for youth today can involve "eternal shopping in the bazaar of culture and subculture" (Mackay, 1999, p. 167), to create their own social reality, their own identity, their own lifestyle where they can feel a sense of connectedness within the community in which they find themselves (Chavis & Pretty, 1999; Fisher & Sonn, 2002; Pancer & Cameron, 1994; Peterson & Reid, 2003; Puddifoot, 2003). Youth need to create their own social identity (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Erikson, 1963; Jaffe, 1998; Tajfel, 1982) with their peers to experience a sense of belonging in the world.

A sense of belonging can be difficult to experience in a world that is increasingly diverse and chaotic (Sloan, 1996). According to some philosophers and social commentators, communities in our modern day world are increasingly showing signs of fragmentation and disassociation from the natural world, with an accompanying loss of sense of identity (Berman, 1984; Delanty, 2003; Eckersley, 2004; King, 1967; Mackay, 1999; Tacey, 2000; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Prominent sociologists, Habermas (1974) and Berger (Berger & Luckmann, 1991) also argued that the post-modern society lifestyle can lead to separation of the self from the concept of being an integrated part of a world around and into various segmented work and family life components, with the subsequent alienation and loss of sense of belonging.

Shared History

The concept of a shared history of the members is an integral part of this need to belong in order to experience a sense of community. Yet with our ever-changing world, this sense of shared history with the wider society is often problematic, especially for youth today who are experiencing constant change. Historian and social commentator Hugh Mackay (1999) suggested that these constant social and cultural changes, with wide ranges of lifestyle choices to make, in our post-modern world can lead to alienation. Mackay suggested that people born since 1970 have grown up in a period utterly different from the

formative years of their parents and their grandparents. He said that youth today can feel alarmed by the dramatic social and cultural changes going on around them, changes that have so disturbed their parents and grandparents, because "change is the air they breathe" (Mackay, 1999, p. 150). This constant change often creates alienation rather than a sense of group membership, of a constant community. Meanwhile, there are other aspects to membership of a group leading to a sense of community.

Common Symbols

The common symbols of members is another aspect of this shared history that can be important in order to experience a sense of community. This can also be elusive in the westernised post-modern diversity where prescribed traditions, rituals, religion, artistic and physical pursuits, common sexuality expectations and the like, are often absent (Berman, 1984). Mackay spoke of the post-modern age where we have to continually make choices to create our own social reality. He argued that we can choose a life of experimentation with many choices of different stories about "what the universe is like, about who the good guys and the bad guys are, about who we are" (Mackay, 1999, p. 167). He argued that this diversity of choice can become quite alienating and lead to feelings of not belonging and a lack of connectedness (Berman, 1984; Mackay, 1999; McDonald, 1999; Tacey, 2000).

Family Rituals

Family rituals can be a way of establishing a shared history and common symbols with family members to create a sense of belonging. However, with high levels of family conflict and breakdown (Frydenberg, 1997; Rutter, 2000), along with high mobility rates (Berryman, 2000), family rituals may not be on-going or satisfying to the developing adolescent. Research findings have suggested that satisfaction with family rituals is positively correlated to psychosocial maturity of adolescents and mediates the relationship between psychosocial development and family boundaries (Eaker & Walters, 2002). In other words, appropriateness of family boundaries is not as relevant to maturity when satisfaction with rituals is considered. This finding is consistent with previous conclusions that the

developmental process associated with psychosocial maturity flourishes when adolescents feel connected to their families but not constrained by the family (Bartle-Haring, 1997; Campbell, Adams, & Dobson, 1984; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Corsaro, 2005; Greeff & Le Roux, 1999).

Studies have suggested that adolescents need to balance separateness and connectedness in family life and that the correct balance will facilitate identity exploration and ultimately adjustment and healthy individuation (Bartle-Haring, 1997; Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002; Campbell et al., 1984; Cieslik & Pollock, 2002; Erikson, 1968; Heaven, 2001). A combination of emotional attachment to parents, and the encouragement of independence striving by parents is seen to be associated with healthy identity development of adolescents (Campbell et al., 1984). Supportive and communicative families are more likely to create a climate within which adolescents are able to resolve developmental crises and progress toward identity achievement (Heaven, 2001). Adolescents who experience positive family rituals and boundaries, with the accompanying sense of belonging, will be more likely to make positive connections with their peers and so experience a sense of community (Campbell et al., 1984; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Eaker & Walters, 2002; Heaven, 2001; Skoe & Lippe, 1998). Adolescent development involves moving from a family focus to exploring common symbols, based on common interests and values with their peers.

Common symbols and rituals are developed by youth with their peers to form their own subcultures and are based on common interests and values, such as their: family cultural backgrounds; emerging sexual identity; religious and spiritual values; personal and cultural interests in sports; cultural and creative arts; and political and environmental issues. Common sub-cultural symbols and rituals will be discussed further under shared values of subculture as another aspect of sense of community.

Emotional Safety

Emotional safety is a crucial factor in the development of a sense of community where members feel trusted by the others, and experience acceptance, empathy and support from other members of the group (McMillan, 1996). The

need to belong and feel the emotional safety of trust is evidenced in many human developmental theories. According to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963), children and adolescents whose needs are not met will learn to mistrust others and come to view the world as basically hostile. However, if their needs are met at an early age, Erikson argued that they learn to trust others and will view the world as basically friendly. Successful passage through this adolescent stage leads to the development of positive attitudes toward life and what can be gleaned from it. Children and adolescents, therefore, need to feel they belong by making attachments with their family, their prime caregivers (Adler, 1959; Bowlby, 1969; Damon & Eisenberg, 1998; Dugan & Coles, 1989; Erikson, 1963; Harlow & Harlow, 1966).

Emotional safety is important to adolescents according to the influential social theorist Adler (1959). Adler believed children and adolescents need to be shown that they are valued in order to develop a social interest in the world around them and experience a general connectedness. The child and emerging adolescent then "feels at home in life" and their existence to be worthwhile, that they are useful to others and are "overcoming common, instead of private, feelings of inferiority" (Adler, 1959, p.19). Emotional safety is important as children grow into adolescence and develop socially in order to extend their sense of belonging to the wider world of extended family, peers and adults in the various school and social community settings where they interact (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Erikson, 1963; Frydenberg, 1997; Frydenberg et al., 2003; Haggerty, 1994; Jaffe, 1998).

According to Erikson (1968), adolescents try to figure out who they are, what they value and who they will grow up to become, as they integrate intellectual, social, sexual, ethical and other aspects of themselves into forming their identity (Moshman, 1999). Erikson and others spoke of adolescents experimenting with various roles (Argyle, 1967; Erikson, 1956; Goffman, 1956; Selman & Selman, 1979) leading to ego-identity formation with a "a feeling of being at home in one's body, a sense of knowing where one is going and an inner assurance of anticipated recognition from those who count" (Erikson, 1956, p. 58). In early adulthood, Erikson spoke of intimacy versus isolation, where the emerging adult

may explore commitment to loving intimate relationships, or alternatively feel a sense of isolation if they fail to connect with the significant others in their lives. Developmental theorists have argued the importance of emotional safety for the child to develop trust, the adolescent to develop a social identity and the young adult to develop intimacy, which are inter-related aspects of a sense of community.

Personal Investment

The personal investment of individuals, to want to contribute and participate as a member, comes from the sense of belonging to others with a shared history and symbols, where emotional safety is provided in order to develop a sense of community. To make a personal investment the individual needs to have developed an understanding of relational interactions of co-operation. Developmental theories have argued that children and adolescents learn this concept of personal investment, of relational interactions, in the process of their moral development (Batson, Ahmad, & Tsang, 2002; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Damon, 1990; Davidson & Davidson, 1994; Graham, 1972; Moshman, 1999; Reimer, Paolitto, & Hersh, 1983).

Influential development theorist, Jean Piaget, based his early studies of child moral development, with the concept of co-operation, on the playful rituals of childhood (Piaget, 1962). He argued that a child's conception of morality develops from one of simplistic rigid constraint in young children, to a morality of autonomous flexible cooperation as they mature and interact more with other children and with adults, and realise there are changeable standards (Moshman, 1999; Piaget, 1977; Reimer et al., 1983). Kohlberg expanded Piaget's theory of moral development with increasing flexibility and understanding of others, to include development from external to internal control as the adolescent realises they can make their own decisions of acceptable behaviour (Moshman, 1999; Reimer et al., 1983). Lazarus (1991) further argued that various problem-solving and coping strategies are developed within environmental contexts to deal with the internal and external conflicts and the demands placed on youth in society (Frydenberg, 1997). Children and adolescents are in the process of developing co-

operative skills through their interactions with others. If these relational interactions are generally positive and provided in an environment of emotional safety, then they can be prepared to personally invest of themselves with their peers to form a sense of community.

Emotional safety appears to be a prerequisite for making a personal investment by a group member. For a person to be prepared to give of themselves, they must feel an emotional safety, that they are trusted by others. In 1963, Jacobs (cited in Kawachi & Berkman, 2000) described the importance of a trusting social environment in the developmental processes by which the moral values of trust and reciprocity become instilled in children. She argued that trusting social environments tend to form trustworthy citizens. In order for youth and adults to be trustworthy citizens in society, they must first feel trusted, that is, experience emotional safety, and from this trust from others, be willing to co-operate with others as a personal investment.

This development of trust in order to give a personal investment, co-operation and participation in neighbourhood communities, has been widely researched. Putnam (1993; 2000), in his extensive research on social environments and community participation, believed that the development of trust within communities makes for communities with more civic engagement, better health outcomes and lower suicide rates. Putman defined civic engagement as involving a generalised reciprocity of: “I’ll do this for you now, in the expectation that down the road you or someone else will return the favour” (Putnam, 1993, p. 167). Putnam argued, from his research comparing northern Italian and southern Italian communities, that a society that relies on generalised reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society. He believed that trust tends to lubricate social life and, therefore, has benefits to society as a whole (Putnam, 1993). At a structural level, adolescents need to experience a sense of trust, of emotional safety, of appreciation, from their local neighbourhood communities where they live in order to participate as citizens and experience a sense of community connectedness (Checkoway, 1998; Helve & Wallace, 2001; Stukas & Dunlap, 2002; Youniss et al., 2002).

This sense of social responsibility, of making a personal investment, of being caring and participating citizens is an important concept in the education of children and adolescents to develop their own well-being and that of the community (Al-Yaman, Sargeant, & Bryant, 2003; Atweh et al., 1998; Giroux, 1988; Hedin & Eisikovits, 1982; Kohler, 1982; Wren, 1986).

Social Responsibility

The sense of social responsibility, of making a personal investment as a component of citizenship, while being taught to youth, is often not reflected in the ways they are treated by society. Youth tend to be isolated from their local communities by being treated as non-citizens or citizens of the future, with few opportunities to fully participate in the community (Wyn, 1995). An understanding of, and participation in, democratic processes are seldom a priority in the institutions in which youth are involved (Wyn & White, 1997).

Wyn and White (1997) argued that the concept of youth is itself problematic when it is used to categorise people by age alone. Rather, they suggested emphasising youth as a social process. This concept of social process offers the opportunity to understand how different social groups, in general, struggle to reconstruct and define their identities against the more powerful definitions and constructions of other groups, including journalists, politicians, teachers and youth workers. Wyn and White suggested that while a transitions approach is useful in identifying important social processes that affect youth, it tends to trivialise the issue of the rights of youth and of their full participation in society. Youth are often taught in school about social responsibility and citizenship as concepts to be undertaken as adults in the future, but are not encouraged to personally invest in social responsibility in the present (Hannam, 2000; Wyn & White, 2000).

Citizenship

This concept of active co-operation, of making a personal investment as a citizen, implies being willing to make sacrifices as part of that responsibility to others in order to experience a sense of community. Tacey (2000) argued that in order to develop a sense of social responsibility people need to be prepared to

make sacrifices. Interestingly, Mackay (1999) found a belief that our heroes are prepared to make sacrifices, with imagination, courage and a sense of connectedness:

> *The kind of people Australians regard as genuinely heroic: they make personal sacrifices – in the form of risk or sustained, devoted work – in pioneering new frontiers of human behaviour ... people who are fighting intensely private battles against ignorance, prejudice, intolerance and apathy ... The challenge of learning how to deal with life in an inherently unstable society (how to stay sane, even, in the face of the growing temptation to retreat into one neurosis or another) (Mackay, 1999, p. 95-96).*

This preparedness to take risks and be willing to sacrifice for others, personally investing in others, as those considered heroes do, shows a strongly developed sense of community.

Influence

Trusting Relationships

A sense of influence on the group, is also needed in order to experience a sense of community according to McMillian & Chavis (1986). The feeling of influence is developed through the forming of trusting relationships, leading to freedom of expression within the group. The concept of influence is reciprocal in the social interaction of members of a group (Berkman & Glass, 2000). Group members can influence each other to conform to the shared values and narratives perpetuated by the group. The need for trusting relationships for youth, in order to experience a sense of connectedness, has been widely researched (Atweh et al., 1998; McDonald, 1999; Mitchell, 2000).

Trusting relationships are necessary in order to experience a psychological sense of community. Ideally, youth need trusting relationships with their family at home, with teachers and peers in school environments, and with their social groups to experience a sense of control and connectedness (Mitchell, 2000). For marginalised youth who have few trusting relationships, one trusted adult, a youth

worker or teacher can make all the difference. At least one trusting relationship is necessary for youth to begin to feel the possibility of a sense of community (McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994).

Freedom of Expression

The development of trusting relationships, has often been found to be lacking according to studies of marginalised youth. A study by the Australian Youth Foundation of disadvantaged youth in Australia in 1993, called them the *lost generation* (Daniel & Cornwell, 1993). The study found that youth have few points of influence or engagement with society and have feelings of not belonging. The participants were portrayed as a *lost generation* not because of their own behaviours or characteristics but because they were the victims of changes to and developments in the economic and social organisation of Australian society, which tended to marginalise them.

This Australian wide study of youth involved 725 disadvantaged participants, 382 young women and 343 young men, 13-28 years old, with an average of 18 years of age, who came from major cities, country towns and remote regions of each state of Australia (Daniel & Cornwell, 1993). Almost all the participants were dependent on some form of social security, with a few apparently with no income. A minority were still in school, but almost all of those out of school were unemployed. Homelessness was common, particularly in the large cities, and frequently linked to a past of physical, psychological or sexual abuse. Young Aborigines were strongly represented in some locations, with refugees and others of linguistically diverse backgrounds in other locations.

These young people consistently expressed feelings of alienation from their local communities. Participants were asked in focus group discussions about their perspectives on work, school and youth services. They shared their personal experiences of living in local communities The researchers described the participants as eager to seize the opportunity to be heard and for many to use the occasion to put their views and decry the generally bad image in the media of youth.

The majority of the focus groups showed optimism, energy and wit, but often the cheerfulness was overshadowed by cynicism, anger and fatalism (Daniel & Cornwell, 1993). The hopes of the participants were described as focused on securing good jobs, the education or training needed and, eventually, a satisfactory way of life and family. In the majority of the focus groups youth expressed their alienation from their local communities. In a very few regions, notably away from the big cities, participants spoke of a sense of belonging in their local communities, an impression reinforced during discussion with youth workers and others concerned in those regions. The participants told of entertainment being available predominantly in alcohol-selling venues, with inadequate public transport, and that a variety of services were available to youth, but little was known about them. The participants resented the antagonism towards them apparent in some areas and argued against the poor image generated by the media. They demanded a chance to speak for themselves and for a fairer representation of what they were, what they wanted to become and what they were contending with. These marginalised youth expressed their frustration at a perceived lack of freedom of expression leading to alienation from their local communities (Daniel & Cornwell, 1993).

A lack of trust and accompanying lack of freedom of expression was also expressed by participants in a similar study in Canada called *They don't trust us; we're just kids* (Valaitis, 2002, p. 248). The qualitative study provided views about community from predominantly female inner city youth. The author explored participants' perceptions about community, their ability to be heard, and their power to influence community change. Valaitis suggested that three sub-themes explain their threats to empowerment: (1) they felt they had no actual decision-making power; (2) they were low in the social hierarchy; and (3) they felt mutual mistrust of and by adults (Valaitis, 2002). These youth also expressed a lack of trust and lack of freedom of expression from others in their structural communities.

Trusting relationships are often lacking for disadvantaged and minority groups, especially cultural and sexual minority groups who can lack safe and secure environments leading to feelings of alienation (Burfoot, 2003; Fisher &

Sonn, 2002; Fyson, 1999; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). This especially applies to minority groups stigmatised by this dominant culture. One of these minority groups often suffering from a lack of safe environments with trusting relationships is same-sex attracted youth (Hillier et al., 1998; Ollis, Mitchell, Watson, Hillier, & Walsh, 2002). Other minority groups include racial and ethnic minorities, particularly recently arrived immigrants and refugees, who have the added insecurity of learning yet another language while experiencing significant cultural differences and possibility facing non-permanent status in their new country (Australian Red Cross, 2002; Beavis, 2002; Brough, Gorman, Ramirez, & Westoby, 2003; Coventry, Guerra, MacKenzie, & Pinkney, 2002; Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994; Mohamed, Francis, Grogan, & Sparks, 2002; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996; Williams & Westermeyer, 1986).

Youth need trusting relationships with freedom of expression to develop a strong self-concept, their own social identity, and in order to connect with others in the community (Phillips, 1990; Pretty, 2002). Youth need to feel they have a voice, that they will be appreciated for their social contribution as participants in the life of society (Berman, 1984; Frydenberg et al., 2003; Hart & Schwab, 1997; Phillips, 1990; Pretty, 2002).

Opportunities for freedom of expression need to be provided for youth to develop a sense of community. Prominent child psychologist, William Damon (Colby & Damon, 1999; Damon, 1990; Damon & Eisenberg, 1998), argued that children and adolescents need to be provided with significant challenges in problem-solving to develop adequate social and life skills. Glasser (1998) argued the importance of the development of the problem-solving skills to be taught at home and in schools to assist youth to develop the necessary negotiation skills needed to develop long-term intimate relationships in adulthood. Adolescents need opportunities for freedom of expression using problem-solving empowering processes to experience a sense of control and a sense of community (Duffy, 2003).

Youth need to be provided with opportunities for creative and even comic self-expression to envision and develop a better world (Bergson, 1917; Levine,

1986; Miles, 2002b; Schafer, 1976). Schafer argued that the creative or comic vision provides a change from oppositionality, to a more creative acceptance and inclusion (Schafer, 1976). He identified social cohesion and pragmatism as the guiding values of the comic vision**.** The comic world is about community dreaming, community imagination, rather than just private dreams or private tragedy (Heilman, 1978). Schafer believed that while tragedy embodies a linear flow of time and events, the essence of the comic vision is the timelessness of rebirth, regeneration, circularity and continuity.

Creative comedy allows for spontaneity and irrationality, celebrating the life force and fosters an acceptance of the world and people as they are. Unlike tragedy, which views the person as psychically divided, people in comedy, indulging their creativity, treat one another as whole, or as if whole (Levine, 1986; Schafer, 1976). Youth provided with opportunities for freedom of expression can possibly develop their creative, comic, whole self, within the group. Youth in a supportive environment, can move from a alienated, negative, almost tragic view of themselves and the world, to one of a positive creative, almost comic view of themselves and the world, where they can experience a sense of community influence.

Empowerment

Opportunities for freedom of expression as an empowering process for youth can enhance their sense of personal control and their sense of community (Mullaly, 2002; Young, 1990). Rappaport (1981; 1987) argued for the use of empowerment as a route to psychological well-being to create "a more equitable, fair and just society" (Rappaport, 1987, p.130). Cowen also argued for this positive community psychology approach (Cowen & Kilmer, 2002) using empowerment as a route to enhance psychological well-being (Cowen, 1994, 2000).

Other community psychologists also take this whole community approach to psychological well-being by arguing for an empowerment approach (Cornell University Empowerment Group, 1989; Israel, Checkoway, Schulz, &

Zimmerman, 1994; Prilleltensky, 1994; Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

An empowering freedom of expression for youth can promote a sense of community and of well-being. Prilleltensky describes a well-being empowerment approach, building on earlier work by others (Arnstein, 1969; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fawcett, 1984; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988), as one working on three levels: (1) personal well-being – physical and mental health with sense of control; (2) relational well-being – participation and collaboration with respect for self and others; and (3) community well-being – social justice with a sense of community support (Prilleltensky, 2003a).

More detail of this empowering model of well-being is provided in Table 2.

Table 2
Prilleltensky's Well-being Domains

Domains	**Personal well-being**	**Relational well-being**	**Collective well-being**
Values	• health • self determination • personal growth	• respect for human diversity • collaboration • democratic participation	• collectivism • social justice
Needs met	• emotional well-being • physical well-being • mastery • control • self-efficacy • voice • choice • skills • growth • autonomy	• participation • involvement • mutual responsibility • identity • dignity • self-respect • self-esteem • acceptance	• sense of community cohesion • formal support • economic security • shelter • clothing • nutrition • access to vital health and social services

Source: Prilleltensky (2003)

Collective Well-being

Prilleltensky argued the importance of social justice principles for promoting wellness in the community (Prilleltensky, 2001) at all three levels: (1) at a personal level – self-determination, health, personal growth; (2) at a relational level – support for enabling community structures, respect for diversity, collaboration and democratic participation; and (3) at a collective level – collectivism and social justice.

Prilleltensky and colleagues (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2000; Prilleltensky et al., 2001) also argued that well-being is achieved by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of personal, relational and collective needs. Their concept of wellness begins from a position of strength of the individual, rather than personal and relational deficits.

It focuses on the influence of the collective aspects of well-being and the need to address collective issues of disadvantage. Prilleltensky argued that "too much attention to personal needs is often at the expense of social values such as justice, fairness and equality; resulting in poorly equipped communities" (Prilleltensky, 2003a, p.20), and so argued for the empowerment of marginalised individuals.

Integration

Status

Integration is the third dimension of the definition to experience a sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Integration includes the fulfillment of the need for status as a member of a community, where the person is able to demonstrate their competence of skills and knowledge. Youth need to be provided with opportunities for improved status by demonstrating their competence in significant and acceptable ways. Studies reveal that youth often lack these opportunities to demonstrate competence in society (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002; Davis, 1999; Fuller, McGraw, & Goodyear, 2002; Tonucci & Rissotto, 2001). Pearl (1978) argued that youth felt devalued and that society provided them with few acceptable social roles and not enough important work. Pearl suggested that adolescent youth need personal and economic security; relief from pain caused by

isolation and emptiness; a sense of understanding about their world; friends and other social supports; a sense of usefulness; a sense of competence; and a sense of excitement. Youth need to feel they have a status, are not isolated but socially connected: are useful and competent, with a feeling of excitement and hope (Cole, 1988; Pearl, 1978) Aspects of these observations have been supported in subsequent studies of youth participation and integration (eg., Alder & Sandor, 1990; Alparone & Rissotto, 2001; Atweh et al., 1998; Checkoway, Finn, & Pothukuchi, 1995; de Kort, 1999; Harre, 2003).

Status in society can be gained by youth who obtain paid employment, as this is usually deemed worthy of status by Western society. However, youth living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods often have higher unemployment rates resulting in fewer opportunities for paid employment, and poorer educational resources and lack of qualifications and experience. They have little choice but to take casual unskilled work with little security and few opportunities for gaining promotion (Miles, 2002b; Ritzer, 2002).

Ritzer (2002) referred to the growing casualisation of work for youth as *McJobs.* The principles of the fast-food restaurant came to dominate more and more sectors of American society, as well as the rest of the world. Ritzer believed that youth who worked for McDonalds were more exploited than those who worked on an assembly line, as it is both de-skilled and casual. McJobs, he believed, are unsatisfying and alienating with paternalistic management styles, rigid and detailed rules, and with no unionism permitted (Ritzer, 2002). As casual workers they have little opportunity to build a sense of solidarity with other workers or unionise to improve their conditions (Mullaly, 2002; Ritzer, 2002; Young, 1990). Youth unable to establish any status through meaningful work can feel alienated and hopeless without a sense of community.

Social Integration

Social integration provides ties that give meaning to an individual's life, enabling them to participate fully, to be obliged, in fact, often to be the provider of support and to feel attached to one's community (Berkman & Glass, 2000). However, many youth in Western post-modern society are spending more of their

free time alone than with their peers in the community. With modern technology, entertainment, television, the internet and playing computer games have become primary sources of information and relaxation, crowding out more sociable leisure-time activities (Stoll, 2002). Research shows that the average teenager in the USA probably spends more time alone than with family and friends, resulting in social isolation (Putnam, 2000). Increasing social isolation of youth, with accompanying high rates of school disengagement and high unemployment, leads to further isolation and disengagement, and to higher suicide rates (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2000; Coggan & Norton, 1994; Victorian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Promotion Officers & Farnan, 2001).

Social integration, as opposed to social exclusion, has been highlighted as an important factor needed to experience a sense of community in a recent Australian report *Community Adversity and Resilience* (Vinson, 2004). In this report, a set of disadvantage indicators were constructed and applied in relation to postcodes in the two most populous states of Victoria and New South Wales to measure each area's overall relative social disadvantage. Levels of social integration were measured in terms of aspects of neighbourhood life, including volunteering, group recreation and expectations of informal help. The areas revealing the higher relative social disadvantage, tended to show lower rates of social cohesion or integration.

International studies highlight the link between social integration and rates of mortality. Emile Durkheim, in his extensive research on suicide in Europe, concluded that the lowest rates of suicide occurred in European societies with the highest degrees of social integration (Berkman & Glass, 2000). Social integration and accompanying support networks, or more importantly the lack of support networks, predicted mortality from almost every cause of death in studies during the 1970s and 1980s (Berkman & Glass, 2000). Social support and social integration are transactional in nature, involving both giving and receiving. According to House (1981), social support is required on a number of levels, including emotional, instrumental, appraisal and informational. For social integration, social support systems, especially for marginalised youth, are essential.

Resilience

"Social connectedness is the strongest antidote to suicide that we know" (Fuller et al., 2002). Youth who feel supported by their family, peers and the community around them, are more likely to feel a sense of connectedness with those around them, and to be more resilient (Fuller et al., 2002; Glover, Burns, Butler, & Patton, 1998; Mitchell, 2000). Various studies have shown that social integration and social support are important to develop resilience and social capital in youth (Frydenberg, 1997; Fuller et al., 2002; Haggerty, 1994; Rutter, 2000). Risk factors, which threaten the well-being of the child and their capacity to continue adaptive development, have been widely studied and include: parental conflict, separation and divorce; chronic illness in child or parent; poverty and social disadvantage; race; and an environment of war (Rutter, 1999). Two classes of protective factors have also been studied: (1) intrinsic, intrapersonal factors believed to be constitutional in large part, such as personality, temperament and intelligence; and (2) extrinsic, environmental influences such as a caring family, the availability of social support or caring mentors, good school experiences and strong attachment. The interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors has been demonstrated in their contributions to coping and resilience (Frydenberg, 1997). A supportive family, school environment and other caring adults leading to social integration has been shown to play a major role in building resilience and assisting youth to cope and feel a sense of belonging.

Social integration experiences for youth, therefore, can provide resilience, with the means to find positive ways to respond to adversity and stressful life events, having stronger connections to school, family and peers, hence being less likely to develop suicidal thoughts or behaviours. Being equipped with a range of coping, help-seeking and problem-solving skills also allows adolescents to see beyond the current situation and has been found to reduce re-attempt rates in suicidal people (Fuller et al., 2002; Patton et al., 2000; Rutter, 2000). Youth who lack social integration and so lack resilience can become isolated, alienated and disillusioned with the lack of meaning to their lives. This is shown by the high

numbers of disturbed youth today (Damon, 1995; Frydenberg, 1997; Glenwick & Jason, 1993; Haggerty, 1994; Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1999).

The social integration of youth to build resilience is a community responsibility according to Sonn and Fisher (1998) who argued that oppressed groups in alternative settings can find ways to resist oppression and experience social integration for an improved sense of community. They are "in settings such as church groups, sporting clubs, extended family networks and other organisations, groups find ways to protect and propagate what is valued and central for their survival" (Sonn & Fisher, 1998, p. 457). This emphasises the importance of social integration with supportive social settings for the promotion of resilience in marginalised youth.

Lack of Social Integration

Marginalised youth often do not experience social integration, rather they experience isolation or even abuse from others. "A young person who is abused believes that they are worthless and that the world is not a safe place" (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996, p. 89).

A longitudinal study by Shek (1998) revealed that Chinese adolescents from secondary schools in Hong Kong who felt safe and not abused in their family environments performed better academically and socially, and were less likely to abuse themselves. Shek examined the relationship between family environment and adjustment in 378 adolescents (aged 12-16 years) who completed objective scales of the Chinese version of the Self-Report Family Instrument (C-SFI), assessing their family environment, general psychological symptoms, coping resources, school behaviour, academic performance, and substance abuse. Participants who perceived the family environment to be more positive, displayed lower levels of psychological symptoms and substance abuse, had higher levels of coping resources, had more positive perceptions of school behaviour, and showed better academic performance (Shek, 1998).

Another study showed the perpetuation of violence and abuse, from structured violence to self-abuse. James, Johnson, Raghaven, Lemos, Barakett, and Woolis (2003) suggested an integrated tripartite model of violence, with a focus on

structural violence within an oppression paradigm. They studied 27 women (70% African American and 30% European American) who were randomly selected for this study from a rolling admissions pool of program participants in CASAWORKS for Families, a three year national substance abuse treatment demonstration program. A model of violence was described, in which structural violence was presented within a transactional relationship between interpersonal and intrapersonal violence. This was magnified when race and poverty are considered. Their results indicated that different levels and types of violence are interrelated.

If youth are not socially integrated they can become self-abusive (including drug abuse, self-mutilation, suicide) and abuse others, acting-out with anger-management issues of depression, conflict and violence (Glover et al., 1998; McPhie & Chaffey, 1998). Studies have shown that this self-abuse appears to be the result of low self-esteem (Carroll & Anderson, 2002), resulting from lack of social integration and possible prior abuse by others.

Prevalent forms of self-abuse by youth include excessive use of alcohol and drugs, and self-mutilation of various forms (Glover et al., 1998; Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992). For example, studies have shown that excessive use of alcohol has increased recently, especially binge drinking by teenage girls (Graham & Chandler-Coutts, 2000). Additionally, excessive use of other drugs is also a problem among youth in Australia. Tobacco smoking, for example, while decreasing among adults is increasing in the younger age groups with more smoking by teenagers and even pre-teens (Giesbrecht & Rankin, 2000).

Illicit drug-taking, including heroin, ecstasy, speed and other amphetamines and barbiturates is also increasing (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Nestler & Malenka, 2004). Australian youth are using and abusing drugs often as a means of self-medicating for relief from feelings of alienation, and from a lack of a sense of community (Nestler & Malenka, 2004).

A lack of social integration can also result in self-abuse through excessive eating or starvation dieting. Over-eating is becoming a problem in Australia with high visibility promotion of take-away and junk foods, and not only for youth.

Recently in Australia, the levels of obesity in children, youth and adults has increased alarmingly (Waters & Baur, 2003). At the other extreme, some adolescents, especially young women, are under-eating, craving the *body beautiful* image portrayed by super-thin waif-like models. Feeling a lack of control in an alienating world, controlling their own body is their only perceived means of coping, resulting in eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia (McIntosh, Bulik, McKenzie, Luty, & Jordan, 2000).

Youth lacking in social integration can also turn to self-mutilation. This is also on the increase including tattooing, body-piecing and other cutting or marking of body parts (Carroll & Anderson, 2002). Some tattooing and body piercing are regarded as forms of art or self-expression. In some cases, tattooing and body piercing can have cultural significance, as with ear piercing in many cultures and face marking in some islander, African and other cultures (Carroll & Anderson, 2002). However, excessive and non-culturally specific forms of self-mutilation can be a sign of low self-esteem, a cry for help, an attempt at self-identity or wanting to be part of a group or gang with like minded anger-management or self-identity issues (Baumeister et al., 2000; Carroll & Anderson, 2002; Cieslik & Pollock, 2002; Stryker, Owens, & White, 2000).

Alienated youth, with a lack of social integration, can also react with excessive risk-taking behaviours. A study on such behaviours by adolescents revealed that the sensation-seeking and perceived levels of risk-taking were more important than any perceived benefits (Rolison, 2002). Interestingly, high-risk adventure sports such as sport climbing, have been popular with youth especially in Europe for many years (Heywood, 2002). Heywood argued that sport climbing provides a "uniquely challenging and satisfying, pure or authentic form of sport, embodies the non-conformist spirit, the genuine individualism of the British climbing tradition and stands out against the rationalizing tide engulfing so many other areas of social life" (Heywood, 2002, p. 62). He argued that adventure sport demands complex activity involving the whole person to develop technique and strength, either through genetic inheritance or acquired by intensive training, and that it is physical, technical, moral and character building. It could be argued that youth engaging in high-risk adventure sports are engaging in personal challenges

that take them outside the rigid expectations of the dominant culture where they lack a sense of excitement, of social integration or a sense of community.

Youth who are not socially integrated can sometimes respond with the most extreme form of self-abuse, suicide. Australian and New Zealand youth rates of mental health problems are increasing, with higher suicide rates compared to other industrial countries (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2000; Fuller, 1998). Recent Australian research on the mental health of youth has shown that suicide rates in young Australians aged between 15 and 24 years have trebled for males and doubled for females over the last 30 years (Glover et al., 1998). In 1995, male suicide represented 25% of all deaths in the 15-24 year old age group. Recent reports indicate that between 15% and 40 per cent of youth report some depressive symptoms, with higher rates in 15-24 year-olds than in any other age group (Glover et al., 1998). Many of these adolescents will fall short of meeting clinical criteria for depressive disorder, but their symptoms will adversely affect their enjoyment of life and are indicators of risk for major depression, substance abuse and self-harming behaviours (Patton et al., 2000).

Research also shows that Australian young men have a higher completion rate of suicide compared to young women, as they tend to choose more violent means, which are more likely to lead to death (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2000). Meanwhile, Australian young women actually have even higher rates of attempted suicide, but with lower completion rates as they tend to choose less violent means, such as the overdose of tablets, which are less likely to lead to death (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2000).

Shared Values

Shared values is another related aspect of this social integration process, with youth seeking peers with common shared values to experience a sense of community. Research shows that influence of peers is significant on an adolescents' behaviour (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Harris, 1999; Jaffe, 1998). Adolescents seek acceptance from their peers as they explore their own social identity and values with their peers in order to experience a sense of belonging to their particular group of peers (Brewer & Silver, 2000; Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002;

Cieslik & Pollock, 2002; Elliott, 2001; Stryker et al., 2000; Tajfel, 1982; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997).

Shared values with peer groups are also sought out as a protection from shame, and in order to feel a sense of community (McMillan, 1996). Erikson speaks of small children, toddlers, needing to develop autonomy rather than a sense of shame and doubt (Erikson, 1963). Shame can be defined as a primitive response to breakdown of one's social presentation, a breakdown in pride, self-esteem and dignity that is likely to become self-destructive, resentful or result in compulsive self-disclose (McMillan, 1996; Tantum, 1990). A sense of shame can be experienced by anyone who feels rejected including children and adolescents who have been abused; women who have been raped; refugees, migrants and indigenous peoples abused or rejected by racism; and same-sex attracted youth facing heterosexist attitudes (Brough et al., 2003; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996). Marginalised youth of society seek others with shared values as a protection from shame and to experience a sense of community.

Seeking shared values often takes the form of exploring and forming peer groups around various youth subcultures or lifestyles based on specific interests and passions, from alternative music styles to statements about their social, cultural or sexual identity (Miles, 2002b; White, 1993; Wyn & White, 1997). Youth subcultures may evolve from sexual identity preferences or ethnic cultural differences, or other cultural interests in sport, music and the arts. Subculture groups are formed around shared values and raise both inclusion and differentiation issues.

Brewer argued for a theory of optimal distinctiveness, stating that social identification is derived from the opposing forces of two universal human motives: the need for inclusion and assimilation on the one hand; and the need for differentiation from others on the other (Brewer & Silver, 2000). Shared distinctiveness is the group property that is most likely to engage high levels of attachment and identification with a given social group or category. Youth subcultures are formed around distinctive shared values as a way of developing

their own inclusive sense of community within the group, while differentiating themselves from the alienating wider society.

Youth Subcultures

Youth subculture groups with shared values can be based on specific cultural backgrounds, identifying with those with common values from their cultural heritage. Immigrant and refugee youth, particularly, share common values with their migrant and refugee peers that may be different from youth born in the country where they now live. These immigrant and refugee youth are likely to have a strong interest in the religion, sports and cultural arts of their home country and face similar conflicts with family as they try to socially integrate into the new culture with other peers (Beavis, 2002; Brough et al., 2003; Coventry et al., 2002; Goodkind & Foster-Fishman, 2002; Kellehear, 1996; Mohamed et al., 2002; Prilleltensky, 1993; Schwab, 1997; Sonn, 2002; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996; Women's Health West, 2001).

Youth subculture groups can also be formed around shared values based on sexual identity exploration. Youth exploring their sexuality, including same-sex relationships, can become distressed in heterosexist neighbourhoods, where they are likely to be labelled as homosexual, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transsexual, or more colloquially queer, dike, leso or poofter (Hillier et al., 1998; Ollis et al., 2002; Victorian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Promotion Officers & Farnan, 2001).

Same-sex attracted youth, often find themselves confronted by discrimination, heterosexist and harassing behaviours from within the home, as well as from their peers, schools and social groups (Hillier et al., 1998; Ollis et al., 2002). They tend to lack sufficient support from their home environment, family or friends, school environments, teachers and peers, social groups and places to allow them to express themselves (Victorian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Promotion Officers & Farnan, 2001). Same-sex attracted youth tend to seek others with shared values in order to experience a sense of community with other accepting youth, as they experience a lack of shared values and shared isolation from the heterosexist society in which they live.

Youth exploring shared values with their peers and forming youth subculture groups can find themselves being labelled as troublesome or troubled (Frith, 1986). Frith argued that youth are often overlooked by adult society, except when they are in trouble. He suggests that media images of youth are often negative, with only sensational stories of violence and the like reported (Daniel & Cornwell, 1993; Mullaly, 2002; Rappaport, 2000; Van Moorst, 1983). Yet some studies in the USA have shown that youth crime rates are no higher than adult crime rates, and that youth crime rates have dropped significantly in the past decade, with the vast majority of youth were law-abiding citizens (Forman Jr., 2004; Yates & Youniss, 1996).

Johnson further argued that conceptualising youth culture as *troublesome* triggers the accompanying concept of *juvenile delinquency* (Johnson, 1993). She suggested that juvenile delinquency can be seen as a "set of concerns about the activities of youth and their supervision by institutions or individuals representing the social order" (Johnson, 1993, p. 96). Johnson saw an integral link between development of a discourse of *youth as a problem* and the establishment of many levels of institutions and processes for the monitoring, processing and surveillance (Johnson, 1993).

As youth seek peers with shared values as part of their social integration to experience a sense of community, they can find themselves being closely monitored and censored, with adults quick to label them as troublesome, even though they tend to have similar levels of problems and crimes to their adult counterparts.

Shared Connections

Participation

Shared connections through participation in shared events is the final aspect of McMillan and Chavis's (1986) dimensions of sense of community. Various studies have shown the importance for adolescents to actively participate in shared events at school and in their neighbourhood communities to experience improved mental health.

Participation leading to shared connections was shown to be important in a recent large-scale Australian research project undertaken by the Centre for Adolescent Health in the Gatehouse Project, which uses a systematic approach to mental health promotion in secondary schools (Patton et al., 2000). The conceptual framework of the Gatehouse Project includes an emphasis on healthy attachments with peers and teachers through the promotion of a sense of security and trust, effective communication and a sense of positive self-regard based on participation in varied aspects of school and community.

Active participation in school or community-based activities has been shown to be protective against health risk behaviours of youth (Hawkins et al., 1992). This is well illustrated in studies of disengagement or alienation where absenteeism and school drop-out are major risk factors for lifelong health damaging behaviours such as smoking, regular alcohol consumption and other drug use (Allamani et al., 2000; Conger & Galambos, 1997; Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002a; Giesbrecht & Rankin, 2000). Others have argued from research that more student participation in extracurricular activities promotes school satisfaction (Fullarton, 2002; Gilman, 2001). Schools do offer many opportunities for students to participate, but as Holdsworth (Holdsworth, Cahill, & Smith, 2003) suggested, for these to make a difference, they need to involve activities which are valuable, academically legitimate and make sense to the participants and to the community.

According to research with youth in Australia, youth actively participating in valued decision-making roles reported a sense of meaning, control and connectedness. Wierenga, Wood, Trenbath, Kelly and Vidakovic (2003) developed a model for youth participation work based on Phillips' model (Phillips, 1990) of a strong self-concept requiring a sense of meaning, control and bonding. For youth in decision-making roles, there are three key elements: (1) Meaning – doing something that has a bigger purpose and therefore that *I believe in*; (2) Control – making decisions, being heard and thus also having the skills to see the task through and do it well; and (3) Connectedness – working with others and being part of something bigger (Wierenga et al., 2003). The concepts of meaning, control and connectedness to achieve successful youth

participation appear to correlate well with the dimensions outlined to experience a sense of community.

Active youth participation, in order to promote resilience, was also emphasised in the research by Blum (1998) suggesting that the planning for the promotion of resilience could be classified according to the four Cs of:
(1) citizenship – meaningful participation; (2) contribution – thoughts to actions;
(3) competence and confidence – sense of mastery and ability; and
(4) connectedness – links with a range of people and diversity of peers (Blum, 1998, p. 370). These concepts not only emphasise the importance of youth participation, but are also closely aligned to other dimensions of belonging, influence and integration to achieve a sense of community (McMillan, 1996; McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Youth participating within their subculture groups can be very affirming of their emerging identities as they reinforce each other's value within the acceptance of the group. However, if they perceive that they are not accepted by others and feel alienated from other groups or from the wider community, these youth subculture groups can become niches of resistance (Moane, 2003; Watts & Serrano-Garcia, 2003). Niches of resistance could provide a place for these youth groups to feel a sense of belonging with each other, as they resist the outside world. They can take the form of street gangs that are often seen by outsiders in a negative light if they have violent tendencies towards others (Moane, 2003; White, 1993).

However, youth subculture group niches of resistance, given caring support, can also provide havens for youth to support each other in working out ways to cope with the oppressive outside world. Youth subculture groups can experience a sense of belonging within the group, as a form of *microbelonging* to the group, as opposed to *macrobelonging* which they do not experience within the alienating wider community (Wiesenfeld, 1996). At their best niches of resistance groups can provide youth with the space for empowering work together towards social change (Berkowitz & Wolff, 1996; Burgess, 2000; Hartley, Hartnell-Young, & Maunders, 1997; Headley, 2002).

Shared Events

Youth actively participating in their local communities by creating positive community-building and social action projects can lead to a sense of community connectedness through shared events leading to shared enhanced narratives (Bond, Belenky, & Weinstock, 2000; Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Rappaport, 1995, 2000; Salzer, 1998).

This research is about exploring these concepts of building a sense of community by creating community projects with youth participants to develop an improved self-image of being able to make a valuable contribution to the community, leading to improved personal narratives and sense of belonging, influence, integration and shared connections (Rappaport, 2000). A sense of community can be experienced by youth within their sub-cultural groups even in the midst of an alienating neighbourhood where the youth often report traumatic tales (Rappaport, 2000; White, 2004b).

Yet, it will be argued, through this present research, that youth, given a safe environment can use their imagination to explore ways to create community-building projects to enhance their own self-image and personal narratives for an improved sense of community both within the group and in their wider community. This concept of youth participation to achieve an improved sense of community connectedness will be further explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

> *To deny participation not only offends against human justice, not only leads to errors in epistemology, not only strains the limits of the natural world, but is also troublesome for human souls and for the anima mundi. Given the condition of our times, a primary purpose of human inquiry is not so much to search for truth but to heal, and above all to heal the alienation, the split that characterizes modern experience*. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 10)

Many youth in disadvantaged communities have great untapped creative and leadership potential, but few positive opportunities to develop their skills and make a positive contribution towards social change (Atweh et al., 1998; Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Burgess, 2000). Youth can be assisted to improve their present sense of well-being as well as help to enhance their future opportunities for suitable educational and employment pathways, while improving their local community. Opportunities are needed for them to have a voice in our community, for self-expression, to be empowered to participate meaningfully in their local communities, to experience a sense of community connectedness.

Youth Non-Participation

Youth often feel alienated and isolated from their local communities finding no significant roles to play in the present ever changing society (Kahane & Rapoport, 1997; Mackay, 1999). Disaffected youth can internalise a view of themselves as worthless, having experienced a learned helplessness (Cattell, 2001; Whitmore, 1994; Zimmerman, 1990b). This sense of disempowerment, can be particularly felt by adolescents who have suffered from abuse or neglect during childhood, lacking trusting relationships. For example, a study exploring links between childhood maltreatment and empowerment revealed that young women who had experienced higher levels of childhood maltreatment correlated with a lower interpersonal sense of empowerment and self-reported lower levels of community connections (Banyard & LaPlant, 2002). Youth, particularly those suffering severe disadvantage and non-trusting relationships, can feel that they are

unable to become active citizens in their local communities where they have been marginalised and feel unsafe and unappreciated.

A large Australian study of young people (Daniel & Cornwell, 1993), showed that the participants generally had few points of engagement with society, with little direct participation in the local community. Daniel and Cornwell argued that these young people are victims of changes to, and developments in, the economic and social organisation of Australian society. The participants consistently expressed feelings of alienation from their local communities, expressing concern at the lack of opportunities for them and the bad image portrayed of them in the media as untrustworthy. Only a few of those youth living away from large cities in rural communities expressed any feelings of belonging to the local community (Daniel & Cornwell, 1993). While youth living in smaller more isolated communities may experience a sense of community, most urban youth expressed marginalisation and alienation.

Studies of American youth have also revealed feelings of alienation from the community, with a definite lack of appreciation and participation. For example, a recent large-scale study of high school students revealed similar reports of feeling unappreciated and not encouraged to be involved in the local community (Burgess, 2000). Youth felt they were being side-lined by society and not appreciated as trusted citizens in the society. Yet youth need to feel appreciated to be able to experience a sense of social connectedness to improve their own well-being and to contribute as trusted citizens (Stoneman, 2002; Yates & Youniss, 1999; Youniss et al., 2002).

Non-citizens or *trainee citizens* is often the attitude taken by adults towards youth in western society (Holdsworth, 2003). They tend to be treated as non-citizens or, at best, citizens in training, apprentice citizens, learning their roles for the future. Yet youth are members of society, not just of the future, but of the present (Hannam, 2000; Wyn & White, 1997). Students are educated about the theories of democracy and citizenship in the classroom, but not often provided with opportunities to actively engage in the democratic processes of citizenship, to learn by participating in the community. Cole (1988) argued that the student

role of younger people has become enlarged, but it is a relatively passive role, always in preparation, never in action (Cole, 1988).

In reflecting on the nature of much citizenship education, Hannam described learning about democracy and citizenship in school as "a bit like reading holiday brochures in prison. Unless you were about to be let out or escape, it was quite frustrating and seemed pointless" (Hannam, 2000, p. 24). Hannam argued that to be effectively educated for democracy means being able to be a democratic citizen. It means knowing how to do democracy, and not just knowing about it. Youth need practical opportunities for citizenship, where they can be empowered to make a valuable contribution to the local community.

Empowering Processes

According to Zimmerman (1995), psychological empowering processes are those where people create, or are given opportunities to control their own destiny and influence the decisions that affect their lives. Psychological empowerment, also involves learning to think critically about our society and how we can influence it (Butterworth, 1999; Chesler, 1991; Mullender & Ward, 1991). Developing a critical analysis is the process whereby people achieve an illuminating awareness both of the socio-economic and cultural circumstances that shape their lives and their capacity to transform that reality (Freire, 1970). Freire's notion of *critical consciousness* is a socio-political version of critical thinking, creating an awareness of socio-political as well as personal forces that influence behaviour (Freire, 1970; Gibson, 1993; Kieffer, 1982; Watts et al., 1999).

Critical thinking by the individual is enhanced in the empowering process. Psychological empowerment involving enhanced critical thinking can lead to a more creative, open vision of the world that celebrates life and fosters an acceptance of cultural diversity. It questions the socio-political injustices in the world, rather than accepting a closed tragic view of a hopeless world (Levine, 1986). Psychological empowerment is about becoming critical thinkers to be aware of socio-political issues, to problem-solve social justice issues of

oppression and gain some sense of personal control (Mullaly, 2002; Prilleltensky, 1996; Thompson, 2003; Young, 1990).

This concept of critical thinking has been developed by educationalists into a transformative learning theory (Christopher, Dunnagan, Duncan, & Paul, 2001). Transformative learning is an empowering approach, that can enhance socio-political awareness for possible action towards social transformation (Maton, 2000; Selener, 1997; Sherman & Torbert, 2000).

Transformational Learning Approach

Transformative learning approaches were developed from Friere's work on educational teaching to develop critical thinking of students (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988). The traditional educational approach was described by Freire (1970) as the *banking* model of education. The goal was to assist learners in gaining knowledge. It views teachers as experts who exclusively possess knowledge. Students are viewed as passive objects, empty receptacles that teachers fill with knowledge. The transfer of knowledge usually occurs in a static exchange with little discussion. Freire believed that *banking* education contributed to maintaining oppressive conditions, because the approach is both paternalistic and individualistic in nature. Because it treats knowledge as a gift bestowed by those who are knowledgeable to those who are not, it is paternalistic. Banking education is individualistic in nature because it seldom recognises a student's unique personal characteristics and context of living. Freire believed that new educational theories, such as transformative learning, which promote increased self-awareness and freedom from constraints were necessary to create social equity for the oppressed and for real learning to occur (Freire, 1970).

A transformative learning approach for disadvantaged young children was developed independently by a teacher in New Zealand in the 1940's named Sylvia Ashton-Warner (Ashton-Warner, 1986). Her innovative teaching was developed with Maori children disaffected by colonial culture and who were unable to read using standard European methods of the day. When the teacher encouraged them to draw and tell stories of their own culture, they learnt the words they used themselves and then learnt how to read. The students were taught to think

critically about their own environment and explore their environment to learn more effectively. Modern teaching techniques use this critical thinking, or transformative learning, approach for students to critically explore their own identity and to critically explore their environments for work towards social transformation (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kohler, 1982; Lewis, 1998).

Transformative learning can be understood as a three-step process, according to Christopher, Dunnagan, Duncan, and Paul (2001). During the initial step, learners become critically aware of how and why their assumptions have come to constrain the ways they perceive, understand, and feel about their world. During the second step, a revision of belief systems occurs as learners change structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective. During the third step, learners adopt behaviours more consistent with their renewed perspective. They argued that transformative learning can be fostered by including: (a) teachers who are empathetic, caring, authentic, and sincere and who demonstrate a high degree of integrity; (b) learning conditions that promote a sense of safety, openness, and trust; and (c) instructional methods that support a learner-centred approach that promotes student autonomy, participation, reflection and collaboration.

Outcomes of transformative learning reported in the literature include: an empowered sense of self and an increase in self-confidence in new roles and relationships; fundamental changes in the way learners see themselves and their life assumptions; more functional strategies and resources for taking action and gaining control over their lives; compassion for others; and new connectedness with others (Speer, Jackson, & Peterson, 2001).

Collective Empowerment

Action on socio-political issues can often come out of the critical thinking involved in the empowering processes of transformative learning. Psychological empowering processes are about learning to *think* critically, but one can also *act* critically to affect the society in which we live. In psychological terms, *cognitive* processes become more critical leading to *behavioural* actions that come from the critical thinking, the problem-solving processes. Changing the way we *think* in

order to change the way we *act,* requires opportunities to *practise* the *action* learned, to actively participate in the society in which we live.

Community participation opportunities assist participants to define themselves and develop a new belief in their abilities to change aspects of their personal and social environments (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988). Empowerment education can involve inviting people to participate in group discussion and action aimed at changing aspects of their community, enhancing their sense of control and their belief in being able to change aspects of their own lives. Empowerment education can involve: (1) identifying their problems; (2) exploring the historical and social factors helping to cause the problem; (3) developing a vision of society they want to help create; (4) developing goals to achieve this; and (5) identifying obstacles on the path to achieve the goal (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988, p. 381).

Collective empowerment can grow out of individual empowerment in group settings (Van Uchelen, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). Empowerment processes work on three levels: individual, group and community. On an individual level, critical thinking in relation to socio-political issues is developed, involving problem-solving skills to confront the challenges. These learning skills are developed in a group context, with group activities and group discussion, thus promoting learning in group processes and group experimentation. In the supportive group environment, individuals learn to confront powerful and influential people and organisations in the community, finding strength, encouragement and support from the group. The empowering process also benefits the community, as the individuals actively contribute to their local communities in positive socially enhancing ways (Cadell et al., 2001; Yeich & Levine, 1992; Zimmerman, 1990a).

Empowerment of youth can positively affect their mental health. A recent study demonstrated this relationship through interviews with 41 high-risk adolescents (Ungar & Teram, 2000). The interviews made progress in explaining the link between the process of empowerment and mental health, as the participants in this study demonstrated how aspects of power that enhance the construction of health-promoting identities form a basis for personal and social resilience. The process of psychologically empowering youth to gain more control

over their lives can, therefore, enhance their social resilience and improve their mental well-being. Psychological empowering processes of learning to think critically in order to problem-solve, and so feel a sense of more personal control, and can lead to an improved mental well-being.

Positive community participation measures have been directly linked to psychological empowerment measures. Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) found strong relationships between measures of community involvement and participation and measures of psychological empowerment. They concluded that psychological empowerment connects perceived competence, motivation to take action and actual participation for the public good. In his model of learned hopefulness, Zimmerman (1990b) supported the theory that, although participation directly reduces alienation, it also directly affects empowerment, which, in turn, reduces alienation. Psychological empowerment can lead to an improved sense of self competence and personal control and improved motivation to actively participate in the community as a trusted citizen.

Community Participation Benefits

Trusting Social Relationships

According to extensive research in western societies, the forming of trusting social relationships is a prime element in the development of social capital leading to trustworthy citizens who are involved in their community (Jacobs, 1963; Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Putnam, 1993). The development of trusting social environments, in turn, tends to form trustworthy citizens, according to Jane Jacobs (1963) in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs described the developmental processes by which the moral values of trust and reciprocity become instilled in children. Jacobs used the term social capital, which according to Kawachi and Berkman (2000) is the earliest known use of this term. They argued that Jacobs believed that children growing up in a social capital rich neighbourhood quickly learn from experience that "people must take a modicum of public responsibility for each other even if they have no ties to each other" (Kawachi & Berkman, 2000, p. 185). Jacobs described the benefits of neighbourhood social capital for the preservation of sidewalk safety, the

facilitation of child rearing, the enhancement of self-government, and the maintenance of the civility of public life in general (Jacobs, 1963; Laverack, 2001; Onyx & Bullen, 2000). Extensive research of community participation has also revealed the importance of trusting social relationships.

According to Putnam (1993), the forming of trusting relationships within the community was found to be strongly related to community participation. Putman sought to measure the strength of civil society, or more specifically social capital, across the 20 regions of Italy. The purpose of his 20 year study was to attempt to explain the performance of local governments, which were introduced to Italy in 1970. Putnam's central finding was that the wide variations in the performance of regional governments was most closely related to the level of social capital in each region.

Putnam (1993) argued that trusting relationships developed in northern Italy, where citizens actively participated in civic associations such as choral societies, soccer leagues, literary guilds and the like, were found to have regional local governments who were effective in creating policy initiatives, good internal operations and implementation of policy initiatives. By contrast, in southern Italy, where patterns of civic engagement were much weaker, local government tended to be corrupt and inefficient.

Putnam explained his findings in terms of the way social capital enables citizens to cooperate with each other for mutual benefit and hence overcome the dilemmas of collective action. Citizens living in areas characterised by high levels of social capital were more likely to trust their fellow citizens and to value solidarity and equality. By contrast, social relations in areas of low social capital were characterised by proverbs such as *"Don't make loans, don't give gifts, don't do good, for it will turn out bad for you"* and *"When you see the house of your neighbour on fire, carry water to your own"* (Putnam, 1993, p. 144). Where there was a lack of trust in social relationships, such as the more isolated areas of southern Italy, there was less social capital and less community participation. In northern Italy, where trusting relationships had developed, people had higher

social capital and so were more likely to be involved in activities of community participation (Putnam, 1993).

Social Capital

According to Putnam (1993), social capital refers to features of social organisations, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action. Putnam's conceptualisation of social capital consists of the following features: trust, reciprocal support, civic engagement, community identity, and social networks. The premise is that levels of social capital in a community have an important effect on people's well-being (Putnam, 1993). Putnam argued that participation in civic life not only confers health and well-being advantages to participants, but increases the wealth of communities in which trust and civic engagement were present (Putnam, 1993, 2000).

However, there is rigorous debate about the concept of social capital in relation to socio-economic determinants of health in a community, with arguments that the levels of income, inequality, social capital, and health in a community may all be consequences of more macro-level social and economic processes that influence health and well-being across the life course (Pearce, 2003). It is further argued that there are potential drawbacks of making social capital a major focus of social policy. Intervening in communities to increase their levels of social capital may be ineffective, create resentment and overload community resources in a *blame the victim* approach at the community level while ignoring the community health effects of macro-level social and economic policies (Mullaly, 2002; Pearce, 2003). The concept of social capital then, needs to be considered in light of socio-economic policies and there effects on disadvantaged communities.

Putnam believed that community participation required a trusting supportive social environment that builds social capital through community networks (Putnam, 1993, 2000). It is not surprising that studies have shown that parental community involvement is a predictor of youth involvement (Stukas, Switzer, Dew, Goycoolea, & Simmons, 1999). Further, adolescent civic activity can be a

predictor of them becoming involved as adults in community participation (Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Youniss et al., 1997).

Research has demonstrated the benefits of early childhood and adolescent education to build social capital, for social networks and relationships based on trust (Farrell, Tayler, & Tennent, 2004; Kawachi & Kennedy, 1999). Australian researchers Farrell, Tayler, and Tennent (2004) using sociology of childhood concepts broadened their research focus to children, as reliable informants of their own everyday experience. In urban and rural localities in Queensland, 138 children (aged 4-8 years), participated in research conversations about their social experiences in education. The children's social capital was found to be higher in the urban community than in the rural community, highlighting the potential of children and family hubs to strengthen children's social capital in those communities with few social facilities (Farrell et al., 2004).

Community Well-being

Studies have shown that community participation is beneficial to the well-being of the local community members. Community participation, both formal and informal, plays an important role in the healthy life of a local community. In a qualitative study defining the nature of participation in small rural communities in Western Australia, it was shown that individuals find it difficult to separate formal and informal participation; both have an equally important role to play in community life (Coakes & Bishop, 2002).

Participation in community organisations and activities can benefit the participants by improved socio-political control, as measured by Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991). In a study with undergraduates and church members, they found improved leadership competence and political control for participants involved in community organisations and activities. Community participation can lead to improved confidence in leadership skills and an improved sense of socio-political control.

The benefits of community participation, of feelings of socio-political control and empowerment have also been shown to increase over time (Itzhaky & York, 2000). An extended replication of the work of Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991),

using socio-political control measures, the Bradburn Affect Balance Scale and a survey developed to measure a sense of community belonging, was undertaken with residents of a town in the Tel-Aviv, Israel area. The Pearson correlations of these measures were compared with Pearson correlations for measures of participation and decision-making for two similar groups of activists in the same community; one group had been active for two years longer than the second group. The comparison showed statistically significant differences in the expected direction between the two groups. Not only were the socio-political control indices of Zimmerman and Zahniser found to be effective, but they and other community empowerment measures are shown to be sensitive to the passing of time and accumulation of experience. Thus, over the time of two years, the activists came to feel more empowered for a socio-political sense of control.

Participation of citizens through community organisations benefits the individuals and the community as a whole, according to Wandersman and Florin (2000). Participation, they argue, increases feelings of helpfulness and responsibility and decreases feelings of alienation and anonymity. Further, they argued that citizen participation benefits both the participants and the environment. Participation, they believed, increases feelings of control over the environment and helps individuals develop an environment that better fits with their needs and values, as they have special knowledge that contributes to quality.

Community participation, within a community development model, has positive effects for the participants and the environment (Butterworth, 1999; Wandersman & Florin, 2000). Community development has been defined as the creation of improved physical, social and economic conditions through an emphasis on the voluntary cooperation and self-help of residents (Rothman, Erlich, & Tropman, 2001). Participation in a community development framework can have a positive impact on interpersonal relationships, including changes in socialising and mutual assistance among residents, as neighbours are an important source of information and referral to needed services. On an individual level, positive changes in attitudes, beliefs and skills, accrue during the process of participation in neighbourhood community development (Wandersman & Florin, 2000).

Participation through neighbourhood community organising can lead to personal empowerment, wellness, and increased competence for those involved (Berkowitz, 2000). Community organisation, when successful, should also result in better communities, in terms of the community's expressed needs, with tangible improvements. Studies have suggested that community organisation does, in fact, lead to such positive outcomes for both individuals and communities, with additional personal and social consequences viewed as desirable, including greater happiness, increased neighbouring, stronger social support networks and lower individual and community pathology (Berkowitz, 2000). In times of economic downturn or worse, community organisation can stimulate cooperation and local self-reliance, at little or no cost, thus cushioning and protecting the community from outside adversity (Berkowitz, 2000).

Perceived positive benefits of community participation were revealed in a study by Speer, Jackson and Peterson (2001) who interviewed 707 residents of a community in the USA. The participants were questioned on their self-identified levels of community participation, and perceived intrapersonal and interactional empowerment. The study revealed that the respondents who participated the most in the life of the community scored significantly higher on perceived leadership competency and political efficacy. These most connected in their communities scored significantly higher on perceived competence and political functioning.

Active community participation can lead to a form of social transformation (Maton, 2000). Maton proposed a multidisciplinary and multilevel framework for work towards social transformation, encompassing four foundational goals: capacity-building; group empowerment; relational community-building; and culture-challenge. Intervention approaches related to each goal are presented at the setting, geographic community and societal levels. Maton concluded with three challenges to guide our efforts in community participation: (1) to move social transformation to the centre of our consciousness as a field; (2) to articulate jointly with allied disciplines, organisations, and citizen groups an encompassing, multidisciplinary, and multilevel framework for social transformation; and (3) to do the above with heart, soul, and humility.

Pro-active community participation with an emphasis on empowerment for engagement in social action and social transformation has also been argued by O'Neill (2000). He argued, with others, that the critical thinking empowering process of social cognition can lead to social activism (Cox, 1991; Nash, 2001; O'Neill, 2000). Social cognition, loosely defined as the study of knowledge structures, decision-making, and information processing, might seem to represent an obvious individual-level approach in research (O'Neill, 2000). However, according to O'Neill, it cuts across all three levels of community, interpersonal and individual. He argued that activists tended to be those who believe in their power to affect change and that social conditions are often unjust (individual level); people escalating their demands when a person in authority makes small, grudging concessions (interpersonal level); and collective action occurring when people identify with a group that they perceive as being unfairly treated (community level). Social cognition plays a role in each of these propositions. At the individual level, beliefs are involved; at the interpersonal level, information is transmitted; at the community level, identification processes are invoked. Social cognition, understanding empowerment, can lead to social action which benefits the well-being of both the individual and the community. O'Neill argued that citizen participation in social action is more likely when citizens believe that social conditions are unjust and that they have the power to act effectively (O'Neill, 2000).

Participation in the local community, therefore, requires trusting relationships between community members to work in co-operation towards the well-being of the community. The good will of trusting relationships between community members also extends to the need for co-operation between community members and community organisations, and for various community organisations to work together in partnership for the benefit of the whole community.

Community Partnerships

Community partnerships involve coalitions of community service agency organisations working together for a common purpose. When working in coalitions, organisations tend to use four basic strategies, according to

Himmelman (2001): networking; coordinating; cooperating; and collaborating. This requires trusting relationships between the community organisations for collaborative empowerment

The building of trusting relationships between community partners is invaluable to promote meaningful community participation (Nelson, Prilleltensky, & MacGillivary, 2001; Prilleltensky, 2000). According to Nelson and colleagues (2001), the key values of community partnership include: caring, compassion and community, to foster mutual trust; health, with physical and emotional well-being to pursue self-determination; stakeholder participation, self-determination and power sharing; respect for human diversity, with a right to define own personal and social identity; and social justice, that guides the fair and equitable allocation of resources and burdens in society. Community partnerships, therefore, can take on a social justice approach (Prilleltensky, 2001; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997). Community partnerships with local agencies can advance youth participation.

Youth Participation Benefits

Community participation by youth has been shown to be particularly beneficial both to the well-being of the youth involved and to the local community (Al-Yaman et al., 2003; Checkoway et al., 1995; Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Headley, 2002; Kohler, 1982; Mitchell, 2000; Youniss & Yates, 1999). Participation in the community can operate at many levels, with more or less control by the youth themselves.

Participation Ladder

Participation concepts are used very broadly in the literature and in practice. It can take place at a variety of levels, from manipulation, to decoration or tokenism, to being assigned or consulted and informed, to being shared decision makers with adults.

A *ladder of participation* was first developed by Arnstein (1969) for adults to assess the degree of citizens' power in regard to community participation. She argued that participation can sometimes be only *empty rituals* or tokenism rather than empowered participation. Arnstein began at the bottom level of the ladder

with non-participation, being (1) manipulation and (2) therapy; moves up to degrees of tokenism with (3) informing, (4) consultation, and (5) placation; to the top levels of actual citizen control with (6) partnership and (7) delegated power. Arnstein's ladder of participation graduates from powerless non-participation to a high level of citizen control and empowered participation, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

Degrees of citizen's power
Citizen control
Delegated power
Partnership
Degrees of tokenism
Placation
Consultation
Informing
Non-participation
Therapy
Manipulation

Source: Arnstein (1969)

A *youth participation ladder* by Holdsworth (2003), adapted from Arnstein (1969), adds to the concepts of citizen participation. Holdsworth categorises the perceptions of the young participants from: clients (non-citizen participation); to consumers (token or consultative participation); to minimal citizens (deferred or apprentice participation); and finally maximal citizens (full or deep participation). Like Arnstein's (1969) original participation ladder, Holdsworth's (2003) youth participation ladder also graduates from non-participation or tokenised participation as clients or consumers, up to apprentice and full-participation.

Another youth participation ladder concept was developed by Hart (1997) based on Arnstein (1969). Hart focused on the ways youth are treated by supporting adults. His rungs were: (1) Youth manipulated; (2) Youth as decoration; (3) Youth tokenised; (4) Youth assigned and informed; (5) Youth consulted and informed; (6) Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth; (7) Youth lead and initiate action; and (8) Youth and adults share decision-making. Community participation by youth is most beneficial when it is meaningful participation, with youth having freedom of expression, a voice, an influence, a sense of control, not just tokenism. Table 4 incorporates the concepts of the various participation ladders discussed with examples of youth participation initiatives at each level.

Table 4
Youth Participation Ladders

Arnstein's Ladder ***(with Holdworth's ladder)***		***Hart's Ladder***	**Examples**
Degrees of Youth Participation *(empowered citizen participation)*	**8**	*Youth lead action with adult support*	Youth-led and youth designed community-building and social action projects in school and community with adult support
	7	*Youth lead and initiate action*	Youth initiated community-building and social action campaigns
	6	*Youth share decisions with adult initiators*	Volunteer community service and teacher initiated school community projects
Degrees of Tokenism *(apprentice participation)*	**5**	*Youth informed and consulted*	Youth forums and youth councils
	4	*Youth informed and assigned*	Compulsory community service in schools
	3	*Youth tokenised*	Youth representatives on councils and forums
Non-citizen Participation *(clients / consumers)*	**2**	*Youth as decoration*	Youth activities in school and clubs structured by adults
	1	*Youth manipulated*	Compulsory educational and training programs, casualised work *(McJobs)* and *Work for the Dole* scheme.

Adapted from Arnstein (1969), Holdsworth (2003) and Hart (1997)

Non-Citizen Participation

Non-citizen participation, as clients or consumers, at the bottom of the participation ladder, is how youth are often viewed. Youth are seen as the receivers of services offered by the adults. The younger voices are often not heard, having no say, no influence over what services are offered or how. Yet, they have the potential to contribute as more than just clients and consumers, but as citizens.

It can be argued that non-citizen participation, is better than no participation or disengagement from the local community. Research has shown that any level of positive participation or social connectedness is beneficial to youth compared to no participation or disengagement with often accompanying high-risk behaviours (Al-Yaman et al., 2003; Fuller et al., 2002; Patton et al., 2000; Rutter, 2000).

Youth are encouraged to participate in educational and community programs as positive ways to make some kind of connection with others. However, it could also be argued that youth are more likely to stay engaged in educational and community programs if they feel they are not just clients or consumers being manipulated, but are treated as citizens. Youth who are treated with respect, who have a voice, the freedom to express their views and have an influence on the program, are more likely to become a part of the program and make a positive contribution.

Control by adults, with no influence or input from youth is common in many educational and community-based programs for youth. Adults design and control all aspects of the program, with little or no input from the youth themselves. They may be treated like small children, incapable of making decisions or creatively problem-solving as a group. Adults can believe they have more experience to make appropriate decisions for the group and provide appropriate boundaries for the safety of the group. Yet, youth can be empowered to work as a supportive group within an educational or community-based program, just as they do in the

youth subculture social groups. They appreciate the opportunity for freedom of expression to influence the group to experience an improved sense of community.

Youth activities, both educational and social, are often structured by adults for the youth. Adolescents who are involved in structured activities are more likely to be healthier and feel a sense of social connectedness compared to those you are not. Research has shown that social connectedness is the strongest known antidote to suicide (Berkman & Glass, 2000; Fuller, 1998; Mitchell, 2000; Vinson, 2004). Studies have shown that adolescents who participated in greater numbers of structured activities reported higher school satisfaction (Fullarton, 2002; Gilman, 2001). In a USA study, participation in boys and girls clubs had a positive effect on relationships and life outcomes (Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003). In a study of 139 youth, between 10 and18 years old, the age and participation interaction effects point to the importance of Club participation for nullifying risks and problems associated with increasing age, particularly in relation to academic outcomes. Adolescents who were involved in structured activities were more likely to be socially connected, with better attitude and academic success at school and experiencing less problems socially.

Educational opportunities as clients, are also structured by adults to benefit youth. Students engaged in school programs are less likely to be involved in at-risk behaviours compared to students (and non-students) who are in the process of disengaging or have disengaged from school (Dwyer & Wyn, 2001; Fuller et al., 2002; Mitchell, 2000; Withers & Russell, 2001). Yet, youth in marginalised communities often believe they have limited educational academic pathways and few alternative practical apprenticeships available (Australian Centre for Equity through Education, 2001). Youth can feel like they have few opportunities for further education or skilled work.

Australian educationalists are pursuing ways to attract students to remain engaged in school programs for the benefit of both the students and the community (Australian Centre for Equity through Education, 1996; Strategic Partners, 2001). This can be difficult, especially for students who face barriers academically or socially, such as lack of language skills, or suffering

discrimination for belonging to a culturally or sexually diverse group (Hillier et al., 1998; Victorian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Promotion Officers & Farnan, 2001). Adding to these barriers are difficulties with limited funding in Australian schools in marginalised communities. Students in marginalised communities can have less subject diversity and less technological equipment compared to more middle-class areas with the latest equipment and better funded public and private schools.

However, schools are beginning to address this issue with more co-operation with community (TAFE) colleges to offer greater diversity of subjects and more vocationally oriented, applied learning to maintain student engagement (Australian Centre for Equity through Education, 1996). Some Australian schools are beginning to undertake community-based programs to further engage their students and provide community participation benefits (Kohler, 1982; Patton et al., 2000).

Work opportunities for marginalised youth can be limited to casual work, where they again open to manipulation, with few rights, unionism discouraged and little job security that respected citizens could expect to be given (Ritzer, 2002). Poor work opportunities for some marginalised youth can lead to further manipulation as clients of the bureaucratic system. Those who cannot find work can be further manipulated in Australia through the *Work for the Dole* scheme for the unemployed (University of NSW Centre for Applied Economic Research, 2003). Marginalised youth are open to being manipulated in the marketplace, with few rights and being left to feel like non-citizens, with no voice, who are not fully participating in the community.

Participation Principles

Youth have the potential to be more than non-citizen participants, more than being treated are only clients and consumers. Given opportunities they have the potential to more fully participate as citizens in the community. Youth do have ideas on what can be done to improve the community, if society is prepared to listen.

Participation principles for youth to be treated as citizens, have been developed by Gerard de Kort of UNESCO (de Kort, 1999). These participation principles include: (1) maximised control by youth (enabling ownership and influence); (2) benefit to youth (providing tangible outcomes); (3) recognising and respecting the contribution of all (providing for access, equity, inclusiveness and diversity); and (4) involving real challenges and development (being of recognised value, reflective and responsive to needs). These principles extol the value of recognising and respecting the contribution youth can make given challenging opportunities for freedom of expression.

Youth participation requires an informal open approach according to Kahane and Rapoport (1997). Their participation requires an openness to be flexible, to encourage engagement and freedom of expression. This open style of working with youth with much freedom of choice has been described as a *code of informality* (Kahane & Rapoport, 1997). This code of informality is based on the assumptions that: (a) youth seek authentic meaning to their lives, that is, maximum self-expression by individuals and groups; (b) it is difficult to establish meaning in contemporary society, where change is so rapid; (c) certain social frameworks, such as community-based groups, encourage the creation of meaning by offering opportunities to interpret and construct experience; and (d) there are infinite ways of interpreting experience, but most individuals will choose more or less rationally (from their point of view) those interpretations that have the highest degree of authentic meaning for them.

According to Kahane and Rapoport (1997), participants need to feel that they can freely express themselves to contribute to a meaningful process for a meaningful outcome. Table 5 sets out the components of code of informality of Kahane and Rapoport, with an added column showing how the components of the code have been utilised in the current research.

Table 5
Components of the Code of Informality

Dimension	Definition	Impact	SAY Project application
Voluntarism	A relatively constraint-free pattern of choice (of goals, means, affiliations) in which the cost of changing one's mind is minimal.	Developed a deep commitment to what has been elected and enhances the bargaining power of youth vis-a-vis adults.	*Participants chose to be involved with the group to do community projects of their choice and developed a strong commitment to the venture*
Multiplexity	A wide spectrum of activities that are more or less equivalent in value.	Enabled the participants with different abilities to optimise their potential thus fostering a positive self-image, multi-track personal mobility, and organic solidarity based on mutual dependence.	*Participant groups designed own community activities based on own social identity and concerns for the local community and worked as a supportive peer group to reach their goals*
Symmetry	A balanced reciprocal relationship based on equivalence of resources and mutual coordination of principles and expectations, in which no party can impose his or her rules on another.	Promoted the acceptance of universal values, such as "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you."	*Project choices and planning decisions were made mutually as a group with agreed mission statements and goals, with each person acting as part of the supportive team effort*
Dualism	The simultaneous existence of different orientations, such as ascription and achievement, competition and cooperation.	Offered the possibility of experimentation with contradictory patterns of behaviour.	*Communal projects needed high levels of co-operation within the group with some confrontational experiences of problem-solving teamwork in the process*
Moratorium	A temporary delay of duties and decisions that allows for trial and error within wide institutional boundaries.	Permitted experimentation with a wide variety of roles and assignments and an examination of different "truths."	*Participants initiate, plan, implement and reflect on their projects in experimental ways that might be successful*
Modularity	The eclectic construction of activity sets according to changing interests and circumstances.	Developed entrepreneurship and the ability to improvise and take advantage of situational opportunities.	*Participants become entrepreneurial in designing and implementing their own projects based on their social and cultural identity explorations*
Expressive Instrument-alism	A combination of activities that are performed both for their own sake and as a means of achieving future goals.	Enhanced the attraction and influences of activities and promotes the ability to postpone gratification.	*Participants develop new skills for their own personal benefit as well as that of the group and the local community*
Pragmatic Symbolism	The attribution of symbolic significance to deeds and/or conversion of symbols into deeds.	Extended the meaning of symbols and behaviour and makes them objects of identification.	*Participants consider own interests and concerns for the community to transform these into actions for the community*

Adapted from Kahane & Rapoport (1997)

Meaningful participation with freedom of expression and freedom to pursue their own identity and have a voice as active citizens is what youth need to explore. By using the concepts of this code of informality (Kahane & Rapoport, 1997) for participants to freely participate in meaningful ways, where they decide their own directions and goals, is a way to provide full participation.

However, for participants to feel free to express themselves and fully participate they need to have spaces where they feel safe and trusted. Trusting environments created by the neighbourhood community encourage greater participation. Trusting environments, with positive attitudes towards youth from adults in the local community, can lead to youth feeling more social connectedness, and so more likely to participate in the life of the community.

Zeldin and Topitzes (2002) believed that adults have become increasingly isolated from adolescents in their communities, and this condition contributes to negative stereotypes about teenagers. Their research on neighbourhood experiences, community connections, and positive beliefs about adolescents among urban adults and youth is revealing. Integrating research and practice-based knowledge, a theoretical model was constructed to predict positive beliefs about adolescents. This was specifically the extent to which adults and adolescents believe that teenagers are motivated and competent to act on behalf of their neighbourhoods.

The model includes two pathways to positive beliefs about adolescents (Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002). It was hypothesised that the experience of volunteering, and residing in a neighbourhood that is perceived as safe and having adequate resources, would be associated with positive beliefs about adolescents. It was further predicted that community connectedness, as assessed by an individual's sense of community and perceived norm of adult caring, would mediate these associations. The hypotheses were tested through analysis of phone interviews with adults and adolescents from a large north-eastern city in the USA. The model received consistent, albeit not complete, support between both samples. Results indicate that an understanding of beliefs about teenagers lies, in significant part, in the neighbourhood experiences of adults and adolescents and

in their sense of connectedness with the places in which they live (Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002). The issue of perceived trust and respect between adults and youth was shown to be important.

Trusting spaces in safe environments created by youth workers, where participants are free to express themselves, is essential to experience meaningful participation. Leadership that allows youth to feel safe to freely express themselves and have an influence is needed for youth to meaningfully participate in social programs. According to the practical experiences of a disadvantaged urban neighbourhood program in USA (McLaughlin et al., 1994), the personal attributes of a successful or *wizard* youth leader are: to see genuine potential in their youth (not pathology); to focus on youth, putting youth at the centre of programs; to have a belief in the leader's own abilities to make a difference; to feel they are giving back something they owe to a community or society; and are unyieldingly authentic, creating programs to suit the youth, where youth feel they are pursuing interests and goals they themselves have selected. Youth need to feel they have some control, that they have a voice, an influence on what will happen and be able to make a meaningful contribution.

Youth need to feel safe, valued and trusted by the social organisations in which they participate in order to freely express themselves to experience meaningful participation. McLaughlin, Irby and Langman (1994) suggested that successful inner-city youth organisations need to: offer safety, so that personal safety is assured; listen to youth, so that direction is taken from the needs that the youth themselves express; encourage genuine and active contribution of the participants in building the organisation; teach responsibility that affords a sense of ownership; provide various opportunities to learn relevant skills to glimpse alternatives to the hopelessness of the inner-city; provide real responsibilities and real work, resulting in learning of value to the broader society and have clear significance to the local community; have clear rules and discipline to encourage self-discipline, as youth want the security and predictability that accompany clear rules and consistent discipline; and focus on the future, to encourage youth to develop real as well as educational skills (McLaughlin et al., 1994). Youth need to feel they are safe, respected, have an influence and have real opportunities to

experience real work with real skills to improve their personal well-being and future opportunities.

Educationalists are also realising that if students are given a choice of what they can do and have a voice in what they actively participate in, then they are more like to continue in education rather than disengage from school (Fullarton, 2002; Glover et al., 1998; Hedin & Eisikovits, 1982; Kohler, 1982; Mitchell, 2000; Patton, Bond, & Butler, 2003). Students who feel they can freely express their views and influence the decisions about what they can do at school are more likely to stay in school than if they feel it is too rigid and adult controlled.

Students who have the opportunity to express themselves, to affirm their social identity in positive and creative ways, are also more likely to continue in school and feel a positive sense of community and well-being (Curriculum Corporation, 2002; Schwab, 1997; Yassa, 1999). Creative outlets are often in the form of cultural arts projects. Some Australian schools are now introducing opportunities for student involvement in community projects, to improve their local communities. Projects can involve community-building projects to positively improve the local community, and range from cultural celebrations with the cultural arts and food to environmental issues to public space improvement issues.

Participation Outcomes

Participation outcomes can include increases in sense of community, and decreases in feelings of loneliness, according to research by Pretty (2002). The act of participating in the community means that one is connecting with others, to experience a sense of community, rather than being isolated and feeling alienated and alone.

Participation outcomes that provide positive benefits require much experience and negotiation (Stacey et al., 2003). The positive benefits of participation can include: valuing outcomes and opportunities; accountability; a major commitment in time and energy required by both the youth workers and participants; identity and belonging, including self-esteem, motivation, a range of friendships; and a sense of belonging in the wider community.

Research by Wierenga, Wood, Trenbath, Kelly, Vidakovic (2003) showed that participation outcomes, where youth take on meaningful decision-making roles, have three key elements: (1) meaning – doing something that has a bigger purpose and therefore that "I believe in"; (2) control – making decisions, being heard and thus also having the skills to see the task through and do it well; and (3) connectedness – working with others and being part of something bigger. Youth involved in meaningful participation can benefit by the sense of control it provides and the sense of community connectedness.

Youth Participation Opportunities

Youth Forums

Youth participation can become tokenistic. Tokenistic participation, in the guise of consultation, can happen when youth are selected to be representatives on school or government councils. These councils or other policy bodies want to give the impression that they are listening to the voice of younger consumers, yet participants often have little or no power in a committee dominated and controlled by adults (Holdsworth, 2003). This tokenism can become frustrating and demoralising, quashing the enthusiastic visions of the younger generation within the traditionally structured framework of adult bureaucracy.

Participation in youth forums can be meaningful if it is not just tokenistic (Foundation for Young Australians, 2001). The concept of youth forums can be beneficial to encourage critical thinking in socio-political issues, and for youth to have a voice as citizens in the community. Programs are being developed within schools and in the community for youth to learn the principles involved in socio-political thinking and addressing issues in their communities. For example, in the USA, a Foundation for Individual Responsibility and Social Trust (FIRST) program has been developed for youth to discuss civic participation issues (Keiser, 2000). The FIRST program, as a non-partisan, non-profit organisation, brings youth together to talk in deliberative discussions about issues that are important to them and showing them that they can make a bigger impact if they become involved politically.

Youth forums in Australia, and indeed many other countries, operate in both school based and community-based programs to allow youth to have their say and make meaningful contributions to their own local communities (Burgess, 2000; Foundation for Young Australians, 2001). In 1999, CIVICUS, the global alliance for citizen action, and the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) brought together a group of organisations and individuals to create a group called Partners for Youth Participation (PYP) as a forum for advocacy and action to engage youth in civil society and social change (Headley, 2002). Youth forums can operate on a local and a global level for youth to participate in social change.

Community Service

Involvement in community service can provide another active citizen participation role for youth, where they are more than non-citizen clients or consumers. Community service can provide an opportunity for more meaningful participation within the local community (Checkoway et al., 1995; Stoneman, 2002). A USA based survey of local neighbourhood community service initiatives, based on interviews with 50 community educators committed to community empowerment, found that successful community empowerment programs require community ownership, and community ownership requires leadership and control by the target population (Eisen, 1994).

Participants can make connections with local service providers and feel like they can make a meaningful contribution to the local neighbourhood. Participants involved in active citizenship programs can learn teamwork, leadership and communication skills in a practical service environment. These practical skills can benefit them in their personal identity development, their social relationship negotiations, and learning to problem-solve in the workplace. Participants can gain enhanced skills to benefit them in future educational and career opportunities (Berman, 1999; Blum, 1998; Cheadle, Wagner, Walls, & Diehr, 2001; Checkoway et al., 1995; Hartley et al., 1997; Stoneman, 2002).

Community service experiences can promote personal and sociol and moral development, according to the theoretical perspective presented by Youniss and Yates (Yates & Youniss, 1996; Youniss et al., 2002; Youniss et al., 1997).

Building on the work of Erikson (1963), they suggested that adolescents struggled to understand themselves in relation to society. In the process of searching for an identity, adolescents attempted to identify with values and ideologies that transcended the immediate concerns of self and instead have historical continuity. Community service offers an opportunity for adolescents to form an identity with links to mature social membership (Leming, 2001). Studies of youth service and activism, have suggested that these activities can lead to the establishment of expanded identities of political participation and social responsibility (Harre, 2003; Youniss & Yates, 1999).

Community service programs need to be contextualised for adolescents. Community service program proponents often claim that such programs succeed in educating youth for democratic citizenship where traditional civics instruction falls short. Yet, according to Riedel (2002), it is not clear that all service programs envision such citizenship as linked to political engagement and participation. Riedel hypothesised that only service programs that frame service within a wide political context and offer opportunities for public action increase political engagement as measured by feelings of civic obligation.

Community service can sometimes be made compulsory, where youth are informed and assigned to community work. Adolescent volunteering for community service, either voluntary or required by schools, is widespread in the USA (Brown, 1999; Nelson, Amio, Prilleltensky, & Nickels, 2000; Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999). The concept of compulsory community service has also been discussed in Australia, with the concept of a national youth civic service scheme to promote active citizenship (Hartley et al., 1997).

Compulsory community service however, can mean that the participants have no freedom of expression and no influence. They may feel they have not been given a choice of whether to participate or not, let alone a choice of tasks or designing their own task or project, and are arguably disempowered.

Community service for so called *unskilled* youthful participants, compulsory or voluntary, can sometimes involve mundane, unskilled, boring tasks, such as stuffing envelopes or answering phones or filing, with no interesting project work

or contact with other people. Tasks could involve helping someone else do their work as a kind of administrative assistant, which can be a good learning experience, but hardly innovative and interesting to capture the imagination and enthusiasm of volunteers or assigned workers. Much community service work for volunteers or assigned workers can leave little room for creativity with the manager taking full control (Inspire Foundation, 2002). Participants can have little or no space for their own voice to be heard or to have their own visions acted upon. This could leave participants feeling powerless, rather than being empowered, as would be hoped for with community service involvement. However, if youth are given some freedom of choice and some chance to have a voice, to affirm their social identity, in their community service activities, then they are more likely to feel empowered and thus benefit from the more meaningful participation (Harre, 2004).

School-based community service programs that impact on the socio-political development of students have been studied. In one case, 476 high school students were assessed on the dependent variables before and after experiencing one of three conditions: community service with an ethical reasoning component; community service with reflection, but without an ethical reasoning component; and no community service (control). After one semester, it was found that students in the first cohort (ethical decision making curriculum integrated into the community service program) made greater advances on all three dimensions of identity formation when compared with students in the other two cohorts. They became more systematic in their ethical reasoning and more likely to consider situations and issues from an ethical point of view (Leming, 2001).

School-based community service programs can be innovative and tailored to the needs of both the youth and the local community. Examples of innovative school-based community service in the USA are the *Carry-Out-Caravan II* and the *Illinois Youth on Campus Service Learning Project* (Zoerink, Magafas, & Pawelko, 1997). These projects were developed and implemented to foster personal and social growth in at-risk youth. The purpose was to use a service-learning approach to facilitate the transition of at-risk adolescents into responsible social roles. On the basis of the guidelines for initiating service-learning

experiences, junior and senior high school students provided grocery shopping and delivery, house and garage painting, yard and garden maintenance, and social and recreation program services to older persons (Zoerink et al., 1997). The students were able to participate in providing local community services to older local community members in need of practical assistance. The students were personally involved in direct community care services of real benefit to other community members who were no longer as young and able bodied as they were. Students could experience the tangible benefits received by others for their work and hopefully experience personal benefits of being able to make a positive contribution resulting in an improved sense of community.

The level of meaningful participation by students in school-based community service programs can vary extensively (Australian Centre for Equity through Education, 1996). School-based community participation can be led by teachers with varied control being given to the students (Holdsworth, 2004). However, many of these school-based examples of empowering students to be involved their local communities have been shown to be of benefit (Saunders, 1998). One study with adolescent school students using an empowerment model showed that adolescents who have participated in more civic and voluntary activities in their school and community have a better understanding, attitudes, and ability to effectively participate in their school (Saunders, 1998).

Innovative school-based community programs in Australia, include: ruMAD (are you making a difference) by the Education Foundation (Education Foundation, 2003); Kids Who Make a Difference (Kids Who Make A Difference Foundation, 2001); Mindmatters (Curriculum Corporation, 2002); Creating Conversations (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002a); and Working Community Program (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002b).

Community-based youth participation projects are also being encouraged to help improve the well-being of marginalised youth. For example, the Australian government has shown concern for the mental health of youth, and particularly the high rates of suicide and suicide attempts of youth, leading to the National

Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2000). This, in turn, has led to many specific government funded projects to support youth becoming involved in their communities and promoting their resilience and well-being, including the Foundation for Young Australians (Foundation for Young Australians, 2001). The Australian government has also provided funding for community initiatives to support the well-being of youth and their families through their Stronger Families and Communities Initiatives (Department of Family and Community Services, 2002).

Community-based programs for Aboriginal youth have also been explored in parts of Australia. For example, a youth project called *Which Way You Mob!* (Aboriginal Coordinating Council, 2003) supports youth participating in social action. The Which Way Project provides support for community youth initiatives in the areas of life promotion and suicide prevention, support for family groups, support and practical help to address episodes of youth crime, youth suicide, and self-harm in a community, support to youth (and youth groups) to help them implement their own strategies to improve their quality of life, and assistance with action planning in communities.

Participation in community-based programs for pathways back to education with disengaged youth have also been explored. A recent initiative supporting youth in the community, MYLO, Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (Bond, 2003), involves a university partnership with local community services to inspire homeless youth to reconnect with the concept of some kind of further education. It provided a weekly drop-in centre with youth participating in whatever way they wished to start thinking about educational opportunities. Some decided to be involved by developing their own newsletter.

Community social service volunteer programs to encourage youth participation are also being explored by entrepreneurial community organisations. For example, the Australian based Inspire Foundation has an *ActNow* project (2002) with a mission to inspire youth to get involved in community work. Their objectives are: to work with voluntary organisations to create interesting and appropriate volunteering opportunities for youth; to mobilise and assist youth to

volunteer in the local community; to capture and share positive images of youth taking action in their communities; to foster and promote citizenship and participation in young professionals working in the local community; and to increase community awareness of the value of the internet in community-building and social services delivery.

The ActNow project to access volunteering opportunities, uses a unique process that combines community mobilisation and participation with online services. An evaluation of the project revealed that youth like the *one-stop-shop* aspect of the Inspire Foundation website (Inspire Foundation, 2002). It was a fast and easy way for them to explore a diversity of positions in an anonymous environment. ActNow enables youth to gain an understanding about organisations and their volunteer needs in one place, with the complication of having to working out what agencies to contact. The site also inspires those curious about volunteering by stories, role modelling and detailed job descriptions. Interestingly, some youth had the impression that community organisations did not need volunteers as the only advertising and promotions they see are about fundraising. ActNow showed that there are needs in the community for people to help out and volunteer (Inspire Foundation, 2002). However, these volunteer community service programs tend to attract middle-class young professionals and university students, rather than disadvantaged younger students and non-professionals (Inspire Foundation, 2002).

Youth Social Action

Social action initiated and led by youth, is happening on a global scale. Youth around the world have been involved in social action, especially in times of crisis. Youth-led civic organising counters an often general community perception of apathy to civic engagement (Checkoway et al., 1995; Van Benschoten, 2000; Wohl, 2000). For example, militant youth orchestrated the political demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in China where student protestors viewed themselves as acting as "the conscience of the nation" (Calhoun, 1991, p. 113). Another example is the international student demonstrations in Europe in the late 1960s where the role of youth as political agents was central in conflict and

change. The direct impact of their collective action was none more apparent than in the events in Eastern Europe during the period from 1989 to 1991. The informal organisation of young students had a major influence during the democratic revolutions in many of the re-established states in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Region (Kovachava & Wallace, 1994). More recently, youth in Europe and Australia defied their schools as they walked out of classes to participate in mass demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq (The Australian, 2003).

Youth social action using the internet is also becoming a pro-active way for youth to participate in community issues (Bessant, 2000; Francisco, Fawcett, Schultz, & Berkowitz, 2001). Youth with access to the internet find that it provides them access to other youth both locally and globally, with no time or place barriers (Bessant, 2000; Inspire Foundation, 2002; Youthgas & Lenn, 2003). An internet site based in Australia, called YouthGAS, encourages and actively promotes the sharing of information and awareness for, by and with young Australians (Youthgas & Lenn, 2003). The site provides both young Australians and the people that work with and for them a vast range of links to local, state, territory, national and international resources, information and opportunities for active community involvement and volunteering (Youthgas & Lenn, 2003). Youth actively use the internet in many and various participatory ways, from informal chat rooms to internet youth organisations (Bessant, 2000; Francisco et al., 2001; Inspire Foundation, 2002). They report that they like using the internet as a means of participation. The Inspire Foundation has found that youth report liking the internet because: it is accessible 24 hours a day; anonymous; provides easy access to services and information; and is interactive and fun (Inspire Foundation, 2002). Youth can now participate in community organisations through many different means including the global internet.

Youth Co-operative Inquirers

Youth can become participants in a co-operative inquiry approach, actively working together to explore ways to address social change using an action research approach. According to Heron (1996), co-operative inquiry is based on people examining their own experiences and action carefully in collaboration with

people who share similar concerns and interests. Participants involved in co-operative inquiry become *co-researchers* in the process by doing the thinking that generates, manages and draws conclusions from the research, and *co-subjects* involved in the experience and action that is the focus of the inquiry. The participants move through several cycles of reflection and action, taking account of a range of validity procedures in the process (Heron & Reason, 2001).

Participants involved in co-operative inquiry are provided with opportunities for freedom of expression to creatively design their own applied research projects. The co-operative inquiry process with youth participants, has been used in various educational and community settings by teachers, youth workers and researchers around the world (Atweh et al., 1998; Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Checkoway, 1998; Matysik, 1999; Schwab, 1997).

Student participants can do social problem-solving in creative ways using an action research approach if supported by more progressive educators. According to Heron and Reason (2001), trust-building is crucial in the forming of inquiry skills and validity processes, which he identified as: (a) being present and open; (b) bracketing and reframing; (c) radical practice and congruence; (d) non-attachment and meta-intentionality; and (e) emotional competence. Teachers prepared for innovative work, use this action research approach with students to develop community-building and social action projects (Lewis, 1998; Rapoport, 1987). Student participants learn basic communication, teamwork and leadership skills, gaining confidence and a sense of control, as they creatively plan and implement their own applied action research projects (Atweh et al., 1998; Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Christopher et al., 2001; Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002a).

Active participants can push the boundaries and create spaces to engage in processes that position them as agents of inquiry and as "experts" about their own lives, (McIntyre, 2000). McIntyre described an action research project with students in a school involving the use of community photography. She argued that by listening to teenage students' stories, by giving them the opportunity to speak about their lives, and by collaborating with them in designing plans of action to

address their concerns, we can more effectively frame research questions and teaching pedagogies around their understandings of violence and urban life (McIntyre, 2000). By examining their lives using action research, youth are provided with opportunities to take deliberate action to enhance community well-being and their own sense of community.

Participants can explore issues of concern to them in community settings. Safe spaces for urban youth are being explored through policy debate with youth (Meucci & Redmon, 1997). Meucci and Redmon found that adolescents are interested in the multi-generational effects of toxic pollution and in preserving public spaces and youth programs for safety's sake. Participants offered a fresh analysis on the causes of youth crime that do not further substantiate community policing, youth curfews, and tougher sentencing as the only solutions, and provide compelling reasons for bringing policy analysts together with youth and community constituencies to define and explore policy solutions from the perspective of youth (Meucci & Redmon, 1997).

Active participants in community settings are also exploring urban planning issues from their perspective (Meucci & Schwab, 1998; Schwab, 1997). With help from adult "coordinators", they explored their own identities in relation to their issues, created media representations of their findings, and developed strategies for advocacy and change (Schwab, 1997). Participation in environmental planning and public health programs by youth can become a critical tool in their successful development and implementation. The idea that children and adolescents are self-determining social actors has become increasingly accepted since the 1970s. William Corsaro, in his book *Sociology of Childhood*, discussed the concept that children (and youth) are not simply internalising their particular society and culture, but are actively contributing to cultural production and change (Corsaro, 2005, p.18). Children and adolescents have been involved in urban planning and environmental policies throughout the world (Alparone & Rissotto, 2001; McLaughlin et al., 1994).

Youth living on the street are also being engaged as active participants in various places around the world. In Brazil, youth living in the streets were

actively involved in the process of writing the constitution of Brazil, according to an interview with Roger Hart (Hart & Schwab, 1997). Hart observed that youth living on the streets of Brazil faced many challenges and become critical thinkers ready for co-operative inquiry with a supportive organisation. Other examples of work with street youth, to address various social issues, including drug issues, have sometimes worked with these youth to interview other street youth (Kirsch, Andrade, Osterling, & Sherwood-Fabre, 1995; Whitmore & McKee, 2001).

Youth participants can use creative arts in educational and community settings to express their community concerns and envision how they would like to be treated in the community. Actively exploring social issues affecting the lives of young women using creative arts in school and community settings in USA, was used by Mulvey and Mandel (2003). They used theatre and writing workshops to facilitate young women's monologues on the theme of: *"What would my community look like when violence against women and girls no longer existed?"* These young women also have designed banners with a theme of: *"These hands would never hurt women and these hands support gender equality"*.

Participants using the creative arts provided multiple opportunities and forms of engagement for a shared commitment to challenging inequality and violence through hearing the voice to unheard stories and perspectives, including our own, to experience a sense of community (Mulvey & Mandel, 2003). Involving the young women as participants to explore their own social issues affecting their lives provided the opportunity for them to have a voice, to gain confidence and feel more in control as they develop improved narratives, thus, to improve their well-being and their sense of community.

Using community theatre to explore personal and community concerns is becoming popular with youth participants. The use of community theatre for participants (and at times the audience too) to explore community issues is based on the concept of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* developed by Augusto Boal (Boal, 1979; Loots, 1997). Boal spoke of community theatre as being a political activity, a form of protest against oppression, creating venues for solidarity and for potential social change. Community theatre involves a participatory process of

analysis and improvisation, followed by performance and further analysis. According to Etherton (quoted in Prentki, 2003), "it is a collective remaking of the drama in order to reflect a deeper awareness of the inter-relatedness of social, economic and political forces in people's lives." (Prentki, 2003, p. 41). A community theatre approach to engaging youth as active participants is an empowering way to explore their own interests and community concerns, thereby improving their well-being and sense of community.

Youth participation in community theatre has also been explored with youth living on the streets. For example, participants living on the streets in Latin America have explored their environmental concerns about toxic chemicals in the local community. They used community theatre as a vehicle to showcase the results of their action research (Latina, 1997). They were visibly exploring local environmental concerns, rather than the street youth themselves being discussed as the public enemy (Latina, 1997).

Community theatre has also been used with youth to produce videos of their explorations of their community. For example, Kolaps, a program facilitated by the Global Action Project (GAP), is an exchange program that trains youth around the world to produce "videoletters" on issues that concern them (Saunders, 1997). GAP, a New York-based program of Global Kids, encourages teenagers to become "positive role models and contribute to community development and international understanding." Although such "adult" ideals might drive the organisations sponsoring youth media projects, videos such as Kolaps ultimately express the concerns and interests of the youth who create them. Once completed, the "videoletters" are used for peer education and community action and are distributed to schools, universities, museums, film festivals, conferences, and television broadcasters (Saunders, 1997).

Refugees have also used videos as a medium to explore their hopes for the future. Videos were produced by refugee youth in Bosnia for their voices to be heard (Saunders, 1997). Teenagers living in a Croatian refugee camp told their stories, shared their observations about the world, and expressed their hopes for the future. The video shows the world through the eyes of the young video-

graphers. They selected the images and the music. Saunders argued that these youth were survivors, unafraid to ask tough questions of themselves and of those they interview. They asked people on the street what they think of the war, as well as those who have lost their homes because of it. They often exhibited a depth of concern and understanding that adults were too preoccupied, or afraid, to explore (Saunders, 1997). Youth participants also explored racism using video as a medium. A video called Youth on Racism, is an exploration by four teenagers from diverse social, economic, and ethnic groups of how racism affects their communities (Saunders, 1997).

Youth have also been involved as active participants in youth-focused research in partnership with youth workers and researchers (Alder & Sandor, 1990; DeVitis, Johns, & Simpson, 1998; Kohler, 1982; Van Moorst, 1983; Yates & Youniss, 1999). Youth can be empowered to challenge the stereotypes, by personally experiencing their own skills and worth, as well as exhibit these to the general public, during the research process and in the presentation of their work.

Co-operative Inquiry Benefits

Creating community projects with youth as co-operative inquirers, is an ideal way to affirm participants' identity explorations and connect them to the local community. Hart argued that "identity is essentially a social concept, one that feminist psychological theorists link to political struggle, and children need to be involved in community in order to better develop self-concept, autonomy, social competence, social responsibility, community identity, and political self-determination" (Hart, 1997).

Action research with youth involves participants becoming creative co-operative inquirers. In this research participants become co-operative inquires as they take an appreciative approach to action research as the methodological framework described in the next chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY APPROACH TO ACTION RESEARCH

This action research with youth participants took a novel approach of appreciative inquiry, adapted from organisational psychology, to facilitate participants to work co-operatively to understand community issues, imagine what can be and create community projects of their own (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999).

Action Research

Community-based action research is a reemerging tradition that links processes of inquiry to the lives of people in their day-to-day experiences (Stringer, 1999). Action research is a democratic process with participants, where the concern is to develop practical knowing in the pursuit of social improvement, grounded in a participatory worldview (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in co-operation with others, in the pursuit of solutions to issues of pressing concern to people. Action research is about identifying the problem and gathering the appropriate data, quantitative or qualitative, to best address the issue for possible social change. Reason and Bradbury argued that "action research is only possible with, for and by persons and communities, ideally involving all stakeholders that informs the research, and in the action which is its focus" (2001, p.2).

Action research can take many forms depending on the issue to be addressed and what approaches are considered appropriate to gather relevant data and work towards some form of social transformation. The action researcher embarks on cycles of data collection, data analyses, and reflecting upon conclusions to guide them towards change and improvement in a particular area of concern (Baldry & Vinson, 1991; Brophy, 2001; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Fals Borda, 2001; McTaggart, 1997; Patton, 2002; Selener, 1997; Stringer, 1999; Wadsworth, 1997).

The analysis of data within an action research, or a critical theoretical research approach, is reflective, rather than structural or interpretive (Gall, Borg,

& Gall, 2005). Gall et al., argued that reflective analysis is largely subjective in nature and that critical researchers do not view data as something which contains facts that need to be uncovered. Rather the data is constructed during research, and in reflection is self-validating because it grasps and reflects reality of the participants' life experience.

This action research concept of participants planning and implementing their own projects, can be taken to the next level of *participatory action research* where the participants are also involved in the initial development and design of the research question, the research approach and also in the final evaluation and writing up of the research findings, and usually with the aim of changing practices and social structures towards social transformation (McTaggart, 1997). However, the more comprehensive Participatory Action Research approach, with participants involved in the interpretation of their experiences and evaluations, needs considerably far more time and commitment by all the research partners and participants than is usually possible in the restricted timeframe of small community projects, including the present research.

Another form of research with participants is called *participatory research,* which emerged from work with oppressed peoples in the Third World, which combines social investigation, education and action in defining and solving a problem, where participatory researchers analyze problems in terms of community and social structures and therefore often work against the system (Brown & Tandon, 1983). This is in contrast to action research which often works with clients or community participants within the system, and contributes to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problem and to the goals of social science by collaboration within an ethical framework. Action research emphasizes the participants being involved in individual, interpersonal and group levels of analysis in problem solving (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Greenwood & Levin, 1998).

This current research model was based on action research principles, using appreciative inquiry techniques for participants to become co-operative inquires.

Action Research and Co-operative Inquiry

Action research that engages participants actively in a co-operative inquiry approach, where research is *with* rather than *on* people (Duckett & Fryer, 1998; Heron & Reason, 2001; Kemmis, 2001; Stoll, 2002). Kurt Lewin, who is regarded as a pioneer of action based research, began by doing experiments with participants, albeit in the field rather than the laboratory, to test theory in such a way that the results of the experiment can be fed directly back into the theory (Lewin, 1946). Arguably this began the concept of action research with people in natural settings, rather than research on or about them in clinical settings. Habermas emphasised the centrality of participants' active engagement in his dictum of "in a process of enlightenment there can be only participants" (Habermas, 1974, p. 40). That is, others cannot do the enlightening for participants. In the end, they are or are not enlightened in their own terms (Kemmis, 2001).

In action research that engages the participants as co-operative inquirers in the action research cycles, the participants themselves take an active role in developing the research methodology and working with the researcher in planning, implementing and evaluating the research (Heron, 1996). "Participatory research is a process through which members of an oppressed group or community identify a problem, collect and analyse information, and act upon the problem in order to find solutions and to promote social and political transformation" (Selener, 1997, p.12). A major goal of participatory research is to solve practical problems in a community, and create a shift in the balance of power in favour of marginalised groups in society (Brophy, 2001; Fals Borda, 2001; Heron, 1996; Selener, 1997; Stringer, 1999; Wadsworth, 1997).

Action research involves a process with cycles of planning, implementing and evaluating (Wadsworth, 1997). These reflective cycles can be carried out by the participants themselves throughout the research process, or within the action phase of the research, as in this research. Participants learn by experience how to exploring ways to problem-solve themselves. Through being involved in the action research process participants are empowering themselves with critical

thinking and reflective action skills to become problem-solvers (Checkoway et al., 1995; Cornell University Empowerment Group, 1989; Fals Borda, 2001; Kieffer, 1982; Nelson, Ochocka, Griffin, & Lord, 1998; Zimmerman, 2000).

In this particular research, the researcher and other adults assisting (steering committee, teachers, youth workers), took the lead in planning and initiating the first phases of the research, and set the aims and the objectives of the research. The youth participants became involved in the action phase of the research, becoming co-inquirers, initiating, planning and undertaking their own community projects. So the research focus was initiated by adults, but the actual community action projects were youth-led, designing their own cycles of planning, action and reflection.

Potential problems can arise using action research with youth, as they can choose to disengage or lack sufficient organisational and project management skills for the project to be successful with the timeframe provided. This potentially could be disheartening for those involved. However, given that the projects are undertaken in groups, members of the group can support and encourage each other when they notice a lack of interest or skills by others in the group. Also, tensions can arise within the group when there are clashes of ideas or concerns with successful completion. Adults and more confident group members can assist in offering support to participants who become concerned or ask for some direction. The very nature of action research with project planning, acting and reflecting together as a group, can help to create a supportive environment to explore ways of problem solving to undertake community projects successfully.

The aim of the present research was to explore ways for youth participants to be empowered to plan, implement and reflect of their own community action projects, within the action phase of the research. A phenomenological analysis of the participants' subjective experience in self-reported evaluations of the planning, action and reflection cycles was completed.

Community Partnerships for Action Research

In order to begin this research, community partnerships between the university and local community agencies needed to be formed. The primary

partner for this research involved a respected local community agency, which in turn had valuable partnerships with other community agencies and local community members. The Victoria University *Wellness Promotion Unit* had developed a strong partnership with *Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service,* a prime provider of youth services in the City of Brimbank, in the disadvantaged north-western suburbs of Melbourne. Consultative processes were used with community partners to create a plan of work with participant groups in the local area. With university colleagues, I undertook the community consultation process with the partner agency, and through the agency became involved with the networks of community and youth workers.

The partnership with Good Shepherd began before this particular research, with an earlier Community Wellness Project. It attempted to understand ideas of collective well-being using culturally diverse focus groups of community members and community agency staff. The earlier project reinforced the perceived need for the promotion of community participation towards improving collective well-being in this community (Totikidis & Robertson, 2004).

Good Shepherd contributed to the current project's community consultation process by facilitating a research steering committee. The committee comprised key management and policy workers of the partner organisation, along with community psychology and social work university representation. The group met monthly for the first two years of the research, providing me with both academic and practical community development expertise and networks of support.

Good Shepherd had established a strong network of youth workers in City of Brimbank who regularly met and worked together. I had been involved in this central youth network, and so found ready access for the community consultation process. The objectives of the project were presented to the local youth workers and the three participation groups for the project emerged from consulting these local network contacts.

In choosing youth participants in socially disadvantaged communities to undertake community projects, I felt it was necessary for the youth to already be part of established youth groups in school or community settings, and have a

youth worker or teacher that they already trusted with whom to work. Research has shown that youth need to be emotionally safe in their environments in order to build trusting relationships and work co-operatively together (McLaughlin et al., 1994; Zeldin, 2002).

Youth worker partners, including teachers and community youth workers, involved with each of the three participant groups for this current research, had already built trusting relationships with the participants in each of their respective groups. The youth workers had already created an emotionally safe environment for participants where they felt able to freely express themselves to experience a sense of community within the group. These trusting relationships, were invaluable in working with these youth groups for them to benefit from participation in the research.

Youth Participation

This research involves exploring ways for youth to positively participate in the community, to improve their personal well-being and their sense of community. Youth appreciate opportunities to express their identity and to have their voices heard (Miles, 2002b; Watts, 1993; Wyn & White, 2000; Yates & Youniss, 1996). Youth want to actively explore and participate in the community, not just passively listen and talk about theoretical knowledge (Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Burfoot, 2003). They see problems in their community, but are not provided with opportunities to influence and address them. Yet, youth can actively participate and make a positive contribution to the local community (Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Wohl, 2000). Action research, using an appreciative approach, can be a valuable vehicle for encouraging youth participation. (Atweh et al., 1998; Schwab, 1997). In this research, participants in small groups became actively engaged in initiating and promoting community projects designed by members of each group.

The current research, was initiated by me and the various community partners. However, during the interventions, the participants initiated, researched and undertook community projects of their own design. The participants became actively engaged in an empowering, qualitative, critical thinking approach,

driving the research by their own actions, rather than research being carried out on them. This empowering, participatory approach contrasts with positivist approaches of completing surveys or answering questions in an interview or focus groups designed by the researcher.

This research involved active group work undertaken by the participants with the results of the community projects evaluated by the participants themselves (Stringer, 1999; Wadsworth, 1997; Yeich & Levine, 1992). Those involved used this as a vehicle to actively inquire about issues relevant to them as they explored their particular identities in relation to the local community. This is in contrast to their time often spent in adult directed activities in educational, work and home settings, with teachers, work managers, youth workers and parents having directed much of their theoretical learning and appropriate activities.

The research involved planning, implementing and reflecting on active community projects chosen by the participants, working in partnership with community workers. This meant the participants leading and designing community action projects. The participants learnt how to make their own decisions and also how to relate to adult community members as partners in an action project, doing meaningful civic work (Berkowitz & Wolff, 1996). Participants developed social capital through affirmation of their social identity and inviting social participation (Kawachi & Berkman, 2000; Stoll, 2002). Participants took a critical approach to social action, and worked towards social transformation (Maton, 2000; Selener, 1997; Watts et al., 1999).

The research used an action research approach with youth participants to undertake community action projects of their choice. It explored ways with participants to have their voices heard, and for participants to begin to create a better local community, taking steps in a supportive group towards social transformation (Maton, 2000). Participants created their own community action projects based on their own identity explorations and their own concerns. The research explored pathways for social action by youth participants, for local youth in order to benefit both the participants and local community members.

Action research with participants as co-inquirers provides a constructive framework for youth identity affirmation activities and discussions, to promote a sense of community within the membership of the participating group. Further to the discussions of personal interests, issues of mutual interest and concern for local community issues are explored. The community concerns are then researched in order to plan and implement community projects of their choice. The participant-led affirmative community projects with community partners can provide a means for participants to begin to experience a sense of community connectedness (Berkman & Glass, 2000; Fuller, 1998).

An action research approach, that affirms and appreciates the visions of participants, lends itself well to incorporate an appreciative inquiry approach of affirming and developing participants' ideas for social transformation.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry theory has been developed as a way of encouraging positive critical thinking by participants to transform human systems (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). It refers to the power of the unconditional positive to ignite transformative dialogue and action within human systems (Barrett, 1995). Appreciative inquiry can be a way to approach organisational life inquiries, as other problem-based approaches to organisational life were finding that participants were de-energised and discouraged from the process (Barrett, 1995; Zemke, 1999). This approach deals with continuous discovery, search and inquiry into conceptions of "life, joy, beauty, excellence, innovation and freedom" (Ludema et al., 2001, p. 191).

This innovative exploratory approach of appreciative inquiry can be taken a step further to expand the visionary approach. The discontinuous leap approach (Frantz, 1998), seeks to allow the visioning of alternative future social systems. Frantz argued that appreciative inquiry is an evolutionary approach, which he called *ground travel*, confining explorations for the most part to the assumptions, constraints and possibilities of social realities that already exist. Participants inquire into the best of *what is* in order to vision *what could be* (Cooperrider, Barrett, & Srivastva, 1995). Discontinuous leap, by contrast, Frantz called *space*

travel, and asked users to break free of existing reality, with its often unnoticed constraints and assumptions, to maximise their creative imaginations. Free of the constraints of *what is,* they dream unconstrained about *what could be* (Frantz, 1998). As Ackoff (1981) argued, the fanciful science fiction versions of future possibilities that result from using the discontinuous leap approach often require surprisingly little redesign to make them viable in the real world. Future possibilities generated from within the constraining assumptions of existing reality tend to be much less imaginative and innovative (Ackoff, 1981). The science fiction visionary approach of the discontinuous leap theory can be incorporated into the framework of the appreciative inquiry approach.

Appreciative inquiry and discontinuous leap approaches are imaginative and positive, sitting well with the participatory action empowering approach. Both are based on the positive concepts of inspiring the participants to creatively imagine a better human condition and work towards making a change to bring this about. Appreciative inquiry uses the same kind of principles as other action research, where the group seeks to creatively envision ways to enhance their world. In this research, the questions asked are about what participants can creatively do to make their community a better place. Participants dream of how they would like their future to be. This appreciative dreaming can be accomplished in supportive group work using various activities.

Steps of the appreciative inquiry approach typically include selecting a positive topic: (1) to discover and appreciate *the best of what is*; (2) to dream and envision *what could be*; (3) to design and co-construct *what should be*; and (4) a destiny to sustain *what will be* (Ludema et al., 2001). Table 6 sets out the phases of appreciative inquiry, with an added column on its application for youth participation in the current research.

Table 6
Phases of Appreciative Inquiry

PHASE	ACTION	YOUTH PARTICIPATION
1. Discovery	Appreciating *the best of what is*	Identity affirmation with passion game
2. Dream	Envisioning *what could be*	Community visions for improvement with positive well-being quest and transformative learning discussions
3. Design	Co-constructing *what should be*	Creating community projects with cycles of planning, acting and reflecting
4. Destiny	Sustaining *what will be*	Enhanced narratives of community connectedness

Adapted from Ludema et al (2001)

In the current research, participants utilised an appreciative inquiry approach involving: (1) identity affirmation discovery with a passion game activity; (2) dreaming of community improvements with positive well-being questions and transformative learning discussions and activities; (3) designing and creating community projects with cycles of planning, action and reflection; and (4) a destiny of successful community projects for improved sustainable narratives.

Identity Affirmation Discovery

Youth actively explore their identities with their peers in their various youth subcultures (Miles, 2002b; Watts, 1993), so the first step was for the participants to explore their own identity, to discover and appreciate *the best of what is* (Ludema et al., 2001). Participants freely expressed their identity, that is, their own interests, beliefs and values. Participants explored their common interests and their shared values within the safety of a group of peers. Youth appreciated the space to discuss these identity explorations when they felt emotionally safe to freely express these issues. They can appreciate a code of informality to freely express their own issues and plan their own projects in an emotionally safe environment (Kahane & Rapoport, 1997).

Time was devoted to developing a sense of community within the group, creating a place of emotional safety, so participants could affirm their mutual

identity interests. In this approach, initial activities with each group involved affirmation of the participants' identity (Cieslik & Pollock, 2002; Erikson, 1968; Jaffe, 1998). To do this, various activities and discussions were used to identity and discover "the best of what is" (Ludema et al., 2001). Identity interests were explored and celebrated within the group, including youth subculture issues such as: mutual cultural arts interests; environment issues; and specific cultural and sexual identities (Watts, 1993).

Passion Game

A *passion game* was a way to explore personal passions and interests and find out the common identity interests of the participants. I adapted this game from a traditional getting-to-know you exercise, to illicit the participants' interests and passions, their identity interests. The game involved me asking participants a series of questions based on *Do you feel passionate about this particular activity?* Participants moved to one side of the room if they were passionate about that activity and to the other side if they definitely were not interested and stayed in the middle if they didn't care or had a mild interest. The questions covered interests in sport, fitness, outdoor activities, thrill–seeking activities, the arts, music, dancing, drama, performing, cooking, eating foods from other cultures, environmental issues, and topical issues such a concern for refugees. For each question those who moved to the passionate side were asked what was their specific interest (e.g., actual sport, type of music). This helped each participant to think about their own passions and see others who might have the same interests to possibly work together on a project of mutual interest.

Participants appreciate time to engage in activities exploring their mutual identity interests. A passion game activity can elicit much energy from participants. Subsequent discussions on participant interests can reveal further mutual identity issues and engender enthusiasm to pursue and celebrate these issues. This exploring of a common group identity is a preliminary step to the planning and implementing community projects (Giroux, 1988; Stringer, 1999).

Community Improvement Ideas

The next phase of the appreciative inquiry approach involved participants *dreaming* and envisioning what could be improved in the community (Barrett & Peterson, 2000; Frantz, 1998). Guided group discussions and activities were undertaken to explore mutual community concerns. Participants explored social justice issues using critical thinking or critical inquiry as part of the process of transformative learning (Prilleltensky, 2003b).

Community Improvement Discussions

Participants used transformative learning techniques of brainstorming and discussing their visions, their dreams, to experience an improved local community. Various activities and discussions elicited their community concerns and visions. Group discussion activities explored what is needed for survival in the community and to enhance the community. Questions were raised, based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1971). Basic questions included: *What are our basic survival needs?; and What do you need to feel a sense of well-being?*

A positive *Quest for Well-being* questionnaire was used to promote transformative learning discussions on the positive and possible visions for improvement (Totikidis & Robertson, 2004). This positive well-being approach, utilised open-ended questions on what is positive about participants' well-being personally, in relation to others and as part of a community. These open questions moved into what could be improved in the community in order to begin to elicit possible visions for the community. The questionnaire, based on the work of Prilleltensky and Nelson (2000), involved open questions on personal, relational and community well-being needs. Participants were asked open questions in relation to: *What is good about your present personal, relational and community well-being* and *what needs improving in your community* (Totikidis & Robertson, 2004). These questions were used in an earlier project on community wellness in the same local area.

Passion Chart Activity

The *Passion chart* activity, with participants in pairs or small groups, is a way of developing their own dreams, their own visions. For example, poster paper and coloured pens can be provided, for participants to draw and write up their own passions, interests, beliefs and concerns. *Passion charts* can also be used to enable participants to start to dream of creative ideas for community projects and to begin to address their mutual interests and community concerns.

Participants assess common themes in their interests and concerns, as with grounded theory approaches taken by qualitative researchers (Glaser & Strauss, 1979). A grounded theory asks what theory emerges from systematic comparative analysis of what is observed by the researcher in the field (Burman, 1997; Travers, 2001). The participants, themselves, can be further involved in the research process by assessing their own group discussions for common themes on their interests and visions to improve their local community.

Participants in socially disadvantaged areas are more likely to have some awareness of specific social justice issues and discriminatory practices in their local communities than those in a more affluent community. Specifically, disadvantaged culturally and sexually diverse groups may be even more critically aware of the social justice issues within their neighbourhoods. For example, same-sex attracted youth may be aware of heterosexist attitudes in their community due to their discriminatory treatment. Similarly, recently arrived refugees may be aware of discrimination issues and problems accessing services, education and work due to language and other racially-based judgements. Development of common themes by the participants can assist in beginning to make theoretical community connections to assist in developing a wider sense of community. Participants consider practical, active ways to enact their theories, to begin to design and create their own community action projects to experience a sense of community connectedness.

Creating Community Action Projects

Designing community action projects is the next phase of appreciative inquiry, where action research steps of planning, implementing and reflecting came into play. This involved cycles of action by the participants. The participants critically assessed their own needs, planned their own interventions, and implemented specific actions, with cycles of evaluation throughout the process. This resulted in youth-led and youth-designed community projects (Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Headley, 2002; Holdsworth, 2003).

Planning Community Projects

Planning community projects involved identifying issues and designing "what should be". Through participation in the community, participants defined themselves and developed a new belief in their ability to change aspects of their personal and social environments (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988).

Participants actively designed their own community projects where they identified an issue they wished to pursue, explored ways to pursue the issue, developed a vision with a mission statement of what they want to create and developed goals to achieve their visions of a community action project to improve their local community.

Implementing Community Projects

Action research undertaken by participants empowers them to implement community projects designed and created by them. Participants develop problem-solving skills, to organise and manage projects (Lewis, 1998; Westhorp, 1987). Participants gain experience in taking on adult responsibilities. They are not just treated as children, but take on meaningful tasks that they manage themselves. In the process the participants develop *teamwork, leadership and communication* skills, making the initials TLC. Participants can think of the popular acronym for *tender loving care* and then substitute the words *teamwork, leadership and communication* skills (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002b). Participants develop personal skills for social life, skills for future career prospects, for community involvement, to become activists in their local

community, and develop personal cultural art interests and experience to improve their own well-being.

Reflecting on Community Projects

Action research promotes the concept of continual action cycles of planning, acting and reflecting by the participants themselves. This continual reflection of their subjective experiences of phenomena assists in developing common themes by participants. From these common themes come positive narratives of common stories and common cultural identities. Traumatic narratives of alienation can, hopefully, be turned into positive narratives of community connectedness.

Evaluation of Projects

Participant Reflections

Action research has cycles of qualitative reflective evaluation built into the process. Participants learn to plan, implement and reflect in cycles of development of their projects. I involved participants in critically evaluating their action projects at each step of the project. During initial group discussions and in group planning, assessing, and reporting back, the participants were continually evaluating their research.

Participants provided personal self-report verbal and written evaluations of their experiences both during and at the end of the process. I also kept comprehensive records of the participants evaluations and reflections, including verbal and written evaluations, as well as, videoed reflections and notes from group discussions. Participants written stories about their project management processes and outcomes were recorded and evaluated using an phenomenological analysis of their experiences. However, due to time-restraints the participants were not involved in the analysis of their evaluations.

Partnership Evaluations

Evaluations were also be sought from youth workers, teachers, community partners and anyone else directly involved with the intervention groups. These multiple observational evaluations were sought to reveal different aspects of empirical reality, called *investigator triangulation* as prescribed by Denzin

(Denzin, 1978; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). Triangulation of data is used to strengthen a study by combining methods, in this case, various participatory or investigator evaluations. The logic of triangulation is based on the premise that no single method can adequately solve the problem of rival causal factors. Denzin argued that because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations should be employed (Denzin, 1978).

Triangulation of data for the first group of school students included: oral and written evaluations from the students; evaluations from the teachers and community workers involved with the research, in the form of verbal feedback and thank you letters to students; and my own comprehensive notes and videoing of class discussions and students small group reflections throughout the process of the community projects formulation, management and outcome phases.

The social group of same-sex attracted youth data included: participant written evaluations and videoed verbal evaluations, including poems; evaluations from the youth worker and community workers involved in the process, including emails and videoed reflections; and my own comprehensive notes and videoing of workshops, performances and poetry with the participants.

For the recently arrived refugee group, data collected included: written evaluation from participants; verbal feedback from the teachers and a written report from assistant student researcher who had also been a refugee; and my own comprehensive notes of class discussions and personal conversations with the refugee participants and the student researcher.

Evaluations from others can be particularly beneficial if there are any specific barriers to participants providing substantial evaluations. For example, recently arrived refugees or immigrants are likely to have a limited command of the primary language used in the research. Evaluations from the teachers and the student researcher involved with the group were beneficial.

Post-Research Feedback

Post-research feedback from youth, their youth leaders and teachers was also sought. For example, further community projects or some form of community involvement initiated independently by individuals and groups after the research provided valuable insight into the possible sustainable benefits of the research.

Case Study Analysis

Ethnographic Observations

An ethnographic style of research was used with direct observation of people in their social settings to understand the way those participants interpret and make sense of their own experience (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Ristock & Taylor, 1998; Stein & Mankowski, 2004; Travers, 2001). This research tried to capture what could be called the insider's story (Watts, 1993). Contemporary ethnography has at least three characteristics, according to Watts (1993): (1) it aims at producing highly specific, small-scale and richly descriptive accounts of people's life-worlds and the meanings and patterns of significance of those life-worlds; (2) the ethnographic researcher approaches the patterns of living, values, relationships, activities, knowledge and beliefs in other people's lives, using detailed and close observation, and relying often on some form of participant observation; and (3) ethnographers generally do not value or seek to develop causal or explanatory theories paralleling alleged natural scientific models of research. According to Watts, ethnographers lean more towards developing understandings and interpretations of meaning and symbolic systems of knowledge, beliefs and values.

I became engaged with each participant group, to form some appreciation of the particular youth subculture (Watts, 1993). I kept a journal of the observed behaviours of the participant group members, with notes on discussion themes, project plan ideas, implementation actions, and case studies of particular participant insights and experiences, including their emerging narratives. The oral and written evaluations of the participants and the partners in the research were also recorded. I used various phenomenological data collection modes, to tag,

bracket, analyse and describe the subjective experiences and narratives emerging during the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Gergen & Gergen, 2000).

Case study narratives have a special role to play in ethnographic research, especially when asking youth to tell their own stories (Watts, 1993). According to Watts, this includes: (1) an interpretive interest in narrative or people's stories is a central part of an ethnography which attends to people's experience and emphasises that the narratives of ordinary people matter a good deal and can tell us a great deal about why people do what they do; and (2) narratives matter because it is through narratives that we constitute ourselves and our identity and much, if not all, of our social activity is expressive of the *who we are*.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative stories provide meaning for life's events (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000). Stories are temporally and thematically organised descriptions of meaningful events in context (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000). A narrative story is defined as "… a symbolised account of actions of human beings that has a temporal dimension. The story has a beginning, a middle, and an ending … The story is held together by recognisable patterns of events called plots. Central to the plot structure are human predicaments and attempted resolutions" (Sarbin, 1986, quoted in Salzer, 1998, p.570). Narrative stories are told and retold to create meaning and some form of resolution within cultural contexts.

Dominant cultural narratives provide meaning in some form within a particular cultural context. In Western post-modern society, dominant cultural narratives are often over-learned stories communicated through mass media or other large social and cultural institutions and social networks (Glover, 2003). Dominant culture stories can be disenchanting and disenfranchising to post-modern youth. Dominant cultural stories can provide negative media images of youth, as likely to be unemployed, having drug issues, and facing racism and heterosexism (Frith & Frith, 1993). Marginalised youth can feel disempowered to contribute to the community leading to disengagement from school and from the local community and work opportunities (Mitchell, 2000).

Cultural narratives for many people, particularly those who lack socio-political power in the community, can be negative, narrow, or written by others for them, (Rappaport, 1995). Mankowski and Rappaport (1995) argued that marginalised communities often need to rediscover and create their own memories rather than accept the often negative stories about who they are that are told to and about them by others from the dominant culture.

A narrative approach to theory and method combined with the study of empowerment, may be used as a means to pursue the collaborative approach of community work and more specifically action research, according to Rappaport (1995). He argued that the narrative approach spans various levels of analysis. It explicitly recognises that communities, organisations and individual people have stories, and that there is a mutual influence process between these community, organisational and personal stories. Stories not only exist, but they have powerful effects on human behaviour. They tell us not only who we are but who we have been and who we can be. There is a great deal of evidence from many different disciplines to show that narratives create meaning (Bruner, 1993; Rappaport, 1995), emotion (Lazarus, 1991) and identity (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995).

Community narrative is a story common among a group of people and creates meaning for people (Bruner, 1993; Ludema, Wilmot, & Srivastva, 1997; Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1995, 2000; Salzer, 1998). For those interested in social change, reading the community narratives of our own time differently, so that they "reveal and expose rather than hide the terror", is a step toward helping to recast the narratives in ways that liberate (Rappaport, 2000, p. 2).

Community narrative building can provide hope and support, especially for oppressed or marginalised people (Banks & Wideman, 1996). Inspiring leaders can weave stories of hope for a vision of the future. For example, elders, prophets, and religious leaders world-wide tell stories of hope that are regularly re-told in reflective community and religious contexts to bring hope to oppressed communities around the globe (Armstrong, 1993; Morreall, 1999; Simmons, 2001; Tacey, 2000). Martin Luther King wove a vision of hope to oppressed Afro-

American black people with his famous speech beginning with, *I have a dream* (Simmons, 2001:15). Oppressed people are often longing for the world to be different on account of the trauma they have been through (White, 2004b). Marginalised youth can envision a better world, a more hopeful world (Miles, 2002b)..

Well-developed community narratives provide an alternative way of constructing personal stories to those offered in settings shaped by dominant cultural narratives. Individual members, through group storytelling, may slowly adapt the narrative (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000). The goals of empowerment are enhanced when people discover or create and give voice to a collective narrative that sustains their own personal life story in positive ways (Rappaport, 1995). Personal narratives influence the narratives that others in the group tell, as well as community narratives (Salzer, 1998). New group enhancement stories emerge to go along with the other stories the group already tells. Community narratives grow in number over time with new stories emerging as they are told and re-told. A narrative approach to inquiry is developed in which the *good news* stories of organisational members are shared, interpreted, and amplified to generate hope, knowledge, and action in organisational life (Ludema et al., 1997).

Narrative therapy with individuals also deals with improved personal narratives and assists clients to reform their narratives to strengthen the positive aspects of their lives (Byng-Hall, 1979; Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 2004a). Feminist narrative therapy also explores ways to re-author life narratives (Lee, 1997). Lee argued that while women make meaning of their everyday lives through stories or self-narratives framed by dominant misogynist cultural meta-narratives, a re-authoring can occur when women create alternative meanings associated with new self-narratives (Lee, 1997).

New self-narratives can be difficult to sustain without social support. Rappaport (1995) believed that people who seek either personal or community change often find it difficult to sustain change without the support of a collective that provides a new communal narrative around which they can sustain changes in their own personal story He argued that associated with such narratives are

cognitive, emotional and behavioural consequences that involve social support, role opportunities, new identities and possible selves. This participatory research hopes to begin to address these issues by offering ways to explore new sustainable narratives within a supportive environment.

Youth Subculture Narratives

Youth participants in this research express their own youth subculture narratives based on their emerging identity as youth. Identity is created, enacted and maintained through storytelling (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000). Youth absorb the dominant cultural narratives of over-learned stories communicated through mass media or social institutions that touch their lives (Rappaport, 1995). Youth form subculture narratives based on these dominant narratives, yet superimposed with their own identity stories, which become their own subculture narratives (Watts, 1993). These youth subculture narratives will be explored in this research.

Enhanced Narratives

Narrative stories are commonly formed around certain standard features, starting from describing the context to the development of a complicating or conflictual issue, and ending with some kind of resolution (Labov, 1982; White, 2004a). Prototype narrative sequential features, according to Labov (1982), include: (a) orientation of characters and setting; (b) abstract or summary of point of story; (c) complicating action of some causal disturbance; (d) evaluation of meaning of change or set of conditions; and (e) conclusion or resolution of story to bring storyteller and listener back to the present. A narrative will commonly feature this movement from description to complicating factor onto resolution. A new narrative sequence was explored by participants, as shown in Table 7 below.

Youth participants in this research came with narratives of their own to tell. Marginalised youth subculture stories can involve a description of a disturbing life situation, with complicating factors of forms of cultural conflict or alienation or trauma, and some kind of conclusion to the story, but not necessarily a satisfactory resolution to their narratives.

Table 7
Narrative Sequence and Application

Prototype narrative sequence	**Enhanced** narrative sequential application
1. *Orientation* of characters and setting	*Orientation* of disenchanted youth within a disadvantaged community assuming the dominant cultural narrative of alienation and rejection with a lack of a sense of community
2. *Point* of story, abstract or summary	*Point* of the story being a chance for youth to use an action research model to design and plan a community project to celebrate their identity within the local community
3. *Complicating action* of some causal disturbance	*Complicating action* of actually creating and implementing a celebratory community project
4. *Evaluation* of meaning of change or set of conditions	*Evaluation* of community project contribution affirming identity, new skills and new positive narratives
5. *Conclusion* or resolution of story to bring storyteller and listener back to the present	*Conclusion* of success of youth participation creating a sense of community connectedness with hope for further transforming community action

Adapted from Labov (1982)

Youth participants can feel alienated and so have narrative stories of alienation. By using an action research approach to create community projects, participants were provided with an opportunity in a supportive environment to explore new narratives of community connectedness.

An appreciative inquiry approach to action research with youth participants, based on community action projects by participants, can lead to enhanced narratives for the participants (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995). Using an appreciative action research approach, participants can begin to creatively explore their hopes of an improved world.

I will argue that the participants in this research actively created new enhanced narratives thereby beginning to experience an improved sense of well-being and an improved sense of community connectedness (Levine, 1986; Pretty, 2002; Rappaport, 2000).

CHAPTER 5

STUDENT GROUP COMMUNITY-BUILDING PROJECTS

Socially disadvantaged youth lack adequate services, shelter for the homeless, jobs for the unemployed, and appropriate sporting and cultural facilities to express their emerging identities, their youth sub-cultures (White, 1993). They want a world where they can express themselves in positive, self-enhancing ways, rather then turning to the negative, self-abusing ways of drug and alcohol abuse. Youth seek opportunities to express their emerging identities freely, through cultural arts and other positive actions to contribute to the improvement of their local neighbourhoods. Youth can benefit from programs that provide opportunities to develop a sense of social connectedness, a sense of community.

The first group of participants for this research, were school students from a socially disadvantaged area involved in a pilot Working Community Program that provided opportunities for students to explore ways to connect and make a positive contribution to their local community. This chapter describes the philosophy, processes and outcomes of this research group, including: the philosophy of the Working Community Program; the recruitment and involvement of the student participants; the processes of participants planning and undertaking community projects; and the analysis of the participants evaluations and emerging narratives both during and at the end of the research process.

Student Participation

Working Community Program

The pilot *Working Community Program* was targeted to a number of schools in socially disadvantaged areas, including the school involved in this research. The school was located in the City of Brimbank in the north-western suburbs of Melbourne, which has one of the lowest socio-economic status levels, high unemployment, low school retention rates, with the second highest youth population in the state of Victoria, Australia (Brimbank City Council, 2000; Victorian Government, 2000). The area has attracted disproportionately low funding for community service provision for youth and families (Department of

Family and Community Services, 2002; Vinson, 2004). The school had limited resources compared to state schools in more affluent suburbs and to private schools. For example, students had very limited access to computers and the internet, and had to book ahead for short periods of time on the few computers available. There were also fewer recreational facilities, and fewer educational and employment pathways in the area.

Educationalists were concerned with the low retention rates of students, particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, such as this local school (Atweh et al., 1998; Australian Centre for Equity through Education, 2001; Holdsworth, 2004). They were also concerned with the lack of alternative educational and employment opportunities, and the high rates of youth suicide, particularly in these marginalised areas.

Piloting programs that actively involve students in making connections with their local communities were seen as a way of retaining youth in schools (Curriculum Corporation, 2002; Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002b). By extending student programs beyond the academic school environment into the local community, students could gain a sense of connectedness with their local community. They also could gain vital teamwork, leadership and communication skills that would be beneficial for their future relationship and career prospects. A community-building project approach gives students a positive opportunity to contribute to the real world as active citizens.

The *Working Community Pilot Program* was a five-phase structured program that enabled secondary school students to develop their key competencies and enterprise skills, sense of personal and social responsibility, and their understanding of the world of work (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002b). It was promoted by Turner and Baker (Turner & Baker, 2000) who had developed citizenship programs for secondary students in the United Kingdom. The program was targeted to young people aged 15-16 years old, who were making the transition to adulthood as they moved from compulsory education (Year 10) to a world of greater choice and uncertainty. Students were able to develop their skills in the compulsory middle school stages before

selecting making choices related to possible future career pathways. Turner and Baker structured the phased nature of the program so that it mirrored many of the characteristics of this transition. The program moved away from activities that are organised by adults to the concept of young person-led projects. The community projects phase translates the values, ideas and aspirations of young people into practical projects that contribute to both their own learning and to the quality of life of their communities. This supportive structure and process was designed by Turner and Baker to engage a wide range of young people, including those who are underachieving and also those students who are at risk of social and economic exclusion (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002b; Turner, 2002; Turner & Baker, 2000)

In the pilot *Working Community Program,* schools worked in partnership with community agencies and employers to support youth to engage with their community and take increasing responsibility and autonomy during the learning processes. The philosophy of the program was congruent with that of the current research. The learning outcomes included: (1) a set of personal and transferable skills categorised as TLC (Teamwork, Leadership and Communication); (2) developing an understanding of their roles in community life; and (3) gaining an appreciation of how students can support each other as peers, in their learning and in navigating their transition into non-compulsory school and other choices (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002b).

The program was particularly aimed at targeting those youth who are considered *at risk* of disengagement from school. It offered them a sense of connectedness with their local community and a chance to participate creatively to build resilience and feel an improved sense of well-being. By participating in this program, it was envisioned that the students would gain valuable teamwork and leadership skills in real-life community settings that would provide them work experience to improve their future employment prospects (Turner, 2002).

Turner (2002) argues that the Working Community Program is capable of valuing young people by building upon their interests and ideas and affirming their potential to take responsibility for their learning and be active citizens in

their community. It also allows for young people to learn outside the classroom and to interact with adults from the community, providing relevant skills that employers and community agencies see as vital to employability, entrepreneurship and citizenship. The program can also assist students to build different relationships with the teachers who are supporting their ideas and facilitating team projects. This can help students to feel more comfortable and generate *a sense of belonging* within the school and community. By tapping into the passions, beliefs and aspirations of young people, this engages students with learning. The project activity can be seen as real and important to the students and it offers a different and fun way to learn. Many non-academic (and academic) students can view this experiential and active learning favourably.

Student Participants

A school involved in the pilot Working Community Program contacted the partner agency of this research, for assistance with the initial group of students in first semester. The agency contacted me, as our partnership had been newly formed, and a further partnership was formed with the school. I gave some assistance to the initial group of students, and offered to work closely with the teacher during the next class of students in the second semester. The teacher involved in the program was eager for my assistance, as a researcher, to further develop the Working Community Program with the next group of students.

The student participants for this research consisted of a class of twenty-four Year 10 students, with 12 females and 12 males, being 15 to 16 years old. They came from a wide diversity of ethnic backgrounds, reflecting that of the local community, including Anglo-Saxon, Indian, Italian, Greek, Macedonian, Maltese, Spanish and Vietnamese. The students and their parents each agreed that the students could participant in the research. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the consent forms completed by each participant in the research project, and informed consent from parents for those underage.

I worked collaboratively with the teacher and students for three months, with the teacher allowing me to take the lead in organising and guiding the program. The program consisted of three sessions weekly, including a whole afternoon each

week, with a total of four hours per week for 12 weeks, plus two full school days of six hours each. This gave me 60 hours with the students, providing the opportunity for ethnographic observation. The program, while having a number of weekly classes, also included a full day introductory session and a full day celebratory session at the end of the program. Extra time spent with students for some of the actual project implementation outside school hours.

Student participants in this research became co-operative inquirers, who took up the challenge of expressing their identities and exploring their visions for social change to create community-building projects (Morsillo, 2003).

Student Activities

The group activities with the participants moved from researcher-initiated to student-led over the first few sessions of planned activities, with: (a) an introduction to the action research processes; (b) discovery and appreciation of personal social identity interests through a passion game and passion chart activities; (c) discovery and exploration of basic needs and community concerns through activities and group discussions; (d) participants dreaming and exploring ideas to improve the local community using passion charts and group discussions; (e) participants exploring ideas to design possible community projects; (f) participants undertaking the planning, implementation and evaluation of specific community small-group projects.

The first few class sessions and introductory day were used to introduce the students to the action research approach. The students participated in a number of activities and group discussions, using a positive appreciative approach, to elicit their interests and concerns, leading to students planning and undertaking their own projects. See Table 8 for an outline of the appreciative activities, showing the progression from researcher planning to participants planing, action and reflecting in their own research cycles.

Table 8
Appreciative Approach with School Students

Session	**4D Appreciative Approach**	**Action Research Cycles**		
		PLAN	**ACT**	**REFLECT**
1	**Discovery of self** *– appreciating the best of what is (personally)*	Activities to promote personal social identity affirmation	Participants engage in **Passion game** activity to discover own passions, interests and beliefs	Participants reflect on own positive aspects of social identity and discover mutual interests
2-4	**Discovery of community** *– appreciating best of what is in community (and what could be improved)*	Activities for participants to explore local community issues and needs	Participants engage in **Basic Needs for Survival**, **Quest for Wellness, Empathy game** and **Community Workers Forum** to explore community issues and needs	Participants provide feedback from small groups activities for further discussion
5	**Dream of community** *– envisioning what could be*	Activities to elicit ideas of how to promote own social identity in the local community	Participants engage in **Passion Chart** in small groups to elicit written and symbolic ideas	Participants from small groups feedback with the larger group for further discussion
6-7	**Design of self in community** *– co-constructing what should be*	Participants brainstorm possible **community-building projects** in small groups of mutual interest	Participants explore ideas with community partners for **community-building projects** in small groups of mutual interest of their choice	Participants from small groups discuss **community-building projects** progress with the larger group regularly
8-24	**Destiny of self and community** *– sustaining what will be*	Participants plan specific **community-building projects** in small groups of mutual interest of their choice	Participants design their **community-building projects** in small groups with community partners of their choice	Participants undertake **community-building projects** in small groups and personal evaluations

Adapted from Ludema, J., Cooperrider, D., & Barrett, F. (2001)

Action Research Process

The concepts of the program were explained to the students, with the expectation that students would plan and implement their own community action projects. Using an action research approach, the students would actively engage in the co-operative critical process of planning, acting and reflecting together.

Initial activities were designed to allow the participants to express their personal passions and their community concerns, and to begin to think of creative ways to use these passions to engage in positive small group projects to improve their local community. The students actively engaged in group discussions, to think critically of issues in their local community and discover ways to actively and creatively become problem solvers together. The students planned and implemented community-building projects, of their choosing, in the local community.

Identity Affirmation

The first group activity involved a Passion Game with the youth discovering and affirming "the best of what is" in their lives, what they enjoy in life and the positive aspects of themselves and their mutual interests. They thought about their own passions, interests and beliefs, for social identity affirmation. The game involved a series of questions with the students moving to one side of the room if they were passionate about that activity and to the other side if they definitely were not interested, and staying in the middle if they didn't care or only had a mild interest. The questions covered interests in sport, fitness, outdoor activities, thrill seeking activities, arts, music, dancing, drama, performing, cooking, eating foods from other cultures, environmental issues and refugee issues. This helped each person to think about their own passions and find out who else might have the same interests to possibly work together on a project of mutual interest. See Appendix 2 for prompt materials of games, activities and discussions used.

Community Concerns

In the second session, participants were asked to reflect on concerns, in relation to their own basic needs for survival. The question was posed: *What do*

we need in order to survive and feel good about life? Group discussions explored ways to identify their own ideas of survival needs. Survival ideas included: food, water, clothing, shelter, family, friends, caring, support, job, inheritance, dole, welfare, pension and charity..

Students were also asked to work in small groups to complete a Quest for Wellness questionnaire on their personal, relational and community wellbeing and the possible actions that could be taken to improve their community. The students raised many possible ideas for community actions, including: organise youth groups, activities, fetes, entertainment centres to keep the teenagers busy and give them fun recreational activities instead of drugs; build more parks and playgrounds; clean up the rubbish and syringes; educate the community on issues such as drugs, crime and sex; and investigate what areas in the community needed work before taking action. These ideas were discussed and participants were encouraged to actively participate in group discussions to begin to personally empower them to become critical thinkers on social justice issues.

Community Action Planning

Initial ideas of personal interests and concerns were developed into Passion Charts on poster paper by groups of two or three and then presented to the whole group. The ideas presented were briefly discussed as a large group, including ideas of art, design, music, dance, community theatre, speech therapy, sporting facilities, parks, playground equipment, cleaning up the environment, homelessness, drug use and racism. This activity encouraged the students to critically think of how they personally could relate to their local community. At the end of this session, and each subsequent session, I noted down all their ideas on the white board for all to see, then recorded them, and typed them up and distributed copies to each student at the beginning of the next session, and briefly reflected on a summary of the previous session.

In the third session, the participants began to dream of "what could be". Participants freely expressed themselves, explored ways to develop ideas for community action, from their *Passion Chart* ideas and *Quest for Wellness* ideas. The students were also given a summary of the *Brimbank Youth Action Plan*

2002-2005, and noted the similarities in youth issues raised by the Council survey and the issues raised by their group. They noted the Council's plan to seek funding for a skate-park. One student commented that it would never happen. I challenged the students to think up ways to help it happen. This was brainstormed by the whole class, with lots of ideas forthcoming, including: gaining support through flyers in letter-boxes and shopping centres; articles in the local paper; petitions; phoning and writing to the local Council; and protesting to the local Council as a last resort.

In pairs, the group was asked to choose one of the passions expressed by the class in the earlier sessions, and brainstorm ways to develop this passion into a community action. The participants began to personally develop a critical awareness of the socio-political environment in which they lived, through group discussion on issues they defined as being a passion for them. Discussion topics in this student group included: cleaning up rubbish and drug refuse from the local environment; improving and creating new parks and sporting facilities; providing more youth festival and music events free from drugs; providing more artistically creative outlets for youth including community theatre; providing for the basic needs of local homeless youth; and considering ways to support refugees.

Table 9 summarises the community issues and possible actions raised by the participants in the various discussions and activities in the first sessions. The issues can be categorised into five areas: community youth activities; community education; community services; environmental improvements; and researching community needs.

Community Connections

The first three introductory sessions were followed by an intensive day of activities to prepare the participants to plan their own community projects. Based on the community concerns raised by the students, the teacher and I invited appropriate local community youth workers to speak at the special day event about possible ways for them to be involved in improving their local community.

Table 9
Student Community Concerns and Actions

Community youth activities – drug-free, safe, and fun	Youth concerts, fetes, youth centres, youth groups, game centres and sporting facilities (soccer on hard-court, skate-park, swimming pools, soccer grounds), entertainment centres, community art (murals/photography), community theatre (musical theatre), music and dancing, and improving parks with more play equipment
Community education	Community education on drugs, crime and sex. Improved resources and technological facilities for local schools, as most work requires a minimal standard of technological competence
Community services	Rehabilitation for drug users, help the homeless, give free food to the homeless, helping kids with speech problems, helping in difficult family situations, helping refugees
Environmental improvements	Clean up rubbish especially drug syringes, clean up drug problems, get rid of gangs, improve roads, improve care of animals and marine life
Research community needs	Investigate what areas in our community need work before we take action

The youth workers were chosen from our partner community agency and their contacts to speak on areas of interest shown by the students. The speakers were informed of the initial passions expressed by the students and were asked to challenge them to consider possible ways to make a positive contribution to their community.

The community agency representatives, came from: Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, St Albans; St Albans Youth Housing; and Edmund Rice Centre Homework Club for Refugee Youth.

The student participants shared their community concerns with the agency representatives who affirmed the students' interests and concerns. They then related their own work with youth in the local area, including youth homelessness issues and refugees. Students considered possible ways that they could partner with the agency or other community agencies to develop community projects based on these concerns.

A follow-up activity to the community agency input, as part of the special program day, was an empathy game. In the empathy game, the students worked in small groups to further consider the issue of youth homelessness that they had raised in early discussions, and which had been followed up by one of the youth workers. The students were asked to imagine how they would feel and what they would do if a friend of a friend turned up on their door step needing a place to stay for the night. Their ideas included: let them stay for one night if they knew them and phone community agencies for a longer term solution; send them to a local community agency or large welfare agency; let them use the phone to get help; or give them food and send them on their way. This activity not only developed their critical awareness of social issues, but gave them an opportunity to begin to consider ways to personally respond to critical community issues.

Project Planning Skills

In order for the students to develop their own community projects, the teacher felt the students needed to develop the necessary project planning skills of teamwork, leadership and communication. To do this, the teacher used an educational video on teamwork made by popular Australian comedians that he felt would be suitable for this students group (Artist Services, 1997). The students discussed issues of: the importance of listening and respecting all members of the group; encouraging the ideas and skills of each member of the group; and working co-operatively together on agreed goals.

The concept of using small group discussions which are presented to the whole group for further questions and discussion, is a way to encourage all participants to have a voice. For example, the quieter members of the group were usually prepared to make contributions in the small group discussions and then their ideas were included in the presentation to the whole group. Most of the time, each member of the group made contributions to the particular discussion. During the small group discussions, the class teacher and I circulated from group to group to offer encouragement for each member to participate; to encourage each group to discuss the given topic and remind them to respect each other; and to encourage them to pursue their own ideas further and brainstorm ways to problem-solve their ideas.

Planning Community Action Projects

Participants worked in small groups (two to eight per group) to identify a shared vision to improve the local community. The students needed to choose projects that could be completed or at least initiated within the time constraints which was less than three months. This only allowed time for small community-building projects, rather than lengthy, time-consuming social action projects. The students came up with a range of ideas of their own and I provided them with a range of community service agencies they could choose to work with for their project. The small groups were each expected to work with a local community group or enterprise to develop and undertake their respective projects.

The teacher requested that each small group develop a mission statement of what they hoped to achieve and why. The group discussions encouraged all participants to share their ideas to identify community problems, and to analyse issues in order to plan for community involvement towards social change. The small group discussions, later presented to the whole group, provided an opportunity for the participants to share their ideas and insights to develop community action projects with each other.

After the class and small group discussion the students divided themselves into five groups and chose to organise the following activities of: (1) a drug-free, public, underage dance party; (2) a student *battle of the bands* (that is, student

bands competing in public); (3) children's activities at a refugee cultural festival; (4) a community theatre company; and (5) designing a small public garden area with an Aboriginal theme.

The students had two months to plan and complete their projects. They used class session times, of two short morning periods and one double period of an afternoon each week where they had school and parental consent to leave the school grounds to organise their community projects, as appropriate. During one session each week the student small groups reported to the whole class on the progress of their projects and discussed issues arising with their classmates. Thus, the students were encouraged to continually self-evaluate during the process, as part of the planning, action and reflection cycles of action research.

Each student group worked autonomously to plan and undertake their respective community projects. Support was provided by the teacher and me to assist them to clarify the issues and consider their options. However, the projects were student-led and student-designed, with the students taking responsibility for their own choices and actions. Each student group completed their chosen project, or at least undertook a significant step towards the goal of their project.

Community Project Results

Three groups completed their projects with the events specified in their mission statements: the public underage dance party; the school battle of the bands; and the refugee cultural festival children's activities. The other two groups were able to undertake an initial phase of their projects within the limited timeframe: the community theatre company proposal group with an initial grant application and a one-off performance; and the Aboriginal public garden group having developed a draft garden design in collaboration with an Aboriginal park ranger.

The students were each involved in evaluating their group projects throughout the process (with verbal reports to the class each week) and completed verbal and written evaluations at the conclusion of their respective projects. The students also took photographs of their projects that they added to their written evaluations. They mounted a selection of their photos onto poster cardboard to be included in

the class video covering their projects and oral evaluations. These images of lived experience provided another dimension to the evaluation process (Berger, Mohr, & Philibert, 1982; Burgin, 1982; Tagg, 1988).

The quotes provided below are taken from a phenomenological analysis of the written evaluations provided by students individually (as part of their class reports), unless otherwise stated, and pseudonyms are used throughout this reporting.

Youth Festival – Public Drug-free Underage Dance Party

> *The highlight of my experience would have been the satisfaction we all felt when the night that we had been planning, stressing over and having sleepless nights about became a rip roaring success. It was a real adrenalin rush for all of us ('Donald', Dance Party group)*

These students (five males and three females) felt there was a need for entertainment for local youth that was drug and alcohol free, as they were underage (15 and 16 years old) and were concerned about the high level of drug use in the area. Initially, the students tried to get support from the local Council, but this proved difficult in the time available. A local community police officer, who worked with local youth, heard about the dilemma and introduced the students to an experienced local hotelier. After some negotiation by the students, they were able to gain the support of this local hotelier who had provided a venue for underage dance parties before, and was prepared to do so again.

The dance party group soon realised they had undertaken a huge task in a very short timeframe and faced many problems that needed to be negotiated and solved for this complex venture. Yet, this group ended up promoting their event very well with promotional materials including posters, tickets, newspaper advertisements and an article in a local newspaper promoting the event. See Appendix 3 for one of the media coverage articles.

They worked long hours to accomplish a successful outcome, including working at the venue the whole day leading up to the evening event. The hotelier had not yet finished renovations on the venue and also needed to prepare an extra

room as the students had organised two DJs (one set up to play Rhythm and Blues (R&B) and the other set up to play Techno music). Members of the group assisted in cleaning and preparing the room for adequate public safety for the evening event.

The event was considered a huge success with over 300 attending, with no incidents within the venue, despite the local area having many social problems. Subsequently, one member has been offered a job with a DJ involved in the event. The students took on significant responsibility and were concerned with the outcomes, and were exhilarated when the event was deemed a success. Interestingly, this group was so proud of their success that they went on to organise another underage dance party on their own early the next year, even though the teacher and I had left the school by this time, and the hotel had changed hands. They had to re-negotiate the terms and conditions of the arrangements for the event. This is especially important as their teachers had been concerned that they were in at-risk of disengaging from school, yet here they were voluntarily managing a complex community event for their peers. The second dance party was again successful with an estimated 500 attending and no incidents. A local newspaper gave the students positive and prominent coverage for the community event.

Youth Festival – Student Battle of the Bands

> *I think I have become more appreciative of community events throughout the program as I now understand the amount of work involved in organising them. I have also developed a bigger interest in alternative music and the organising of events such as the Battle of the Bands. Through the program I have found that I would like a career which involves the organising of music events. The best part of the program would be the freedom to organise your own community event as you feel proud of your own achievement. ('Amanda', Battle of Bands group)*

Two other students (one male and one female) were also keen to organise a music event for youth. Unlike the underage dance party group, who liked the

techno and rhythm and blues (R & B) music, these students were into alternative music and promoting local student bands. They also sought assistance from the local Council, but to no avail, so they chose to assist their own school music teacher to plan, promote, and compere [MC] a battle of the bands within the school. The promotion of this event included recruiting bands, encouraging students to attend, and acquiring donated prizes for competing bands from various local businesses.

This event proved very successful, with a high proportion of the school body attending. The two students' enthusiasm and efforts were greatly appreciated by the teachers, the band members and those attending. Meanwhile, one of them has decided that she would like to consider promoting music events as a career option. Two years later in a follow up session at the end of Year 12 she wrote:

> *It was a learning experience I will take away with me for the rest of my life. My most memorable moments of school were in Working Community Program class. Instead of having to sit there and learn by others examples, I got to make my own. To this day, I am still able to publicly speak. I owe a lot of my confidence to the Battle of the Bands experience. I am prouder now of my achievements now than I was ever. My perception of what was good, great, not so good has completely changed two years down the track. It gives me the strength to say, "I had the balls to do that!" and it's incentive to do something big again. If in future I get the chance to be involved in the community, I would because I know now that anything can be achieved with willpower. I recommend all schools should implement a program like this. ('Amanda', Battle of the Bands group, two years later in Year 12)*

Refugee Cultural Festival – Children's Activities

> *We sure loved all the smiles we got from the children and we even got smiles from Tiffany and Melanie (community service workers). Everything went to plan, although we did not expect nearly as many children, but we were happy to accommodate them all and we worked*

together quickly as a group to adapt to the crowds of children we had to deal with. ('Josie', Children's Activities' group)

Six young women in the class all wanted to do some sort of activity to benefit those less fortunate in the community. These young women discussed many ideas of what they could do, and finally decided to assist with at an upcoming annual event organised by the North-Western Migrant Resource Centre, by organising children's activities for the event. They organised to meeting times with the Migrant Resource Centre co-ordinator for the event. The students wanted to do face painting, hair-spraying and blowing bubbles, but were informed they couldn't have bubbles due to safety reasons. The local community shopping plaza events organiser provided extra children's activity equipment for the young women to use at the venue on the day. These students were so well organised that they invited two friends from outside of the class to assist them on the day. All the young women worked very enthusiastically with large numbers of children attending the event. The parents were grateful to have activities provided for their children.

Community Theatre – Proposal

Our group worked together as a team, as our project is such a long term one, we each had input on filling out applications, structuring our vocals etc. At the performance I gave the audience some information about our community amateur theatrical society and introduced our act. With limited time we hadn't organised the date and structure of our performance far enough in advance, so the lead up was quite nerve racking. As someone who enjoys performing, naturally the best part for me was performing ('Cassie', Theatre group)

Three young women decided that they would like to form their own community theatre, as they believed that the existing local community theatre group they knew of tended to be insular and only looking after the welfare of their long-time members. They found that the local council was offering information and grants for community cultural projects. One of the group attended a Council

workshop and talked to a local councillor. They made their application for funding and their application for a business trading name and found someone to design a logo for their group. They decided to call themselves B-CAT – Brimbank Community Arts Theatre.

These students wanted to give a debut performance with singing and dancing to promote their proposed new community theatre. They were hoping to be part of the refugee cultural festival performances in which one of the other groups were involved. However, the organisers of the cultural event believed that the popular songs (from Madonna) that were chosen, were not suitable for the event. So, the students contacted the same local shopping mall management to organise a separate performance time, and the teacher organised for the school bus to take their classmates to support their performance at the mall. They performed their songs with their own choreography and were cheered on my their classmates. The debut performance was recorded on video, as with each of the project events.

The young women had hoped to do more towards starting their own community theatre, but due to the constraints of time, the initial performance was all that was able to be achieved. However, the young women were pleased that they were given the chance to perform and were eager to participate in more community theatre. They would consider starting their own company after they had completed school.

Cultural Heritage and Environment – Design an Aboriginal Garden

> *It really opened my eyes and now I know I can still contribute to the community, making a small difference which sums up with other people's efforts, to make a big difference overall. The best part is definitely moving around and going places rather than being stuck in a classroom. Also visiting the park on a nice day, going for walks and learning about other people's ways of life. The development of my attitude towards helping others has increased immensely and my attitude towards my responsibility and others has also changed as a result of my involvement in this program. ('Vin', Garden group)*

Four young men in the class decided they wanted to do something to improve the local environment, particularly the parks and gardens. One, a Vietnamese Australian, was a gifted artist and wanted to design something with the assistance of his friends. Connection was made with an Aboriginal park ranger, who was happy to work with the them. The park ranger offered a choice of three projects and they chose to re-designing the garden area in front of the Brimbank Park Visitors' Centre to have an Australian Aboriginal theme. They organised several meetings with the park ranger, who explained many historical and local Aboriginal cultural heritage issues and encouraged them to research the many plants used by local Aborigines which have medicinal and cultural significance.

The students were able to draft a plan, after much research and discussion, and submit this to the ranger. However, they were unable to construct the garden due to time constraints and the need to consult with various government and Indigenous groups before the plans could be ratified and carried out. However, the students were pleased to have learnt much about Indigenous issues and what was involved in planning public ventures. The park ranger was appreciative of the initiative shown by the young men and their commitment to researching and discussing the issues, to achieve a draft garden design proposal. He gave them a thank you letter for their impressive efforts.

Community Project Outcomes

Three out of the five community projects culminated in a successful event:

1. The drug-free underage dance party was enjoyed without incident by hundreds of local students with positive reports in the local media.

2. "Alternative music" students appreciated a chance to perform at the battle of the bands organised by fellow students and the school music teacher.

3. Children's face painting and activities for a refugee cultural festival organised by a group of female students was greatly appreciated by festival organisers and by the parents attending the festival.

The other two groups were able to make a significant start to their community projects in the limited time-frame available:

4. The local council appreciated the positive initiative of students applying for a local community grant to start their own community theatre. The students also appreciated the chance to perform at the local shopping mall.

5. The Aboriginal Park Ranger appreciated the initiative and dedication of a small group of Australian and Vietnamese young men researching and designing a small Aboriginal park in collaboration with him. The students completed a garden design, but the actual Aboriginal garden initiative could not be completed due to time constraints and bureaucratic requirements.

In summary, the various projects, organised and carried out by the students themselves, made a positive contribution to the local community. Their positive contributions were affirmed at a celebration day at the end of the semester. Organised in conjunction with other schools involved in the Working Community Program, students, teachers and community partners attended. Students from each school gave reports on the community projects undertaken. The state Minister of Education congratulated them on their efforts in gaining leadership skills to benefit their future careers and making a positive contribution to the wider community.

The teacher and I had taken video footage of our student projects and of their evaluations, including photos, which we made into a videotape. I presented each student with a copy of the videotape as a gift for their contribution both to the research and to the wider community.

Participant Evaluations

This positive contribution through the participant community projects was evaluated through the comprehensive notes kept from: the student participants' verbal and written self-reports throughout the process, at the end of the process and in a follow-up session two years later; the observations and written evaluations from various community partners involved in the participant-led projects; and my own phenomenological observations.

The phenomenological analysis of data was undertaken by systematically reviewing the extensive written and verbal reports from focus style group

discussions and individual written reports from open-ended questions produced by each of the 24 students, along with a careful examination of the ethnographic material. Video footage and photos taken by participants during project events and evaluations sessions were also used to reflect on group processes and students' perceptions. An analysis of the students' spontaneous and independent comments was undertaken.

Participant Themes

Students worked in small groups according to their areas of interest. Throughout the process the small groups engaged in reflective practice, considering the benefits and challenges associated with each step of the work. Students recorded their self-evaluations and shared them with the class, the teacher and myself. This took place regularly throughout the life of the projects, with weekly verbal small group reports to the whole class. In addition, at the completion of their projects each group evaluated their project on videotape. The student participants each provided written answers to open-ended questions about their own personal part in the project and how they felt about doing the work, as part of the reporting requirement for the school program. Their self-report written evaluations were used to analyse the participants perceptions of the process and outcomes associated with each project.

The analytical framework used was to organise the material to try and illuminate the key issues or themes covered in the written reports received from the students on their evaluations of the process and outcomes of their respective community projects This content analysis of finding recurring words or themes is a reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings, to not only make sense of the world but also to try and making sense of our relationship to the world (Patton, 2002).

In this current research, all references to positive and negative feelings and experiences expressed in their reports were highlighted. This included comments on the processes throughout their project management experience, as well as, lessons learned from the project outcome. Similar words, phases and concepts

were grouped together and coded to find any pattern of common themes emerging, in relation to their self-perceived change in skills, attitudes, feelings, behaviours and knowledge learned. See Appendix 4 for a comprehensive summary of student comments arranged by emerging themes.

In the written evaluations, the students consistently reported positive experiences, both in the process and outcomes of their projects. Students in each group acknowledged some concerns throughout the process, either of not being organised enough early in the process or being concerned that their project would not be successful. However, in each case, the students reported that these negative concerns became positive outcomes and that they felt is was worth the effort.

Positive outcomes reported in the participants' written evaluations, which also revealed a positive effect of the program. The positive responses from the student participants subjective experiences can be summarised in the following themes:

(1) freedom of expression, with a sense of pride and hopefulness that they were trusted to act independently to discover and dream of their community projects;

(2) influence, with a sense of confidence that they developed leadership, organisational and teamwork skills to design and problem-solve issues to control their own community projects; and

(3) community connectedness, with the challenge to make a meaningful contribution to the community through community action projects, thereby creating their own sense of community.

Table 10 summaries these participant outcomes by themes, and Appendix 4 provides more detail of student written evaluations in a thematic content analysis.

However, it should be noted that due to time restraints the participants were not involved in any detailed analysis of their experiences and evaluations. So this analysis is my own interpretation of the participants primarily written (with some verbal in the case studies) evaluations.

Table 10
Student Participant Outcomes

Level of Analysis	Self-Reported Outcomes
Personal	*Freedom of Expression* • Social identity affirmation • Acting on enhanced socio-political awareness • Felt trusted to act independently leading to a sense of control • Sense of pride and hopefulness
Group	*Influence* • Sense of confidence and group solidarity • Development of leadership, organisational and teamwork skills • Independence and motivation with own project management, design and problem-solving
Community	*Community Connectedness* • Embraced challenge to make a meaningful contribution to community youth involvement • Created own community action projects • Created own sense of community connectedness

Freedom of Expression

Students expressed their pride in being trusted to act independently, to freely express themselves and devise their own community projects, based on social identity issues. Comments included: *"The best part of the program would be the freedom to organise your own community event as you feel proud of your own achievement" (Amanda, Bands) ; "It was great where you were the one who got to decide on what you would be doing. It gives you the freedom to let you go out into the community and see what you can come up with." (Trix, Children) ; "The freedom and trust that is put in us throughout the semester gives us confidence and a lot more room to personalise our projects. This freedom is the gateway that gave our project the individuality and special feel that we enjoyed so much." (Josie, Children) ; "The best part was the freedom. The fact that we were allowed to decide the project that we do and were allowed to leave the school grounds to work on it" (Liana, Theatre); "The best part of the program that you weren't*

under the teachers control all the time. You were independent and self-determinate (sic).” (Minh, Dance).

They also expressed an enhanced socio-political awareness. Students planning and executing the various projects realised the influence of power dynamics upon their lives. One commented that during the process he “*learned a lot about how the world works.” (Arthur, Garden)* Another noted that the work *“opened my eyes to the needs of our youth,” (Donald, Dance)* while a third one observed that the intervention *“developed my awareness to community issues and helping out in the community.” (Vin, Garden)* These are just a few examples of many similar comments made by students.

Students expressed an enhanced sense of control and hopefulness, with one male student declaring *“I took on adult responsibilities” (Donald, Dance),* and a female student commenting: *“I am now confident enough to do things that I would usually hand over to someone else” (Cassie, Theatre).* Students’ perceptions about their ability to make a change moved from *“What can we do? We are only kids; We don’t have any connections” (Donald, Dance, in a class discussion early in the program)* to *“I can still contribute to the community, making a small difference which sums up with other people’s efforts, to make a big difference overall.” (Vin, Garden).*

Influence With Leadership Skills Development

The students’ sense of influence was enhanced as they developed teamwork, leadership and communication skills. The independence and motivation of the students was clearly evident as they worked in their groups. Although they felt somewhat overwhelmed at first by the task and the independence they were given, they gradually gained confidence in their ability to see the projects through. The group that organised the dance party went on to organise, independently, a second and bigger one. This is particularly impressive given that a few of the young men in this group, who initially took the class to avoid more academic school subjects, emerged as leaders of the group and worked very hard to convince others to help them to successfully promote the event.

Ensuring group effectiveness was an important skill developed in the small teams. A student observed that the project *"helped me become independent and able to organise with my group an event with hardly any assistance" (Britany, Children).* As part of a supportive team effort organising children's activities another student was happy to have developed *"confidence, communication, organising and independence" (Britany, Children).* They also learnt practical communication skills for community organising, including: *"Phone calls sharpened our skills with communicating because we slowly got the hang of talking to strangers and not being shy to express our own ideas to the other person" (Vin, Garden)* and *"It is a great way to build skills, and give you a realisation of what YOU are capable of and what YOU can achieve when you put your mind to it. I am glad that I had the opportunity to build my skills in such a way that I have never experienced in school before. The fact that this one program can offer so much more is really something and I look forward to using the skills I have developed in all my subjects and even out of school." (Josie, Children, her emphasis).* Reflecting on their initial hesitation, a student commented that now *"we can organise and do what we want if we really want it" (Britany, Children).*

In addition to independence, motivation and group effectiveness, students experienced cohesion and solidarity. Students relished the sense of belonging that evolved over the course of the challenge. *"The highlight was the satisfaction we all felt when the night of the dance party that we had been planning, stressing over and having sleepless nights about became a rip roaring success. It was a real adrenalin rush for all of us." (Donald, Dance).*

Lessons Learnt

There was only one student who reported a negative experiences that did not have a positive outcome, although she learnt a valuable lesson from the experience. She was struggling with personal issues and was regularly absent from class. Yet, she wrote of the positive influence of the class:

> *I admit I had no role in the group as I did not show any interest in organising the underage and did not show up to the underage. Not*

only did I let myself down but also my group. Even without my help they did excellent but maybe if I showed a little more interest everything would be better. If another dance party is going to be organised I don't think I'll include myself in organising it I will help if they do ask. The program was a good experience. I think if you had the chance to do it do it! You gain different learning skills and meet different people. The best part would be thinking up what to organize for the youth in our area. The worst part about the program would probably be nothing. The program was good because you would be in control for a change. The skills I gained from the program would be communication skills and being able to work in a group and not disagree on things (Rowena, Dance Party group)

Discussion of Participant Evaluations

Community Connections

By being exposed to local community agencies, the participants gained an awareness of local community issues and what is being done to address these issues. Student participants considered how they could make a contribution to solving the problems of their local community through taking leadership roles and participating effectively in group work. In sharing their ideas and insights into possible community action, the participants gained a sense of being able to contribute meaningfully to the local community (Morsillo & Prilleltensky, in press).

The students made community connections as they developed their projects, showing a growing sense of empowerment to make further community connections and to think of their own family community connections. For example, the students who wanted to organise their own community theatre, worked with their extended family connections in community theatre and with a local council member they knew through their family. The students also read the local papers and found an information night on community grants which they attended and received a copy of a grant application to assist in starting their own community theatre.

Through supportive group work and making connections with local community groups, participants developed ways to solve problems and improve their local community through their projects. The students came to realise how local community services work, how to relate to the appropriate government bodies, and what is entailed in organising social action projects, such as government funding and community safety issues. They learnt what the issues were and found appropriate ways to deal with them.

For example, for the underage dance party, the students learnt about the government "Freeza" funding for underage youth festivals, and negotiated with the Council to access this funding. They met with the Council and learnt the relevant regulations that they must abide by, and reported this to their classmates. When it looked like they might not be able to access the money within the tight timeframes, they found another option, without using the Freeza funding. However, knowing about the various public issues was invaluable when negotiating an alternative way forward with the help of the local community police officer and a local hotelier.

In designing local community projects, the students were also confronted with community safety regulations and related public liability issues. The students learnt about public liability issues, including not being able to do anything new without all the appropriate government approvals. For example, the park designers learnt that before they can put a shovel in the ground, their park design must be approved by the government authorities of Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water, plus have the approval of the designated Aboriginal leaders in the local area.

The students learnt about the rules and regulations, and about working within these guidelines to solve some of their community problems. They worked out appropriate ways to make a positive contribution to their local community. They found this quite daunting at first, but began to appreciate the issues and work through them as a supportive group to realise their goal of improving their local community. One student made the comment while organising the underage dance

party, *"Oh well, if we get sued, we all get sued together. Right."(Rodney)*. The group agreed.

The student projects were all completed with great success. The students received much praise and publicity from the wider community for their passion, their good organisation skills, and their worthwhile contribution to the local community. Some project groups experienced some frustrations in their proposed social actions, especially working within the timelines of less than three months for the whole program. However, each project group learnt valuable organisational and leadership skills.

Community Connectedness

Student evaluations revealed an improved sense of community connectedness. Students developed community participation skills and a sense of social responsibility, with comments like: *"a sense of satisfaction that you were able to put something back into the community for once" (Donald, Dance)*. They organised and attended meetings with community service workers, business people, politicians and others. In addition, they learned about obtaining permits, bureaucracy and the inner workings of local government. One student observed that *"you get to interact with other people in the community, which is a thing you wouldn't normally do" (Trix, Children)* while another commented that *"meetings with community service workers gave us the independence and presented us with problems that we had to tackle, not just as individuals, but as a group." (Josie, Children)*.

Students benefited from their participation in community activities, and the community benefited as well. The community gained enhanced youth involvement in local affairs during the projects. One of the students who undertook the program went on to volunteer in an ongoing capacity to be a member of the Youth Advisory Council with the local government. Others went on to organise other school and community events, such as school balls and youth festivals with other secondary schools in the area.

The various community workers involved with the students also expressed their appreciation for the community benefits of the community projects. For

example, the young women involved in a cultural event received a thank you letter on behalf of the Refugee Festival organising committee and the Migrant Resource Centre NorthWest including:

> *" ... The event was a great success. The children's activities added to the variety of the day and gave the children an opportunity to be busy, enjoy themselves and look very colourful. You did a really excellent job."*

Another example of community gratitude was for the young men who designed the Indigenous Garden, from the Indigenous Ranger of Brimbank Park, who noted:

> *"I have noticed their keen attitudes and inquisitive manner in learning about our environment. Researching information, designing the garden and costing of materials has been done by the students . . . The young men are a credit to Keilor Downs College as they have behaved well and maintained a good repour at this park."*

These themes of personal and community benefit continued in a follow-up evaluation session two years later in the students' final months of secondary school life. Students expressed even more pride and confidence in their abilities and achievements gained through the program. Many commented that it was the best experience of their entire secondary school life. They also commented on the practical leadership skills and confidence that they developed and could use in everyday life and in taking on further challenges in community and other work opportunities. For example, in the follow-up evaluation session a female student said: *"I am prouder now of my achievements than ever. It gives me strength to say: 'I had the balls to do that!' and it's incentive to do something big again . . . I know now I can achieve anything with willpower" (Amanda, Bands, Year 12);* and a male student commented: *"The program gave me a lot of ambition and energy to aim higher in life." (Minh, Dance, Year 12)*

A teacher at the school, assisting with the follow up evaluations, commented that many of the students in the Working Community Program had gone on to take on significant leadership roles within the school and that a few of the

students had also taken on significant leadership roles outside. As another female student in the follow-up reports commented:

> *Being put in a position where we have to set goals, interact and pursue our goals is an amazing experience, which also helps in being involved in leadership and teamwork after the program. It gives the ability to have an active role in our community and help us realise that we really do have a voice. (Donna, Children, Year 12).*

Another female student commented:

> *Being involved in WCP two years ago helped me to develop my leadership and communication skills with not only my peers, but also with the community. It helped with the organisation of my future aspirations. I look forward to being able to teach future students about developing their teamwork and leadership skills. I would highly recommend the program to other students. (Suzie, Children).*

The 13 students able to attend the follow-up session, each gave positive feedback on the program and commented that they would highly recommend the program to future students.

In the written evaluations, participants generally reported positive effects from the project with increased empowerment at all levels: (a) personal level – improved sense of empowerment in understanding socio-political issues and positive responses in relation to the community; (b) organisational level – working effectively with their peers and developing organisational and leadership skills; and (c) community level – developing meaningful connections and creatively making a positive contribution to the community. Table 11 outlines the empowering processes and outcomes for participants leading to a sense of community connectedness.

Participant Benefits

Encouraging outcomes were observed at the three levels of intervention. In part, this may be due to the successful completion of most projects. Students felt rewarded by the recognition they obtained from the community at large.

Table 11
Empowering Processes and Outcomes

Level of Analysis	**Empowering Processes** (focus on efforts)	**Empowered Outcomes** (results of efforts)
Personal	*Learning about self and community* • Reflecting on perception of self • Engaging in social critique • Participating in empowering group with community agencies • Learning how some social systems work in the local community • Learning how to go about obtaining resources in the local community • Developing skills to attempt to access resources in the community	*Discovering social justice issues* • Redefining some aspects of self-image • Instrumental empowerment: gaining some socio-political awareness • Relational empowerment: gaining some sense of control over certain situations • Taking action to influence events: gaining some participatory competence
Group	*Experiencing supportive group work* • Participating in a group with initial encouragement from researcher and youth leader/teacher • Learning how to work together as a group • Participating in group decision making • Learning to take some leadership roles • Experiencing the value of peer support • Learning to collaborate with community service providers • Experiencing the benefits of collective action	*Campaigning together* • Experiencing the results of actions taken by group participants • Development of some local networks • Gaining some lobbying power • Securing some community resources • Development of a group vision, ideology, values and culture • Improved concept of group work • Enhanced group effectiveness • Instrumental empowerment
Community	*Acquiring community connections* • Developing community coalitions • Involvement with some stakeholders from across levels of social system • Gaining some institutional support	*Solving community problems* • Development of more or better community resources • A sense of how to improve collective lives • Substantive empowerment: improved community outcomes

Adapted from Butterworth (1999) using model of Zimmerman (2000)

Some of the projects were promoted and reported in the local newspapers, adding visibility and credibility to students' work (see Appendix 3).

The students, teacher, and community workers reported positive outcomes for the youth and the neighbourhood as a whole. In fact, students showed positive outcomes from the process and expressed appreciation for their involvement in community projects.

They revealed positive learning experiences in working independently as part of a supportive team effort. The written reports closely reflected focus group discussions and videoed sessions. Verbal and written comments closely reflected the themes emerging from the ethnographic material.

Enhanced Social Identity

The groups involved in this research created new enhanced social identity in relation to the local community, forming new narratives together following a typical narrative sequence, in this case: (a) orientation of disenchanted youth within a disadvantaged community assuming the dominant cultural narrative of oppression and frustration and lack of sense of community; (b) the point of the story being a chance for youth to use an action research model to create a new narrative of enchantment using various visual and performing arts of choice within the local community; (c) the *complicating* action of a celebratory community project; (d) evaluation of empowerment with new enhanced narratives of hope; and (e) conclusion of success of youth participation with youth-led local community projects leading to new enhanced narratives.

Donald the Promoter

The following is a case study of one young person's story, I constructed using written quotes from the participant's evaluation. The *orientation of the story* is a 16 year old, *Donald*, a youth-at-risk of school disengagement, who was involved in the action research project. The *point of the story* is that Donald was disenchanted with the dominant narrative of youth being perceived as problems, with the highly visible incidence of drug taking (with discarded syringes in public places) and little in the way of positive alternatives of drug-free venues for the

entertainment of teenagers. This was accompanied by feelings of powerlessness to change the circumstances in this disadvantaged area, which has a high youth population, high unemployment and high suicide rates. His comments were, "*We need more entertainment for youth to relieve their boredom and turning to drugs . . . But we're only kids, what can we do to change things, we can't organise any major event ourselves."*

The *complicating action* was that the participants became engaged in co-operative inquiry. This involved thinking critically, researching and planning possible community projects as a group. Group discussions revealed that community connections were available. Donald realised that maybe he could organise an underage dance party. He took on the responsibility of organising the DJs and other practical aspects of the venue, including addressing safety issues. He had his own connections of cousins, whom he hoped might be able to assist as DJs. When that idea fell through, after some initial frustration, he used the Internet to track down more options. The action research planning steps taken were: (a) role playing of actions to take in making community connections; (b) researching and discovering possible community contacts; (c) using the Internet to find more contacts; (d) pursuing personal contacts; (e) meeting with community contacts; (f) designing own community project; (g) organising a community project with peer-support; (h) undertaking a youth-led community project; and (i) forming a new narrative of enchantment and empowerment, to experience an improved sense of community connectedness.

The *evaluation* was that Donald felt impressed that he could take control and make a difference by organising an underage dance party successfully. His own written evaluation included:

> *I feel that I contributed a great deal in turning this night into a huge success. I worked within the group and didn't make a lot of fuss. I tried to support everyone's ideas and input. Planning an underage dance party can be extremely hard work as I found out along the way. The highlight of my experience would have been the satisfaction we all felt when the night that we had been planning, stressing over and*

having sleepless nights about became a rip roaring success. It was a real adrenalin rush for all of us.

The worst part was the clash of egos, trying to listen to each other's point of view and working within the group without getting frustrated and losing our cool. The night didn't go without its hiccups. The most rewarding thing was the fact that there was no trouble on the night and everyone really seemed to enjoy themselves. We got recognition from promoters who approached me and offered me some work in the future in helping organise further underage events. I went to bed that night on a real high (Donald, Dance).

The *conclusion* was that the action research approach can be successfully used to work with disenchanted youth to create new personal narratives of positive social identity.

Seleena the Social Worker

A very different story came from a struggling female student, *Seleena*. Seleena was a 15 year old female student encouraged to participate in this pilot program by teachers who were concerned that she may be at-risk of disengagement from school. During the program she spent time visiting a relative in hospital due to a drug-overdose. She also had a close relative in prison. She spoke of perhaps ending up in prison herself one day. Seleena kept company with the most vocal group of young men in her Year 10 *Working Community Program* class, chatting constantly with them.

Seleena had a strong sense of justice and wanting to help others. She was particularly concerned for the plight of refugees, an issue raised in class discussions. Seleena does not have a great deal of confidence academically. She told me that she is good at listening but not good at explaining things to other people. She argued that while she was keen to do something with refugees, she could not possibly take part in a prospective project of assisting in a Homework Club at the local Christian brothers, *Edmond Rice Centre*, tutoring recent refugee youth of her age.

Nevertheless, Seleena wanted to do something with and for refugees, whom she believed were hard done by. In class discussions, some students showed concern for the treatment of refugees coming to Australia. The students thought it was not fair that people who arrive here by boat are treated as criminals and locked away. This view was particularly espoused by some of the more vocal young men and Seleena.

We talked about the possibility of trying to organise a visit to the Maribyrnong Detention Centre, where asylum seekers and illegal immigrants are detained, if there was enough interest. Seleena showed immediate interest. Seleena was keen to go into the detention centre and interview a detainee. Then she wanted to interview a person who has been a refugee, but has now been settled in Australia for a while and see the difference in how they felt.

The more vocal young men in the class were quick to raise many concerns. How could we actually get to talk with them? How can we get interpreters? How would we pay for the interpreters? What would happen to us if we wrote a story in the local paper that criticised the detention centre? Would they come and get us? Would we be safe? The young men were concerned for the logistical and safety issues that could be encountered. We discussed their concerns and talked about not being expected to do anything that made anyone feel unsafe. However, Seleena was still more concerned about the plight of the refugees who were being detained. She wanted to do something to help others in need.

With further discussion, Seleena also became keen on helping her male friends to organise an underage dance party. She provided much enthusiasm for the group. She occasionally clashed with some of the others over promotional issues and did not actually attend the party. However, she did assist with preparations, encouraged the rest of the group throughout the project and congratulated them all on their success with the event.

Interestingly, two years later in a follow-up session as Seleena was finishing her final year of secondary schooling, she said to me that the program had changed her life, and she now wanted to be a social worker, writing:

The Working Community Program has influenced me to take social work into consideration therefore have entered myself in social work courses. This program was the best subject done through my high school life. I would recommend this program to all students that are interested in getting involved with the community ('Seleena', Dance).

Rodney the Agitator

Rodney is another 16 year old student who elected to do this program in Year 10, with a similar, but different story from Donald. Rodney was very excited about doing this subject because he had heard that in the previous semester the students went on excursions, and he was particularly interested that they went to a large local shopping mall. At the beginning of each class for several sessions, he would inevitably ask very loudly and consistently, "When are we going to the shopping mall?'

The teacher and I explained that first students had to chose a community project to do as a small group, then they would go on relevant excursions in relation to their project. These community projects rarely involved going to shopping centres, unless it was an integral part of their project.

Rodney and his friends were having trouble deciding what community project they would like to do until another small group in the class came up with the idea of organising an underage dance party. Rodney and his friends became very excited by the idea of organising an event for local youth to help keep them off the streets and provide an alcohol and drug free night with music and fun.

Organising the underage dance party was much more difficult than he first imagined. There were many obstacles to overcome. Rodney took a leadership role in trying to acquire government support for funding for the event, but was unable to do so in the tight timeframe of the project. A local community police officer offered to help by introducing Rodney and others in the group to a local publican who was prepared to have an underage dance party in the back rooms he was building.

Rodney also took upon himself a leadership role in promoting the event. He organised to promote the event through many avenues, including visiting many local schools with hand-outs, designed by another member of the group, and individually encouraging many students to attend. A week before the event, the teacher asked Rodney if he was stressed about the up-coming event. Rodney's reaction was, *"Stress? This is like shitting bricks. I haven't slept properly for three weeks" (Rodney, Dance)*.

However, on the night over 300 youth turned up to the event. Rodney was very impressed and relieved, as were his mates. They had promoted the event for months and had to clean up the venue all day because of last minute renovations needed. They also helped the bouncers make sure the event was truly drug-free and alcohol free. There were no incidents within the venue. The local community police officer confiscated one large knife from a local gang member on the street out at the front of the venue, but the bouncers reported no negative incidents inside the venue and commented on the good behaviour of all the teenagers attending the party. Positive reports were received from all involved, even though the event was held in one of the highest crime areas of Melbourne, with high unemployment, and a high rate of homeless youth called, ironically, Sunshine (Brimbank City Council, 2000; Vinson, 2004).

Later Rodney announced he would organise and promote another underage dance party in the new year at the same venue. He did go on to organise another under-age dance party with his mate Donald, and even more youth came. Rodney had acquired a new enhanced narrative by transitioning his agitator's role from the class clown to the class promoter of events for youth.

Improved Sense of Community

Arguably, these student case studies and evaluations reveal an improved psychological sense of community, incorporating: (1) *membership* – a sense of belonging to the group, with a shared concern for youth in their disadvantaged community, experiencing the emotional safety to make a personal investment to contribute to the community; (2) *influence* – development of trust enabling freedom of expression within the group to design, develop, and control the

community project; (3) *integration* – with fulfilment of the need for status and to demonstrate competence, with shared values as a protection from shame, extending their teamwork, leadership and communication skills for community work and career opportunities in the future; and (4) *shared connections* – with participation in and sharing of significant events to experience positive narratives of bonding and further connectedness to their local communities.

Conclusions

Students in the Working Community Program made significant shifts from feelings of disconnection from school and the community, to feelings of community connectedness. Many of the students had expressed feeling alienated from school life, and teachers had shown concern that they were at-risk of disengaging from school. Students said they choose the Working Community Program subject in order to have a chance to venture outside of the school grounds.

During the early stages of the research process, students expressed alienation from their local community. They felt discouraged with the lack of resources provided from them, both within school and outside, in the wider community. Further, they expressed feelings of disempowerment to make any difference to improve their community life.

However, during the research process of actively planning, undertaking and evaluating their own community projects, they gained leadership skills to confidently work together towards a mutual goal outside of the wider community. In completing their projects and accomplishing their goals, they were proud of their achievements, and that they made a positive contribution to the wider community.

Student participants, made significant positive changes in their perceptions of themselves at a personal, relational and community level: (1) personally, they felt more confident to take on empowering leadership roles of planning and organising their own projects; (2) relationally, they developed trust to express themselves and support each other to undertake a project of mutual concern; (3)

communally, they felt able to make a positive contribution of the life of their local community.

Students had a rapport with each other before the program began, revealing a sense of community within the group. The students strengthened their sense of community within the group as they supported each other to develop positive community connections and organise events outside of the group to create for themselves an improved sense of community connectedness.

CHAPTER 6

SAME-SEX ATTRACTED YOUTH SOCIAL ACTION DRAMA

Generation Q is a group of same-sex attracted youth (SSAY) wanting acceptance in a community without heterosexism or homophobia, free of rejection, trauma and alienation (Morsillo, 2004, 2005). Members of this social group live in the socially disadvantaged north-western suburbs of Melbourne, and meet weekly for mutual support and encouragement. They share their stories of traumatic events in their lives and their hopes for a better world, so moving from oppositionality towards acceptance and inclusion (Schafer, 1976).

I was invited to work in partnership with this group and their youth worker from Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service for six months on a social action project. An appreciative approach to action research was used to explore the participants' interests and concerns, as with the first group of students. This social group expressed a mutual passion for theatre work and an over-riding concern about heterosexist attitudes in their local neighbourhood. They agreed to create their own social action drama project.

Members participated in workshops to write drama vignettes for a teachers' forum, and to contribute to a policy manual called *A Class Act* on issues of same-sex attracted friendly environments in schools. Workshops were facilitated by their youth worker and me, with some assistance from an educational consultant. The participants reported affirmation as they shared ideas on challenging heterosexist and hetronormative attitudes whilst contributing to a social action project. This emergent sense of community connectedness was further demonstrated when they went on to plan and implement their own public forum on same-sex issues in the local community.

Rejection

Same-sex attracted youth often experience traumatic events as they grapple with feelings of being gay in a basically heterosexist society (D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995; Garnets & D'Angelli, 1994; Kitzinger, 1997; Wehbi, 2004) Johnson refered to the heteronormative assumptions of the current Australian

politicians, where same-sex relationships are tolerated but considered a disappointing choice and homosexuals are not treated as equal citizens (Johnson, 2003). This oppressive attitude of fear or intolerence towards same-sex attracted people has commonly been called *homophobia,* which is a term often used in the literature (Baker, 2001; Kitzinger, 1997; Wehbi, 2004). However, the term *homophobia* can be defined as 'imputing a sickness to specific individuals who supposedly deviate from the rest of society in being prejudiced against lesbians and gay men' (Kitzinger, 1997 p. 211). This could imply a stronger aversion to homosexuals by some compared to the general population. Although it could also be argued that many in the population do have a strong aversion to homosexuals that is more widespread than just specific individuals, with many being homophobic. However, the more general oppressive attitude by many heterosexuals towards homosexuals could more correctly be called *heterosexism.*

Same-sex attracted youth struggle with coming-out issues, fearing rejection by family, ostracism by peers, and being called a *"poofter"* or *"dyke"* at school (Ollis et al., 2002). They can experience heterosexist attitudes, with little support, their friends not coping, sometimes leading to self-harm and suicidal ideation (Hillier et al., 1998). They can feel alienated and isolated, with no sense of belonging (Emslie, 1999; Victorian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Promotion Officers & Farnan, 2001).

According to Savin-Williams and Cohen (1996), one common theme frequently identified in research and clinical accounts of same-sex attracted youth in the USA, is the chronic stress often created by peers and family members through their verbal and physical abuse. The psychosocial consequences of harassment and physical violence include quitting school, running away from home, conflict with the law, substance abuse, prostitution, and attemped suicide (Savin-Williams & Cohen, 1996).

In an Australian survey (Hillier et al., 1998) of 750 young people identifying as same-sex attracted, aged between 14 and 21 (49% male, 51% female), were asked about unfair treatment and any verbal and physical abuse suffered because of their sexuality. Nearly one-third believed they had been unfairly treated or

discriminated against, because of their sexuality. Forty-six percent of participants overall stated they had been verbally abused, with young men being more likely to be the target of verbal abuse. Thirteen percent of participants had been physically abused. More young people (70%) were abused at school than anywhere else. Ten percent had been abused by family members. Verbal and physical abuse had a profound effect on these young people, affecting their feelings of safety at home and at school and was related to the use of drugs and a reduction in their sense of well-being. Hillier et al., believed that despite these high levels of abuse, there was evidence that many young people were creatively using limited resources, and thought carefully about strategies to dismantle prejudice and work for change (Hillier et al., 1998).

Seeking Emotional Safety

Same-sex attracted youth need safe places, refuges from their heterosexist environment, in order to celebrate their sexuality, to celebrate the diversity of life (Wehbi, 2004). They form subcultures where they can freely express themselves (White, 1993, 1999). Their subcultures can become niches of resistance (Moane, 2003), as they gather to share alienating narratives and envision a better existance (Miles, 2002b; Pipher, 2002). They envision a world without heterosexism, a world accepting of sexual diversity, of *queer culture* with its bent on subversion of dominant cultural ideals (Beemyn & Eliason, 1996; Goldman, 1996; Ristock & Taylor, 1998; Seidman, 1997).

This research took place with same-sex attracted youth who have found a place of safety with a trusted youth worker at Generation Q. As one member commented:

> *It is good having Generation Q as it's a place to be free, make friends, and have fun and it helps us express ourselves and to be what we want to be. It helps us to deal with gay issues and to help us with whatever it maybe. Through all of my time spent with Generation Q it has helped me to become the person I am and not to be afraid of being gay ('Michael' of Generation Q).*

Support Group as Co-operative Inquirers

Support Group Program

I was invited to work with Generation Q, and their youth worker, Jemma, of Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services, St Albans, Melbourne. The agency management representative on my steering committee had invited me to speak at a staff meeting about my proposal to work with various youth groups. The Generation Q group youth worker was particularly interested in the concept and was willing to ask the members if they were interested in being part of the research.

Social Group Participants

Generation Q members were same-sex attracted youth, from 15-21 years old, who met weekly for mutual support and encouragement. At the time of the research, the group had 16 members, half female and half male, with an average attendance of eight each week. Half of the group were full-time school students and the others had part-time studies or casual work. Most of the group members were from Anglo-Saxon or European families with one Indigenous homeless woman and one single parent.

An advantage of this social group was the flexibility of time-lines for the project, with no limiting external constraints, such as a school term. We could be flexible with timelines, and were able to work together over the equivalent of two semesters. Interestingly, even though the timelines were longer for this group, compared to the school group, the actual contact time was similar, as there was less time per week, but over a much more extended period of time, plus an intensive weekend with this group.

Introductory Sessions

The introductory sessions followed the pattern of the school student group. Given the social setting of the group with smaller numbers, the sessions were less structured.

Firstly, the youth worker invited me to meet the group, and ask them if they wanted to be involved in a social action research project. Members asked me many questions about who I was and what I wanted to do. They were especially keen to know about my sexuality and my attitude to their sexuality. They seemed to accept my marital status, especially when I showed an openness and acceptance of their sexual preferences. They were also interested in what the project offered them. They wanted to know if it would be fun. I talked about the activities of a passion game, a chance to express their opinions and choose a community project and possibly a camp as part of the research project. They expressed interest in giving it a try. Table 12 outlines the activities undertaken with this group.

The introductory activities were adapted for this group from the student group. These activities included: (a) personal identity discovery with a passion game; (b) exploring basic needs and community concerns with group discussions; and (c) exploring ideas to improve the local community with group discussions.

Passion for Drama

Working with these youth and their youth worker was challenging, as they came to the group for social support. We were asking them to consider doing more than socialise, so needed to make the project concept sound interesting and fun for them to consider being involved. I offered them a chance to express themselves in positive ways and to organise a camp with them to work on their project. The group were enthusiastic about the concept.

Using a passion game, they explored their interests, their passions for life, what they could get excited about. As with the first group, the game involved me asking the group a series of questions, where the participants moved to one side of the room if they were passionate about that activity; moved to the other side if they definitely were not interested; and stayed still in the middle if they didn't care or had a mild interest.

Table 12
Appreciative Approach with Support Group (SSAY)

Session	**4D Appreciative Approach**	**Action Research Cycles**		
		PLAN	**ACT**	**REFLECT**
1	**Discovery of self** *– appreciating the best of what is (personally)*	Activities to promote personal social identity affirmation	Participants engage in **Passion game** activity to discover own passions, interests and beliefs	Participants reflect on own positive aspects of social identity and discover mutual interests of the group
2	**Discovery of community** *– appreciating best of what is in the community (and what could be improved)*	Activities to explore local community issues and needs	Participants engage in **Quest for Wellness** open questions to explore community issues and needs of the group	Participants discuss mutual issues of interest and concern in the local community
3	**Dream of community** *– envisioning what could be*	Activities to elicit ideas of how to promote their social identity within the local community	Participants engage in **discussion** with participants to explore ideas to promote their social identity within the local community	Participants socialise and reflect informally on ideas to promote their social identity within the local community
4-5	**Design of self in community** *– co-constructing what should be*	Participants brainstorm possible **social actions** of mutual interest of their choice	Participants explore options for a **social action** of mutual interest of their choice	Participants socialise and reflect informally on **social action** progress
6-14 plus an intensive weekend	**Destiny of self and community** *– sustaining what will be*	Participants plan a specific **social action** as a group	Participants design their **social action** with workshops	Participants undertake **social action** at a teachers' forum and reflect on experiences with the group and provide personal evaluations

Adapted from Ludema, J., Cooperrider, D., & Barrett, F. (2001)

The questions covered included sport, fitness, outdoor activities, thrill seeking activities, arts, music, dancing, drama, performing, cooking, eating foods from other cultures, refugees, and environmental issues. For each question those that moved to the passionate side were asked what was their specific interest (e.g., actual sport, type of music).

In this session, on the question of theatre performance and drama, all but one member, showed a strong interest. The only one not showing a particular interest was extremely shy. While not interested in up-front performing, she was happy to consider participating in a project involving performing, as long as she could just help in the background. It quickly became apparent that drama was of most interest for this group.

As this group was in a social setting, rather than a school setting, and was a much smaller group than the first school setting group, the youth worker decided it would be best to have the whole group work together on one community project. Thus it was important that this group had quickly found a common interest in drama, that could be used as a vehicle for a community project.

Heterosexist Concerns

The next group activity involved discussing mutual concerns. However, given the informal nature of this group, the youth worker and I decided to concentrate on the primary elements of the introductory sessions. So the passion game was used as was the Quest for Wellness discussion questions (Prilleltensky, 2001; Totikidis & Robertson, 2004). These discussion questions used in a focus group style discussion, with a series of open questions on: what they felt was good about themselves; what they felt was good about their relationships with others; what they felt was good about their local community; and what was needed to improve their personal, relational and community needs (Prilleltensky, 2001). The discussions quickly revealed a mutual concern about living in a heterosexist neighbourhood. Those who had been so alienated and faced many challenges had become critical thinkers ready for research within this supportive group (Hart & Schwab, 1997). Table 13 lists the participants' community concerns, as raised in discussions.

Table 13
Same-Sex Attracted Youth Community Concerns

Addressing heterosexist attitudes	Heterosexist and homophobic attitudes need to be cleaned up – gays need to be seen and feel secure in the streets with no harassment or violence
Environmental improvements	Environmental improvement like smelly streets and rubbish and behaviour of druggies in the community.
Community Education	Community education needed on heterosexism and homophobia, harassment, pregnancy, violence and drug issues. Some of the community stereotypes are: all gay men are queeny; all lesbians are butch; and being gay is a disease that can be cured.
Community theatre dealing with heterosexist issues	Dealing with heterosexism and homophobia, including issues of: teen depression; suicide; self-harm; drug and alcohol issues; family issues; friends; home; peer pressure; fantasies; school and education; relationships; pride; religion; tolerance to acceptance to celebration; personal emotions; coming out with family and friends; expectations for study and work; juggling stuff; media; community disrespect; fear of rejection; and not being accepted.

This group had an obvious mutual concern about heterosexist and homophobic attitudes in their local community, which was why many of them had joined the group in the first place. Matching this mutual concern with their mutual interest in drama made for a clear direction in choosing a community action group project.

Planning Social Action Drama

After the initial sessions, the group was approached by a group of school teachers to be involved in a forum on sexuality issues. The group was prepared to consider participating in the venture, on the proviso that their own voices were heard and that they were able to present their own material in their own way. The

group agreed that this would give them an opportunity to address their concerns of heterosexism to make their own significant contribution to the local community.

The project involved developing drama scenarios to perform at the teachers' forum, on providing a safe environment for same-sex attracted youth in schools. *A Class Act* was a day-long conference for teachers, school administrators, youth workers and interested students on issues for same sex attracted youth. The conference program included: (a) presentations from schools that are addressing the issue successfully; (b) young same-sex attracted people as speakers; (c) drama performances; (d) a report on current research; (e) policy workshops; and (f) practical whole-of-school approaches. The conference program was designed around making school environments friendly and supportive places for same-sex attracted youth and to meeting their education needs within the curriculum. Schools reported on their progress, or barriers to progress, on strategy development in this area. The Generation Q group was keen to contribute to developing strategies to address the heterosexist issues in schools, using dramatic performances of *hot seat dilemmas* and *hidden thoughts*, as a tool.

Drama can provide a space for youth to freely express themselves on their journey of self-identity (Boal, 1979; Cossa, 1992). The development of the dramatic scenarios was based on concepts from previous work in schools called *Creating Conversations* (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002a). In Creating Conversations, students researched and performed scenarios for parents, with audience participation, on drug and alcohol issues. The group was enthusiastic about adopting this approach for same-sex attraction issues, as they would have the chance to use their own stated interest in drama and also have plenty of freedom to develop their own drama scenarios in relation to heterosexist issues.

The participants agreed to make every second week a totally social event, with the alternate weeks to work on the social action project. But even these project weeks had to have plenty of time to socialise, including sharing food and fruit juice. Frequently, members told the youth leader and me that this was the first time they had eaten that day, when they arrived at 4pm in the afternoon. They

also needed time to tell each other, their youth worker and me, about their experiences of coping with life. Since attendance of this social group was completely voluntary, the numbers varied from week to week. Multiple reasons accounted for fluctuating attendance, from the opportunity for casual work or a college course to housing issues, health related issues, relationship issues within the group, or feeling too overwhelmed with life that week.

The youth leader and I would begin activities with one group and the next week the group would have a different make-up and so we would have to explain again what was happening to keep everyone informed and feeling part of the group activities. This took much time and energy and slowed down the process, but provided an opportunity to reflect on what had already been accomplished, and keep the group informed and feeling part of the project.

A weekend camp was organised with the participants to work on the drama activities. The campsite was in a country setting, an hour and a half bus travel from the group's meeting place. The site was an old homestead with dormitory style accommodation, cooking and recreational facilities, including a flying fox, trampolines, billiards, table tennis, archery, and a low ropes course (with low swinging ropes to walk and hang on too, close to the ground for safety, erected in various patterns amongst the trees to challenge balance and agility.) Close by was a large lake for kayaking, with supervision provided by the camp manager.

The camp gave adequate time away from the stresses of urban life, to work more on the drama writing and role playing, while still giving plenty of time for socialising, fun and challenging activities. The weekend was also emotionally intense, with high expectations for a fun time and some relationship issues within the group. All members of the group contributed to the discussions and workshops of drama productions. While only a few of the group eventually performed at the forum, most had contributed significant material during the sessions and at the intensive weekend camp and expressed enthusiasm for being involved in the project. One participant commented in the final written self-reported final evaluations of the project:

> *I enjoyed acting and expressing myself and seeing how people really thought about homosexuality issues within the community. We could bring out what-ever you wanted to say, as wouldn't do it in front of most people, but all these people are supportive of homosexuals ('Sharee' of Generation Q).*

As a result of the workshops and the camp, the participants developed two sets of performance scripting, *Hot Seat Dilemmas* and *Hidden Thoughts*. Examples of their drama vignettes are in Tables 14 and 15, with more in Appendix 5.

Hot Seat Dilemmas

Drama workshops that develop the improvised work of the participants on the topic of interest, can take various forms. This group chose the two forms of Hot Seat Dilemmas and Hidden Thoughts. For the Hot Seat Dilemmas, a member of the audience (in this case, a teacher at the forum) volunteers to sit in the hot seat and pretends to be a gay young person. A description of the role and the dilemma, as seen in Table 14, is read out to everyone. See Appendix 5 for further Hot Seat Dilemmas.

Then two youth stand either side of, and slightly behind, the hot seat. They alternatively give their arguments for and against in response to the situation at hand. The person in the hot seat, having listened to the arguments, is asked to decide what they would do. They are asked to remember they are in a role as someone else. They are asked to give an answer based on the persuasiveness of the arguments, saying what arguments helped them make their decision either way.

Table 14
Hot Seat Dilemmas

Dilemma 1: You are 17 years old and for a while you've known that you're gay. You're watching TV with your parents. They are talking about a gay character on the program. You think this is an opportunity to come out. Do you?

FOR	AGAINST
• They'll find out anyway, so it's best you tell them.	• You can't come out. You're dad has a weak heart.
• You won't have to pretend to be someone you're not.	• You'll ruin Christmas day.
• They'll accept you.	• They'll reject you.
• They probably know you're hiding something since you've been so secretive.	• They'll stop you seeing you're friends.
• Do you really want to hide who you are forever?	• You'll regret it.
• They'll stop asking you when you're going to get a girlfriend.	• What will the rest of the family think?
• Uncle Fred's gay and your parents still love him.	• If they kick you out, where will you stay?

Dilemma 2: You're a Year 9 and 10 English teacher. You know the research says that 1 in 10 young people are same sex attracted so you want to include some gay and lesbian books on the English curriculum. Do you?

FOR:	AGAINST:
• The young people will have a better understanding of homosexuality.	• You could loose your job.
• It could stop the bullying.	• It may aggravate the bullying.
• Students have a right to know.	• Parents might complain.
• What are people afraid of?	• It might make the young people uncomfortable.
• Homophobia shouldn't exist.	• Some people might think that being gay is wrong.
• People shouldn't have to stay in the closet when others can support them.	• Some people might think you're encouraging young people to be gay.
• There's nothing wrong with being gay.	• It might be more trouble than it's worth.

Hidden Thoughts

The aims of Hidden Thoughts are to explore the possible issues and stresses associated with coming out, and to encourage discussion about strategies for dealing with this situation. The Hidden Thoughts performance is introduced by giving a description of the activity as a role-play about a peer group that is concerned about a friend. The aim of the activity is to explore what the characters might be thinking, but not saying, and then discuss ways of managing this situation.

The participants developed their own role play based on an issue of mutual concern. Table 15 shows a scenario that the group developed.

Drama Performance Results

This project provided an opportunity for these youth to freely express their sexual explorations. Some of the group performed their drama vignettes at the teachers' forum on same-sex issues, with over 200 teachers from northern Melbourne attending. The three youth who were able to attend, enjoyed performing their set *Hot Seat* and *Hidden Thoughts* scenarios as rehearsed.

They were so inspired by the atmosphere of acceptance and listening to other youth telling their personal experiences of heterosexism in schools that they also told their stories, unrehearsed, to applause (not to mention a few tears) from the audience. This was a very gratifying experience for those who constantly deal with rejection because of their sexuality.

There was a real sense of a successful social action project with empowering activities and an improved sense of community. A response from one of the participants of performing these scenarios was:

> *The teachers' forum was the best experience of all. All these people were totally willing to listen to us and our thoughts on how to fix the homophobia problems at schools. I got to talk about how I felt and it was great. ('Sam', Generation Q)*

Table 15
Hidden Thoughts of a Coming Out Dilemma

(Ben, Tom, Sarah and Phung sitting in front of the TV talking about Craig.)	
Ben:	Don't change the channel Tom. It's the footie.
Tom:	Come on, it's boring. There's gotta be something better on.
Sarah:	No Tom, we came over here to watch the footie and it's that last quarter. Leave it on.
Tom:	All right, all right.
Phung:	Hey, does anyone know where Craig is? I thought he was supposed to be coming tonight.
Tom:	He said he was.
Ben:	He never turns up anymore.
Phung:	Do you think there's something wrong?
Sarah:	No, he's fine.
Tom:	He's been a bit quiet lately.
Ben:	He's queer.
Tom:	He can swing whichever way he wants.
Phung:	Yeah, it's who he is.
Sarah:	It's not even an issue. I don't know why you're talking about it.
Ben:	Because it's not normal. *(They all ignore Ben.)*
Tom:	I'm worried about him.
Phung:	Yeah, so am I. He's been really quiet lately.
Sarah:	He's fine.
Ben:	God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.*(They all ignore Ben.)*
Phung:	I wish he'd talk to us about it.
Sarah:	Just give him some space. He'll talk when he wants to.
Tom:	But he hasn't even told us, we're all just guessing about it.
Phung:	Maybe he feels like he can't tell us.
Ben:	He better not make a move on me.
Tom:	In your dreams mate. No wonder he hasn't said anything. I know just how you'd react.
Phung:	Yeah Ben, really supportive. "He's queer, it's not normal…". What are you scared of?
Ben:	I'm not scared of anything!
Tom:	Do you think we should ask Craig if he's gay?
Sarah:	He'll tell us when he's ready to. *(Door knock.)*
Ben:	I don't believe it. He's actually turned up.
Phung:	Just keep your thoughts to yourself Ben. *(Tom goes to the door and lets Craig in).*
Sarah:	Hey Craig, how're you going?
Craig:	OK. Sorry I'm late.
Tom:	No problem.
Phung:	What have you been up to? We haven't seen you around much.
Craig:	Just busy.
Ben:	You got yourself some new friends?
Sarah:	Leave him alone Ben.
Tom:	Hey Craig, is everything OK? You've been really quiet lately?
Craig:	I'm fine.
Sarah:	He's just fine.
Phung:	You know you can tell us anything.
Craig:	If there was anything I thought you guys could help me with I'd tell you.
Tom:	Come on Craig, we've always shared our problems.
Craig:	Thanks Tom, but I don't have a problem.
	(Characters freeze)

Facilitator:	*(Asking the audience)* What other thoughts might the characters be having? How are Craig's friends handling the situation? Do you have any other suggestions as to how they could handle this situation? Here are other thought the characters might be having
Ben:	I don't know any gay people. It really freaks me out. Other people at school might think I'm gay too if I hang out with Craig.
Tom:	Craig and I have always been best friends. I wish he'd talk to me about what's going on. If people are giving him a hard time I want to be there for him.
Sarah:	What Craig is going through is really personal. I wish people would leave him alone. Coming out should happen when a person is ready.
Phung:	I'm really worried about Craig, he's been so quiet. I really want to support him but I'm not sure how to.
Craig:	Everyone thinks I've got a problem but there's nothing wrong with me. I need to sort out how I feel in my own head before I share it with anyone. It's good to know that some of my friends will be there for me when I'm ready.

Participant Outcomes and Case Studies

Members of the group evaluated their work through verbal and written self-reporting and video footage taken at the weekend camp. I co-facilitated with the youth worker, and took extensive ethnographic notes about the evolution of the program and participants' interactions with others in the community.

Initially, half the group did not believe that they could make a difference in their community. Yet, every member of the group participated in developing scenarios on heterosexism. The more sceptical members of the group were still prepared to give it a try, to begin to overcome discrimination in the community. Their mutual concern about heterosexism and interest in drama ignited the group's passion for action. Mounting drama scenarios with audience participation at a teachers' forum generated an impact for the audience and performers alike.

The structure of this group was much more informal than the school group. Amidst much socialising and sharing of life events, all members of the group

contributed to the discussions and workshops of the drama productions. While only a few of the group were available to perform at the forum, most had contributed significant material during the sessions and the weekend camp and expressed appreciation for the opportunity.

The participants all reported positive outcomes to the experience of being involved in the process of developing their social action dramatic vignettes. This is shown in the two extended case studies below, followed by a summary of other written evaluations from each of the participants.

Jade's Story

One participant, *Jade* found a sense of community within Generation Q, especially through participating in this research. Jade was a homeless young woman, who had a difficult life. She had a big heart, concern for the underdog and angry at any mistreatment of herself and her friends. Jade enjoyed many of the activities on the camp with the group. She was camera-shy at first, and reluctant to be filmed by me, but was eager for others to be filmed. So I gave her the video-camera to do the filming for a while. She happily filmed the rest of us and providing her own commentary. When she gave me the camera back, she allowed me to film her and even approached the camera for a close up with a wide smile.

Jade was not confident with her writing. However, she was keen to help and support her friend *Sam* when he was inspired to write poetry at the camp. She happily worked with him and sat with him as he read his poetry for the camera. Interestingly, Sam's comments on the camp and the later forum were:

> *The camp is the second best thing so far, being able to go somewhere else and being able to be ourselves and work together to write drama stuff ... The forum was the best experience out of all! All these people were totally willing to listen to us and our thoughts on how to fix the homophobia problems at schools. I got to talk about how I felt and it was great (Sam, Generation Q).*

Jade also enthusiastically offered ideas for the Hot Seat and Hidden Thoughts scenarios that I wrote down for her. She commented that *"I enjoyed making up the arguments for and against the 16 year old telling her friends she was gay and I enjoyed making the leaders and the loud one do the acting!"(Jade, Generation Q)*. In her own way she was, arguably, showing an improved sense of community connectedness. Interestingly, the *"loud one"* whom she referred to, and who also wrote her own scripts commented:

> *I enjoyed acting and expressing myself and seeing how people really thought about homosexuality issues within the community. I've never done any work so quick as this, easy, I got a choice in the topic, so invigorating. You could bring out whatever you wanted to say, but wouldn't do it in front of most people, but all these people are supportive of homosexuals (Shirl, Generation Q).*

Zara's Story

Zara is a popular outgoing young woman attending secondary school. Zara has "come out" about her sexuality with mixed reactions. At school she received good support from her teachers and some friends. However, some peers gave her a tough time. Soon after announcing that she was "gay", other young women called her derogatory names and a couple of them beat her up on the way home from school. Undeterred, she confronted them, engaging them in conversation at school the next day. She gained their respect and that of most others in the school.

Interestingly, Zara had been involved in the pilot Working Community Program at school in the term before I assisted with the program. Then, as she was part of the social support group of Generation Q, she took part in the research with that group. Zara particularly enjoyed the performing aspect of the research, commenting:

> *Being a part of the forum for teachers, to beat homophobia in schools, was a great experience to express my thoughts on how to beat the homophobia. The drama part of it was funny and hopefully meaningful to the teachers (Zara, Generation Q).*

She was so impressed by the teachers' positive response she asked to tell her own story at the forum, which she proceeded to do with positive acknowledgement from the audience.

Soon after the forum, Zara volunteered to assist and be a main compere for a local youth festival being organised by an inter-school group that I was assisting. At a planning session of youth organising the day, she recognised a couple of young women who had taunted her in the past and immediately said in a light hearted fashion, something like, *"You two used to give me a hard time, calling me the crazy dyke, remember?"* They looked a little confused and taken aback, so she added, *"Yes you did"*. Then continued to chat as though they had just exchanged pleasantries.

Zara has taken up many opportunities since the forum to use her substantial communication skills and leadership skills. When offered a free short course in radio announcing for disadvantaged youth, she was first to volunteer. She was offered substantial radio time and support. She then convinced a girlfriend to work with her and together they ran their own community radio and community TV hour once a week for a several months. This community radio and community TV program was designed for youth to have their say and to talk about issues relevant to them, including issues of sexuality.

Zara has also hosted a few events in the local community and helped organise them, including a couple of youth festivals with YMCA and Freeza (Government funding for youth events organised by youth). She has also acted in a local community theatre group called Y-Glam with same-sex attracted youth. Zara undertook all this while she was completing her secondary school education. She is justifiably proud of her achievements, and has shown an enhanced sense of community connectedness.

Participant Responses

Participants responded positively to the drama workshops and the performing process. Themes of participant written responses include: (a) freedom of expression with a sense of identity affirmation at a personal level; (b) influence with acceptance and peer support, with the challenge of creative group processes;

and (c) community connectedness with enhanced youth involvement and enhanced community awareness of same-sex attracted youth issues. Table 16 summaries the self-reported outcomes of the participants, analysed at personal, group and community levels. See Appendix 6 for more detailed written responses from participants.

Table 16
Same-Sex Attracted Youth Participant Outcomes

Level of Analysis	Self-Reported Outcomes
Personal	*Freedom of Expression* • Sexual identity affirmation • Assertiveness • Liberating experience
Group	*Influence* • Acceptance and peer support • Creative group processes
Community	*Community Connectedness* • Enhanced youth involvement • Enhanced community awareness of same-sex attracted youth issues

Freedom of Expression

Participants personally enjoyed the opportunity for self-expression and for sexual identity affirmation. *"I enjoyed acting and expressing myself" (Shirl, Generation Q)* observed one participant during the process; while another commented "*being a part of the forum for teachers was a great experience to express my thoughts" (Zara, Generation Q)* . Beyond self-expression, the teamwork also promoted assertiveness. For example, one member said: *"The drama program run by Julie and Jemma has been great in communicating issues associated with the queer community in an often humorous yet serious manner" (Simon, Generation Q).* Youth experimented with telling the community what they really thought about heterosexism and homophobia.

Some, for the first time, asserted their views in public: *"I got to talk about how I felt and it was great" (Sam, Generation Q)* . Two members of the group *(Sam and Zara)* gave impromptu speeches at the teachers' forum and reported feeling "wonderful." For some, participation in the project went beyond assertiveness; presenting in front of teachers was nothing short of a liberating experience: *"The forum was the best experience out of all! All these people were totally willing to listen to our thoughts on how to fix the homophobia problems at schools" (Sam, Generation Q).*

Influence

At a group level, the self-expression and assertiveness reported by youth could not have occurred without a sense of influence, with acceptance and peer support within the group. *"It is good having a place to be free to make friends and have fun and to express ourselves and to be what we want to be; it helps us to deal with gay issues and not to be afraid of being gay." (Pete, Generation Q).* Another group member observed that, "*you don't feel threatened at all when you are around the group cause you can be yourself and you won't get discriminated against"* Other participants enjoyed the group, as: *"I like this group to make friends, going to places, and to talk about our problems" (Rebecca, Generation Q)* and *"being able to be ourselves and work together" (Tony, Generation Q).*

Related to self-expression was the creative group process: *"I enjoyed making our own drama ideas groups and working in groups and talking about what we wanted" (Shirl, Generation Q).* This process enabled the group to be creative, enjoyable and empowering. The accepting atmosphere and the passion for drama ignited imagination, playfulness and fun.

Community Connectedness

The community benefited in two ways from the participants performing their group scenarios. Similar to the first intervention, there was enhanced youth involvement in community affairs with a sense of community connectedness. In addition, the specific group of hundreds of local teachers attending the drama forum learnt about heterosexism in schools from youth who experienced it first hand. The teachers cheered the young people for their presentations and many

personally thanked them for their valuable contribution to the forum and to the policy manual on same-sex friendly environments on schools. The young people contributed to an enhanced community awareness about a particular form of oppression.

Community Connectedness Discussed

When these same-sex attracted youth came together as a group, there emerged a sense of community, with feelings of belonging and the emotional safety to freely express themselves, a subculture that formed an enclave of safety, a *niche of resistance* (Moane, 2003; Prilleltensky, 2003b; White, 1993, 1999). This sense of community within the group provided a space for freedom of expression. They were able to tell their stories and express their attitudes, with consensual validation from their peers, without fear of attack, conflict or shame (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Pretty, 2002; Rappaport, 2000; Tantum, 1990). Traumatic real-life stories of individual lost-love and rejection were retold over and over in the group. In the outside world they can experience traumatic events, yet within the group they are part of a community accepting of diversity and free from heterosexist prejudice (Crowhurst, 1999; D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995; Garnets & D'Angelli, 1994; Kitzinger, 1997) (Linne, 2003; Wehbi, 2004). Within the group they could celebrate their uniqueness, their diverse sexuality, their creative or "comic vision" (Schafer, 1976).

This creative comic vision can be seen as a vision of change from oppositionality to acceptance and inclusion. Comedy can be seen as a "corrective for the rigidity that threatens community", usually an individual taking themselves too seriously, too tragically (Bergson, 1917): "The tragic stage is the individual soul, while the comic stage is the world" (Heilman, 1978, p. 57). By joining a group, these youth have taken their first steps in giving up their independent isolated *tragic* selves to find creative or *comic* solutions and risk some dependency on the group to experience a sense of community (Berkman & Glass, 2000). They are survivors who have turned their experiences of rejection into creativity, into comedy and community celebration of diversity, whenever they had a chance. In comedy "our laughter is always the laughter of the group . . .

however spontaneous it seems, laughter always implies a kind of secret freemasonry, or even complicity, with other laughers, real or imaginary" (Bergson, 1917, p. 6).

Many of the group laughed at themselves and others, searching for possibilities, pushing the limits of diversity, being dramatic, working out ways to celebrate their sexuality, to enjoy their lives. Unlike traumatic experiences that views the person as psychically divided, people in positive creatively or comedy treat one another as whole, or as if whole (Levine, 1986; Schafer, 1976). In fact, the same-sex attracted youth gave the impression that they were the creative "whole ones", at least in terms of their sexual identity: arguing they were the ones who have examined their sexuality and worked out their identity. They chose their more sexually liberated world of homosexuality, with the creative rainbow symbol: not the black and white rigidity of heterosexuality, with its straight-jacket of what was right and wrong. These same-sex attracted youth gave the impression of having found their identity, of being liberated, at least, sexually. As one participant expressed their sense of community:

> *I think it's good having a same-sex attracted group because you get to discuss issues, meet new people and get to share how your week has been. I think it's good to have some sort of thing that you can relate to without dealing with harassment and discrimination. I really like the atmosphere of Generation Q and the people that attend (Mike, Generation Q).*

Generation Q Community Connectedness

At the end of the project Generation Q agreed they enjoyed the creative experience of expressing themselves. They embraced the challenge to make a real difference in their community, reporting feelings of acceptance and connectedness. Arguably, this led to an improved psychological sense of community with the beginnings of enhanced narratives, with experiences of a sense of belonging, of connectedness. In fact, the Generation Q group went on to organise their own local community forum dealing with heterosexist issues with another Victoria University student and their youth worker.

CHAPTER 7

AFRICAN REFUGEE YOUTH CELEBRATE

Recently arrived refugees suffer from the effects of trauma, as well as from the demands of settling in a new country where customs and language are unfamiliar. Participants in this research were a group of newly arrived refugee youth from the Horn of Africa, 15 to 19 years old. They were undertaking an educational bridging program at the Western English Language School (WELS) in Braybrook, a suburb in the west of Melbourne.

I worked closely with teaching staff and an undergraduate psychology student for one semester (that is, two school terms) to complete a community project as a subject in their community program. Using the same appreciative approach to action research as with the previous groups, the youth discussed their positive constructions of identity, their personal passions and their community concerns. The various games, activities and discussions were adapted because of their limited English language. The participants revealed their hopes for peace, freedom, fun, music, dancing, soccer, educational and work opportunities, and a new life.

The group shared a passion for African music and dance which they mixed with modern hip-hop and rhythm and blues. The participants also shared a mutual concern to make the most of the educational opportunities in their new country free of wars and educational disruptions. In a safe supportive environment, and with encouragement to indulge their mutual interest for music and dance, participants organised a celebratory day of their educational achievements, with a formal awards ceremony, followed by food, music and dancing, organised for themselves and for another refugee group involved in sister bridging programs on another campus. The students reported that they felt well supported as they laughed and danced to their own beat in their new home of Australia. They celebrated with laughter, music and dancing, celebrating a sense of community. They showed an emergent sense of belonging, of connectedness to each other and to their new country.

It should be noted that the students did consider undertaking a community project that was more connected with the local community, for example, performing at a local refugee cultural festival. However, only some of the students were comfortable with the idea. Also, the teachers and the school principal were concerned that, given the students' recent experiences of trauma as refugees, undertaking such projects might cause additional stress. When the students showed interest in organising their own time for celebrating their educational opportunities, the teachers were also pleased. While this project does not involve social action as such, there was community-building involved, as they organised an event for their own group that was combined with a refugee group from Iran in another WELS bridging program. Community visitors involved in the two community programs were also invited.

Refugee Trauma

Refugee youth can suffer from multiple traumatic experiences, often being uprooted from their home countries in adverse circumstances, facing family and cultural losses. These losses can include the loss of peace and safety in their country of origin. They can find themselves fleeing war and social upheavals ravaging their countries, with the accompanying loss of family members, loss of cultural identity, and loss of traditional accepting communities (Australian Red Cross, 2002; Fisher & Sonn, 1999). Trauma and loss can leave refugees feeling alienated, isolated victims with no place to belong. They arrive as aliens in a foreign country, feeling unwelcome, and missing the family and friends left behind. The participants in this research group spoke of these experiences.

In the past 50 years, over 620,000 refugees and displaced people have been resettled in Australia. Many had close family or other ties to Australia (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2004). Under Australia's Humanitarian and Refugee program, 12,525 refugees arrived in Australia in 2002-03. Nearly half of these, 5,628, were from Africa, which is about twice as many as the previous year (2,801 in 2001-02) (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2004).

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* defines three basic rights: the right to survival; the right to protection; and the right to develop. Yet millions of children in the world today are denied these basic rights. It is estimated that one and a half million children have been killed in wars in the last decade, and four million have been physically disabled (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996). Additionally, five million children have been in refugee camps because of war, a further twelve million have lost their homes (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996, p. 329). Countless others have been captured and forced to become slaves. In over 30 countries, children as young as nine years of age have been *"used as soldiers*" (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996, p. 329). In the same period, ten million children are estimated to have suffered psychological trauma as a result of civil and international wars and there is now increasing recognition of the need to deal with psychological effects as well as provide for physical survival and education (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996, p. 312).

There are many causes of war related trauma, including: removal of physical and emotional safety; displacement; separation from family; physical injury; abuse; exploitation; torture; violence; rape; being forced to witness or participate in killing and deprivation of education; nutrition; and the lack of opportunites to play (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996). Young people growing up in refugee camps continue to be denied secure, safe accommodation, safety from abuse, education and health care. Even where children have not been directly targeted for abuse, or have not witnessed assaults and deaths of family members, they are exposed to the disruption of family and community by internal conflict, and families divided by ethnic alliances, if not betrayed outright by neighbours and relatives. Conditions in refugee camps often render adults incapable of adequately providing food, shelter and protection (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996).

Immigrants leaving their home countries face a sense of loss of their traditional cultural identities (James & Prilleltensky, 2001; Sonn, 2002). They often face the loss of extended family and local community members. Immigrants under any circumstances have some loss of the sense of identity in the transition

to a new country with new cultural forms, a new language, and often with lack of extended family members. This can be traumatic for any immigrant, even under relatively positive circumstances, where they have carefully planned their exit and had time to say their goodbyes.

When refugees flee their homeland, these cultural and family ties are abruptly severed, especially in the case of *acute* as opposed to *anticipatory* refugees (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). Refugee families, often under forced immigration, can leave their homelands in very adverse circumstances, with little time to plan their exit and little or no chance to say goodbye to family and community members left behind. They can also face the loss of family members and friends who have died, disappeared, or are unable to accompany them. As they arrive in the country of permanent settlement, they encounter the formidable task of acculturation and re-building their disconnected and shattered identities.

Refugee youth and their families still suffering from with their traumatic pasts, find themselves on a traumatic continuum in the new country to which they have escaped. The trauma continues as they face multiple acculturation issues associated with adjusting to a new culture (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). They have to deal with the loss of an integrated cultural system with supportive family and friends in a familiar traditional culture and language. They struggle with education in a new language, especially since they often experienced a disrupted education in their home countries before arriving (Coventry et al., 2002; Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Lesnie, 2004).

Young refugees must deal with multiple losses, concerns and responsibilities often not faced by youth living in their home country (Brough et al., 2003). Refugee youth face cultural and family losses, often with extra family responsibilities and conflicts. They can face anxiety and grief about immediate and extended family members and friends left back in the home country (Kaplan, 1998; Mekki-Berrada, Rousseau, & Bertot, 2001). They worry whether they will ever see close family members again, or have to grieve over the death or disappearance of family members. They can also miss the support of extended family members and familiar friends in their local communities back in the

homeland. Refugee youth can feel disconnected and disoriented, with loss of family and loss of cultural identity (Miller, 2004). They can also feel guilt that they have survived whole others have not, or that they are free and relatively safe, while others are still in unsafe places (Kaplan, 1998). These losses experienced by refugee youth can be overwhelming at times. Additionally, they often need to cope with their parents or parental figures who are dealing with loss, guilt and trauma from possible torture (Brough et al., 2003).

Refugee youth often have to take on greater family responsibilities, due to lack of parental care for a number of reasons, including: the parents have died or are missing; they are still back in the home country; they are unable to communicate sufficiently with others; or are having difficulty adjusting to the new language and culture (Brough et al., 2003; Fantino & Colak, 2001; Miller, 2004). Their parents, or close relatives who are with them, can be suffering emotional disorders from past and present traumas (Brough et al., 2003; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996). There is also often conflict within the family with changed cultural attitudes and expectations (Brough et al., 2003). The parents expect to have the same authority as they did in the home country, and for their children to follow their more traditional cultural ways. Yet, the refugee youth often want to experience the extra freedom they observe in the Westernised local youth and media defined post-modern attitudes and behaviours. The refugee youth can tend to clash with their more traditional parents or caregivers. Young refugees need to manage these multiple issues as they begin to deal with the acculturation process (Brough et al., 2003).

Refugees feel the loss of a sense of community, with a loss of cultural rituals and celebrations. In more traditional rural communities naming ceremonies, weddings and funerals are attended and celebrated by the whole community. Young people in these communities meet, gather, and walk the streets with friends, being welcomed into each others' homes (Barnes, 2003). Young refugees can miss their traditional welcoming cultural practices.

However, youth can also appreciate the freedom found in Australia. Their parents, on the other hand, are concerned that there is too much freedom for their

children here, feeling they have no control, no discipline and no knowledge of how to cope in their new, open culture (Brough et al., 2003). Problems can arise from this change in culture, for example, use of physical discipline, is common in some family breakdown issues. Many parents coming from Africa get frustrated because they have little control over their children. They blame themselves when they see their children doing what they are not supposed to be doing. They feel helpless when they cannot physically discipline their children. Parents may blame themselves for these problems, for bringing their children to the West (Brough et al., 2003; Fantino & Colak, 2001).

However, the youth appear to more readily acculturate. Many refugee youth have hopes of a peaceful world with no wars and no racial discrimination (Beavis, 2002; Saunders, 1997). They appreciate the peace they have experienced in Australia, with no civil wars, and more freedom of choice compared to their refugee experience. They also appreciated the many opportunities for education and employment here in Australia, compared to their previous refugee experiences in various Horn of African countries of disrupted education and lack of employment opportunities. As a participant in this research commented in his written evaluation of his personal perspective on Australia:

> *In Australia there are a lot of schools even when you finish study you can start work easily. So I like Australia and here always peace and everything is cheap. So you can buy anything (Bisrat of Eritrea).*

All refugee family members need to adjust through some level of adaptation and integration into the next culture (Prilleltensky, 1993). Migrant families retell each other stories about the home country as part of the remaking and integration of identities into the new community (Sonn, 2002). Studies have shown that refugees who develop a positive attitude to both cultures can more successfully adapt and acculturate (Kovacev & Shute, 2004). Yet, refugees face many barriers, especially language barriers, as they need to re-learn all their skills in the English language (Goodkind & Foster-Fishman, 2002). Refugees, having lost their old support networks, need to re-build community support networks to assist with their adaptation (Coventry et al., 2002; Jones, 1998; Ramaliu & Thurston, 2003;

Sonn & Fisher, 1998, 2005; van der Veer, 2000; Wessells, 2004; Women's Health West, 2001). Refugees need to re-establish emotional and social bonds that have been lost, both through leaving their homeland and through the general loss of trust in others as part of their traumatic experiences (Mekki-Berrada et al., 2001; Mohamed et al., 2002). Positive interventions are needed to assist in restoring their identity within the new culture and language (Miller, 1999).

Group work processes for youth who may have experienced traumatic life experiences associated with being a refugee have been designed by educational and community agencies (Beavis, 2002; Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996). The aim is to begin to break down the social isolation resulting from previous trauma experiences and compounded by cultural dislocation and resettlement. The restoration of trust and building of communication skills is integral to this process (Behnia, 2004). The group setting helps participants realise that they are not alone and that others share some of their beliefs and feelings (White, 2004b). This discovery assists with normalising their experiences and difficulties. The development of self identity involves the integration of past experiences, an understanding of their influence on the present and helping the young person explore their view of the future (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 1996).

The current research aimed to use these group processes to assist refugee youth to come to terms with their trauma experiences, working towards positive constructions of identity, to affirm their cultural identities. However, this research sought to take the process further, by inviting the youth to identify their particular passions and concerns and to use these mutual interests to develop their own community action project. Hopefully this affirming process further assisted the youth to deal with acculturation issues and feel a sense of community with each other and also begin to feel some connectedness with the wider Australian community.

Refugee Participants

The participants in this group were recently arrived refugees from various Horn of Africa countries involved in an educational bridging program at the

Western English Language School (WELS) in Braybrook (near St Albans), Melbourne. The principal of the school had heard about my research with youth groups through the local youth workers network meetings and was interested in having my involvement in the part of her program that required students to undertake a community project. The principal was pleased to have my assistance with the program, once she was assured that the students would not be expected to undertake anything too stressful for them. I was invited to work with the teachers of the program in the school in a subject called Personal Skills 2, within the VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) educational framework of community learning. This subject required the students to organise a community project, consistent with the research aims.

The 20 students in the class were African youth 15-19 years of age. The countries they were originally from were Ethiopia (10), Sudan (5), Eritrea (4), and Somalia (1). Half had spent significant time in refugee camps in other countries before coming to Australia including: Sudan (6); Kenya (3); and Egypt (2). The majority of the students (14) were male, with seven from Ethiopia, three from Eritrea, and four from Sudan. Six of the students were female, with three from Ethiopia and one each from Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. All of the students had experienced a disrupted education and had lived in refugee camps. The students all had been living in Australia for less than 12 months.

The teachers in the community education program had been working with the students as a group for one semester. The teachers believed that the students had bonded very quickly with their common experiences of refugee camps and each being able to communicate at some level in the common language of the refugee camps, Arabic.

The classes for this project were for two hours, one afternoon per week over one semester, plus three excursions days to Melbourne Museum, Melbourne Zoo and Geelong Beach. Additionally we were able to take them on a camp for three days using funds donated from the Morawetz Social Justice fund.

African Research Assistant

I invited Diana, to assist me in the program, as she was Sudanese and had been a refugee. She was a previous student of mine, keen to assist, as a volunteer placement towards her final year undergraduate studies. The WELS principal agreed that Diana would be a valuable role model for the newly arrived refugee youth.

Diana had an immediate connection with the students as she also was from Africa and had been a refugee. She enjoyed the opportunity to work with African youth representing a number of different countries from the Horn of Africa. Diana, like other students in the group, left her home country when she was young and with her family grew up in Kenya as a refugee.

Action Research Approach

The two WELS teachers and the student researcher assisted me to engage the African youth in various activities affirming their interests, beliefs, passions and concerns. The same introductory activities were used with this group that had been previously used with the other two participant groups. However, some of the activities were adapted to suit the English language skills and to assist with the building of their language skills. See Table 17 for a summary of the activities adapted for this group.

The introductory activities included: (a) discovery of mutual interests using a game; (b) exploring mutual community concerns with class activity sheets, discussions and videos; and (c) designing a shared community project.

Mutual Interest in Dance

The initial activities, as with the other groups, the African students explored their interests, their passions for life, what they could get excited about.

Table 17
Appreciative Approach with African Refugee Students

Session	4D Appreciative Approach	Action Research Cycles		
		PLAN	**ACT**	**REFLECT**
1	**Discovery of self** – *appreciating the best of what is (personally)*	Activities to promote personal social identity affirmation	Participants engage in **Passion game** activity with participants – to personally discover own passions, interests and beliefs making up their social identity	Participants reflect on own positive aspects of social identity and discover mutual interests
2-4	**Discovery of community** – *appreciating best of what is in the community)*	Activities to explore local community issues and needs	Participants engage in **What I like about Africa** and **What I like about Australia** written activities to explore community issues	Participant discussion on mutual community issues discovered
5	**Dream of community** – *envisioning what could be*	Activities to elicit ideas of how to promote their social identity within the local community	Participants engage in **Passion Chart** with participants in pairs to elicit written and symbolic ideas	Participants pairs feedback to the group reporting ideas brainstormed for further discussion
6-7	**Design of self in community** – *co-constructing what should be*	Participants brainstorm a possible **community-building project**	Participants explore ideas for a **community-building project** of mutual interest of their choice	Participants reflect on issues for a **community-building project**
8-16 plus an intensive weekend	**Destiny of self and community** – *sustaining what will be*	Participants plan a specific **community-building project** of mutual interest of their choice	Participants design their **community-building project** with students in pairs taking responsibilities for various aspects of the awards day	Participants undertake **community-building project** of the awards day

Adapted from Ludema, J., Cooperrider, D., & Barrett, F. (2001)

The initial passion game involved me once again asking them a series of questions on possible interests and they moved to one side of the room if they were passionate about that activity and to the other side if they definitely were not interested and stayed in the middle if they didn't care or had a mild interest. The questions covered interests in sport, fitness, outdoor activities, thrill seeking activities, arts, music, dancing, drama, performing, cooking, eating foods from other cultures, refugee issues and environmental issues. For each question, those that moved to the passionate side were asked what was their specific interest (e.g., actual sport, type of music). This helps each person to think about their own passions and see others that might have the same interests to possibly work together on a project of mutual interest.

This group quickly revealed a common passion for music, dance and sport, especially soccer for the young men. They all openly acknowledged their interest in dance, as they enjoyed dancing whenever music was played.

Common Concern for Education

Further individual and group activities with guided discussions were used to affirm their interests and concerns. A passion chart with poster paper and coloured pens was used to draw and write their community concerns. They were asked to consider: (a) What do you enjoy doing; (b) What would you like to do in the community; and (c) How would you like to see your community improved. These group posters were completed and presented to the whole class and discussed for common themes.

In separate sessions the students completed written open statements, one set on their own interests and one on their past experiences and future expectations. I designed these open-ended statements to assist with discussion and also to help develop their English skills as requested by the students and the teachers. I based the content of the statements on the well-being concepts developed by Prilleltensky (2001) and issues covered by the Rainbow and Kaleidoscope refugee programs developed by the Victoria Foundation of the Survivors of Torture (1996; 2002).

In the first set of statements, the students were asked to complete were: (a) *"I like the school program because"*; (b) *"The best parts of the program are";* and (c) *"What could be improved is".* In the second set of questions they were asked were: (a) *"I like my country of origin in Africa because"*; (b) *"I like living in Australia because";* and (c) *"What I would like to improve is*".

All of these individual and group activities were followed by guided class discussions to affirm their revealed interests and concerns and find common themes. The group affirmed their common interests and concerns under a number of themes including: music and dance; sport; religion; freedom and social justice in the world; family concerns; educational opportunities; employment opportunities; freedom and social justice in their new country. Table 18 shows a comprehensive summary of participant responses that have been grouped into the various themes. Appendix 7 provides a detailed summary of issues raised by each participant.

Participants showed a common passion for music and dance. They enjoyed listening to modern and African music, and dancing with a mix of various African and modern styles. Participants also showed interest in sport and religion. They especially enjoyed soccer and basketball, particularly, the young men who followed soccer almost religiously. Actual religious conviction was also a major interest with some Muslim and some Christian. For example, the young woman from Somalia wore a veil, while one young man was very interested in further study of Arabic poetry and the Muslim religion.

Meanwhile, two young women were enthusiastic Christians, regularly attending Bible studies and singing in a church choir. This interest in religion as a guiding force in some of their lives was in direct contrast to the other participant groups who had grown up in Australia, with few showing interest in religious matters.

Table 18
African Student Interests and Concerns

Music/dance	I like fun and music; I like listening to music; We like music and reggae; I like dancing.
Sport	We like soccer, football and basketball; I want to improve my soccer skills; I like running.
Religion	I like my Muslim religion, and I like Arabic poetry; I want to help religions and I want to do more reading about the Bible; I like Bible study and singing in the church choir.
Freedom and social justice	We want to live in peace without wars and without discrimination; We want to re-build the poor countries, to have education, to have food, peace and freedom; We would like to become a republic; I like to watch the news; I want to know stories from another country.
Family	I like my family and my mother's cooking; I miss my father; I miss my family; It is hard to live without my family; I miss my country because my family is still there; All I need is my father then I would be happy.
African Homeland	My country has beautiful natural views like the mountains and rivers; the weather is nice and warm; people are kind, friendly and help at any time you need them; I felt relaxed psychologically in Africa as most of my family and friends live there; I didn't like living in Australia till now because I am missing my home country and the natural views and my Mum, my friends and I missed every thing in my home country; I like to hang around the shopping centre with friends; My country is exactly like Australia in many ways, except freedom.
Educational opportunity in Australia	I like school; This is a good school with a good curriculum; I want to learn more English; I got the opportunity to complete my studying and I have a chance to get a good job and a lot of money; In Australia there are a lot of schools even when you finish study you can start work easily; In Australia here is always peace and everything is cheap, so you can buy anything.
Employment opportunity in Australia	I would like to help refugees in Africa and Asia with water, food and shelter with the UNHCR; I would like to help refugees in other countries; I would like to help refugees in Australia; I like to do something for Australia; I want to have a chance to get a good job and a lot of money; I want to improve my bank account. I want to: be an air hostess; be a psychiatrist, be a psychologist; be an office worker; be a nurse helping older people; teach people how to cook; use my computer skills to help others with projects, flyers and advertising; and help young people for sport.
Freedom and social justice in Australia	I like Australia because it is a free country, but it is hard to live without my family; The Australian government is very good because the refugee people are here with help, money and food; I want help young people in Ethiopia to know how to come to Australia; Australia is more developed than my country because the government is good, and transport to school is good also; Australia is a beautiful and peaceful country; I would like to organise a party; I would like to celebrate with food and drink.

The participants shared a concern for peace and freedom in the world. For example, one extravert young man was very pleased that Australia was a country free from war, yet he was concerned that Australia should be a republic to make it even better. Another couple of other young men wrote and discussed their concern for peace in the world with no discrimination and no poverty:

> *It is important to live in peace without wars and without discrimination between the people. To have education, food, peace and freedom, with no war discrimination or poverty (Robbo, Ethiopia via Kenya and Awalkher, Eritrean via Sudan).*

Many of the students individually wrote of their concern for missing family still in Africa with often a close relative plus extended family left behind. Many of them missed the warm climate their African countries, although a few admitted they did not miss the heat and preferred the cooler Melbourne climate.

Participants had a mutual appreciation of their present opportunity for a good education and were hopeful of further educational and employment opportunities that they saw leading to a positive future in Australia. They talked of their gratitude for the educational bridging program in which they were participating, with the academic and practical curriculum, supported by helpful teachers. They had high hopes for further educational opportunities and further career pathways in what they perceived as the abundant choices offered to pursue their interests in their new country.

Other supporting activities with participants included watching two videos produced by other recently arrived refugees in Australia. The videos gave the participants a chance to hear the experiences of other youth in similar situations, for them to identify with and to affirm their own issues and possible ways forward. One video, with dramatised vignettes by refugee youth of their life experiences as refugees, was called: *Given a chance: A video training manual on working with refugee young people* (Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994). This video was somewhat confronting as it dramatised traumatic events from the lives of young refugees.

The second video shown had been developed in collaboration with recently arrived refugee youth from various countries, called *Safe places: A community cultural development workers' guide to working with young people from a refugee background* (Beavis, 2002), by the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma. This video showed refugee youth from various countries telling their personal stories of their refugee experiences and being involved in expressing their issues through artwork.

Celebrating Identity and Freedom

The participants discussed their mutual interest in dance and their mutual concern to make the most of their educational opportunities in their adopted country. They decided to organise an event celebrating their recent educational achievements with a formal recognition ceremony followed by celebrating with food, music and dance. By organising an awards celebration day, they were combining their mutual identity of dance and the freedom of educational opportunities in their new country.

Celebrating Education with Dance Project

The research assistant, Diana, firstly observed the behaviour of the Africa youth participating in the program. On her first day there, the refugee students were particularly restless and she considered this to be "very shocking". Some students were talking while the teachers were explaining what they were supposed to do, and a couple walked out of the classroom without an obvious reason. Most students were trying hard to listen to the teachers but some of them were interrupting. She was very sad to see how her fellow Africans were behaving. Diana explained that in traditional African communities, when you go to school, you cannot walk out of the class without any good reason. Students had always been taught to respect their elders, and to see them behaving disrespectfully was not encouraging to Diana. At the end of her first class with them, Diana asked the teachers to give her a minute to speak to the students. She proceeded to remind them that they should respect their teachers as they were there to help them.

Diana's role was to work with the students to develop a dance performance since they had shown interest in dancing as a way of affirming their cultural and

youth identity. Diana discussed with the group what kind of a dance they would like. They chose Rhythm and Blues and Hip Hop and African music. Diana also asked them if they would like to come up with the dancing steps to perform as a group. She suggested they might want to each develop a part of the dance using steps from their own particular style of dancing from their home country. But they seemed too shy to do this. Diana developed some dancing steps herself to share with the class. She showed them the steps that she had come up with, which they liked. She was open to their ideas and suggestions and when two of the young men said that some dancing steps were girlish she changed them using their suggestions. Dance was informally incorporated into the event they organised.

Participants also revealed a mutual concerns for educational and employment opportunities in their new country, and wanting to assist those who are still caught up in war and suffering in refugee camps. One participant's written statements included:

> *I like to help refugees. I would like to help whose who have family problems. First I would like to help refugees with water and food and secondly to give them shelter. Those in Africa and Asia. That is my dream and I wish to help them. I would like to work for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. (Sadia, Somalia via Kenya).*

Many participants also expressed their interest in pursuing the many educational and employment opportunities they believed were now available to them. A written statement that is reflective of the general attitude of the group was:

> *I like Australia because we have freedom and school. The country Australia you can work anything because we have freedom. (Emebet, Ethiopia via Sudan).*

The participants decided to organise their own day of celebration, combining their interests for dance and educational opportunities, by planning an awards ceremony with a formal time followed by dancing. The teachers and I helped the students to develop an action plan of organising an awards celebration of the students educational achievements so far in their bridging course. This included

the students working in small groups to organising the many aspects of ceremony, including: compering the event; inviting refugee students from Iran in a sister bridging program; organising other speakers; organising and preparing the venue and seating arrangements; preparing name tags for each person; buying and preparing the food; and making a CD with their favourite music (that is, a compilation of music from CDs that students had purchased, with one favourite song from each student, and only copies made for the student's private use only, with a picture of the whole group on the cover). Additionally, the students organised a time after the formal ceremony to celebrate further in a fun way that affirmed their identified love for food, music and dance.

Students enjoyed watching the video footage I took of outings and events including the dancing, which created much more laughter. This was a positive way to reflect on the process and outcomes. Their cultural identity was affirmed and cultural barriers were beginning to be addressed. The students appreciated receiving a copy each of an edited video of their celebratory times together

Results of Celebrating Education with Dance

Working with the refugee youth was a challenging experience. The participants in this research, were in the process of recovering from the trauma of war, loss and separation of family and their refugee status. They had all been in Australia for less than 12 months, still suffering from significant trauma and dealing with loss of immediate and extended family. They expressed a sense of loss of a warm accepting climate and culture. They had experienced a loss of innocence, having seen so much war and death. They grieved for lost and missing family members left behind. They experienced a disrupted education in Africa. Refugee camps were traumatic. Language barriers on coming to a new country added to the trauma. Family conflicts were also common as they adjusted to a new culture. Yet they were eager to acculturate, eager to take advantage of the educational and employment pathways in their adopted country. Taking on the freedom of the new culture and rejecting the parental restrictions of the old culture with its physical punishments and communal control of youth was sometimes overwhelming. They needed to acculturate to Western values and norms. Refugee

youth can appreciate the new freedom of movement, but needed to learn the cultural expectations of commitment to specific times, places and tasks required in educational settings and work places.

Initially, communication was a problem. I experienced issues arising from the lack of student English skills and their heavy accents, causing initial frustrating communication problems. Part of my personal learning experience with this group was learning to listen very carefully and using basic simple English language to speak more slowly and clearly. The school teachers helped me with these communication issues as they had already been working with the group for one semester.

We gave the African students the space for freedom of expression to talk about their common cultural identity of history and rituals and share their common interests in music and dance to experience a developing sense of community.

> *I want to improve my soccer skills and the country. I would like to do something for Australia but cannot by myself. We have to join to each other to do big things or something. I hope to hear my voice, because if Australia is a republic we will be comfortable and we can help every one, we can help the poor countries, we can do whatever we want. Come on join me if you are interested in my idea. (Drar, Eritrea).*

The students spoke of their appreciation for acceptance into Australia with freedom of choice and opportunities, especially educational and employment pathways. Yet many of them missed their home country and family members, making acculturation more difficult. Some examples of their feelings about their new country are:

> *I like Australia because it is a free country but it is hard to live without my family (Meriam, Ethiopia).*
>
> *Australia is a good country and good people and it is quiet place where you can relaxes all your life. Good government and beautiful*

country. Good school and also study are good (Sadia, Somalia via Kenya).

I didn't like living in Australia till now because I am missing my home country and the natural views and my Mum, my friends. I missed every thing in my home country" (Drar, Eritrea)

All my family are here and I have a good school in Australia. Australia has nice weather and is a beautiful country and I like Australia because all my friends they are here (Zakaria, Sudan via Egypt).

These youth had experienced much trauma. Yet with the opportunity to freely express themselves and indulge their passion for dancing, as part of their cultural identity, resulted in much laughter and a sense of community within the group. They laughed with each other and the teachers, especially laughing at the male teacher's dancing. Dancing and particularly watching themselves dancing on video, caused much laughter. Laughter was a form of release from their past and present traumatic experiences. The laughter of a group exercise, a shared valued experience, thereby improved their sense of community.

The group shared much dancing and laughter with a sense of mutual peer support. A sense of community was developed within the group, as they expressed feelings of being well supported by their teachers and researchers. These refugee youth especially enjoyed watching the video of themselves dancing and socialising and appreciated receiving a copy each of the video with highlights of their shared experiences together. The students expressed a sense of community as they celebrated the support they found at the English language school. The African refugee students were beginning to work through their acculturation issues, accepting and integrating the best from their traditional cultures and appreciating and adapting to the opportunities of their new cultural surroundings. Table 19 provides a summary of these participant outcomes.

Table 19
Refugee Youth Participant Outcomes

Level of Analysis	Self-Reported Outcomes
Personal	*Freedom of Expression* • Cultural identity affirmation • Freedom of choice • Educational and employment opportunities
Group	*Influence* • Acceptance and peer support • Expressive group processes
Community	*Community Connectedness* • Acculturation – appreciating the traditional culture and the opportunities offered in the new country

Discussion of Cultural Identity and Dance

Dancing for these young people reinforced community identity, a means of reaffirming and renewing a sense of community (Mayo, 2000; O'Connor, 1997). Movement and dance can transcend verbal barriers, providing a means to express the *unverbalizable* (Callaghan, 1993 p.416). providing the space to "re-own the body and reinvest it and the world with meaning" (Callaghan, 1993 p. 417). Traditional cultural dance forms are a source of pleasure, freedom and individual expression for refugees finding themselves in a different culture far from home (O'Connor, 1997).

Dance can contribute to the release of tension and the promotion of social harmony (Mayo, 2000). Dance has nevertheless often been relatively marginalised as a cultural theme. It has been argued that dance has been "largely silenced in industrial societies", or at least not regarded as a culturally significant practice (Bottomley, 1992 p. 73). Dance has also been described as *invisible*, not in the sense that it is actually unseen, but in the sense that non-verbal forms of communication do not fully register in the general consciousness as being particularly significant. In a culture in which verbal forms are prioritised, non-verbal forms are relatively marginalised (Thomas, 1997). However, dance offers

alternative ways of communication, non-verbally and expressively. As a cultural strategy, dance has the potential for communicating at different levels, recognising the significance of the sphere of emotion as well as the sphere of reason (Mayo, 2000). Dance can also be a sensual experience, of course, communicating the unspoken (Bottomley, 1992).

Dance has always been a major ritual of solidarity in many cultures. Music and dancing are given prominence in significant ceremonies and celebrations as a means of expressing emotion and a common bond within the community (Bottomley, 1992). At festivities, in many traditional cultures, music and dance is as crucial as food and drink. Dance and music can provide a sense of collectivism. This is particularly so in dancing in the *round* or a circle, revealing a collectivism literally embodied in this shared code of communication (Bottomley, 1992 p.88). The African youth in this research, danced together, often in a circle, as a form of self expression, celebrating their collective solidarity.

Discussion of Hope for the Future with Education

Traumatised youth need emotionally safe places for self expression. Refugee youth especially need safety while they deal with past trauma and accompanying losses and acculturation issues. Time and space is needed to affirm what they value and treasure from their past cultural identity and to deal with the present identity and acculturation issues. They need time to dance and laugh and enjoy life after a long struggle with trauma and as they continue to struggle with ongoing acculturation issues with their family and peers. They celebrated their mutual passion for dancing and their mutual concern for educational opportunities in Australia. They displayed a sense of community, of connectedness, within the group, as well as taking steps to begin to take advantage of educational opportunities to feel a sense of community connectedness within the wider Australian community.

Sadia's Concerns

A case study of one of the most outspoken women in the group reveals this sense of community connectedness. Sadia came from Somalia. She was the only young woman in the group to wear a head-scarf. She wore beautifully flowing

clothes and mostly a white head-scarf. A teacher at the Western English Language School explained that many Somali women arrived in Australia with no head-scarf, but within a short time, usually took to wearing one as a hajib, as a sign of their adherence to Muslim beliefs within a predominantly non-Muslim country.

Sadia explained to me at the camp, that she believed her country was in complete political disarray with no effective government and no safety. Her family came to Australia, but they hope to return one day to Somalia. She also was very angry that Muslims were being unfairly labelled as terrorists. She believed that Muslims were often only reacting to violence against them but were the only ones being labelled as terrorists. Sadia asked me to consider how I would react if all of my family were being killed around them:

> *If someone started shooting each of your family members in front of you, what would you do? Just allow them to kill all your family? Just watch with no response. Surely you would try and stop the killing and maybe shoot them back if you could. So who then is the real terrorist? (Sadia, Somalia, via Kenya)*

She believed that Muslims were often only trying to defend themselves or reacting to violence against them first.

Yet Sadia made friends with all of the others in the group, including the young women whom she pointed out were Christian because they went to church, attended weekly Bible studies and sang in the church choir.

At the camp, Sadia and the other young women all insisted on sleeping together in one small room with two sets of bunk beds for six of them. They explained that they were used to sharing beds as it was common in Africa to have to share. During the camp, the young women invited me, the researcher, into their room to dance with them, just before the dance party organised with everyone in the main hall. Sadia wanted this private dance party first as she was then able to freely dance with females only, without her head-scarf and upper layer of clothing. She laughed and danced with the other young women. When the door to their room was opened by the young men wanting to start the public dance party,

Sadia quickly dashed for cover under the bed-clothes and retrieved her head-scarf and extra clothing. She still danced with all the others, in a more subdued manner.

Six months later at their educational bridging program graduation ceremony, Sadia came to receive her certificate of completion. She was still wearing her head-scarf (hajib) and usual flowing clothing to define herself as a Muslim, and appreciating her home culture values. But this time she was smiling more broadly and wearing her school jumper with the school emblem over the top of her other clothing and welcomed me warmly. She expressed her pride at being accepted into the mainstream schooling system that she believed to be a stepping stone on her way to her dream of working for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, to help other refugee seekers in Africa. Sadia appeared to be integrating her home culture values with an appreciation of the educational benefits of the culture she found herself in, in order to assist others in need.

Community Connectedness Through Education

This development of a sense of community connectedness within the wider context of taking up educational opportunities in their new country was further displayed when I made contact with group members six months later. A graduation ceremony was held six months after the pilot educational bridging program for refugees. About half of the African refugee youth were able to attend. These youth had matured significantly and were progressing well in their chosen educational pathways, including a few in mainstream secondary schools and others in further English language studies.

One student, Akon, came up to me in full-school uniform, explaining that she now attended school every day, on time, with no late notes and was handing in all her assignments. She seemed very proud of herself. She had suffered much trauma, with her mother dead, father still in Africa, and living with an uncle who locks her out of the house if she comes home too late and she is then forced to sleep on the door mat. She still suffers from on-going trauma, but is dealing with her acculturation issues and displaying an improved sense of community connectedness:

"My country is exactly like Australia in many ways, but is different like freedom. I have school and everything in Australia. I like school. I like helping people. I like music and dance and fashion. One I need is my father. If he came to Australia I will become happy. I need to be in Melbourne always with my family. I want to do psychology in the future" (Akon, Sudan via Egypt).

CHAPTER 8

OVERALL DISCUSSION

This research was undertaken with three diverse youth sub-culture groups from the same socially disadvantaged area of Melbourne: a school student group; a same-sex attracted youth social support group; and a group of recently arrived refugees from the Horn of Africa in an educational support program. The three groups each participated in similar processes, affirmed their social identities, expressed their community concerns, and designed diverse community projects to make a difference in their local communities.

This chapter will provide a discussion of the similarities and differences in the processes and outcomes of the three diverse participant youth groups, and reflections on the benefits of youth actively participating and contributing in their local communities.

Participation Processes

Participant groups each undertook a similar initial sequence of activities with their peers. Common initial games, activities and discussions were used to elicit participants' passions, interests and concerns. Some minor adaptations were made for each group, given the diversity of setting and language ability. The groups conducted in educational settings were more formal than the social setting group. The larger educational groups had more small group session discussions to report back to the larger group. The smaller social group had more informal discussions, but could achieve more in a shorter time-frame as they could discuss issues with the whole group and work on one single project together.

The three groups each had weekly times together with several intensive days for each group. The high school group had an intensive day of introductory activities near the start of the program and another intensive day celebrating at the end of the program. The other two groups each had a camp, special excursions and social outings and a celebratory day towards the end of their programs.

Participation Outcomes

The participant groups in this research each expressed concerns about the relative lack of resources, compared to other areas in Australia, and also the general lack of tolerance in the community. They showed concern for the high levels of intolerance to those of different minority racial groups, and those with different sexual preferences. They were also concerned about the high levels of drug abuse that they felt was partly due to few opportunities for free-of-charge or loss-cost youth entertainment, recreational activities and celebrations in the local community. They felt that youth were disaffected by a lack of facilities and by the lack of opportunities to promote and celebrate their youth sub-culture identities.

Youth Alienation from Community

The participants in each group expressed alienation from their local communities. Youth living in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods can feel disaffected, with little sense of community and with few facilities or opportunities for involvement (Furlong & Cartmet, 1997; Zimmerman, 1990b). This has been shown to be linked with higher suicide rates (Carr-Gregg, 2003; Fuller, 1998). Disaffected youth, especially extremely marginalised youth, such as recently arrived migrants and same-sex attracted youth, express narratives of rejection and alienation. Table 20 outlines the community needs and concerns as assessed by the various youth groups involved in the research.

Youth seeking a sense of community find it with peers who have a similar identity (Eckersley, 2004; Miles, 2002b). However, they often do not find it in their local communities or the wider community. They feel particularly marginalised, often for the very reason that they are youth and not children or parents.

Table 20
Self-Assessed Needs of Youth Groups

Level of Analysis	**Socially disadvantaged youth**	**Same-sex attracted youth**	**Refugee / Migrant youth**
Community attitudes (macro)	LACK OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES – this group experience a lack of community support with few: *recreational services; educational resources and options; and employment pathways*	HETEROSEXIST attitudes towards SSAY plus lack of community support and resources for SSAY youth and their families including: *lack of community education on sexuality issues; and lack* of *recreational services, educational options and employment pathways* for SSAY	RACIST attitudes with lack of community support and resources for migrant and refugee youth and their families including: *migrant services; family immigration and citizenship status provision; cross-cultural training; and recreational services, educational options and employment pathways for migrant youth*
Group needs (meso)	SUPPORTIVE environment – this group can feel *unsupported at home and school* leading to: *alienating behaviours* (e.g., anger-management issues, drug abuse, self-mutilation and suicide); *conflict* with family, peers and school; and *school failure and disengagement* with the community	SAFE and supportive environment – SSAY experience unsafe and discriminatory *heterosexist attitudes* from family and peers that can lead to: *alienating behaviours* (e.g., anger-management issues, drug abuse, self-mutilation and suicide); *conflict with and rejection from* family, peers and school; and *school failure and disengagement* with community	SECURE and safe and supportive environment – migrant and refugee youth feel lack of security with: *language barriers; cultural differences; missing family members; non-permanent citizen status.* Plus lack of safety with *racial discrimination issues and past trauma issues.* Plus lack of support with limited *educational and employment pathways*
Personal identity (micro)	SOCIAL identity – this group are constantly *creating own personal social identity* from their own social reality that can lead to *feelings of alienation*, social isolation, lack of sense of community, and lack of connectedness	SEXUAL identity – SSAY are constantly *creating and questioning their own sexuality* and the sexuality of their peers, often leading to feelings of *isolation, conflict and REJECTION from family, school, peers and each other*	CULTURAL identity – refugee and migrant youth need to *re-create their culture identity* and deal with *assimilation issues* for self and in relation to family and peers, that can lead to *conflict with family and peers and school*

Youth can feel they have no place in the community. Small children are cared for by family and other care givers including schools (Mitchell, 2000; Withers & Russell, 2001). Adults have a place as parents and citizens, as voting, working members of the community (Wyn, 1995). Yet, youth feel they have limited opportunities to feel part of the wider community (Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza, & Woolley, 2003). They are trapped into dependency with the need for prolonged education, facing high unemployment, considered citizens of the future, rather than citizens of the present (Checkoway, 1998; Wyn, 1995). Marginalised youth are especially vulnerable to feeling alienated from the wider community, with few recreational, educational and employment resources and possibilities for them in their local neighbourhoods (Alparone & Rissotto, 2001; Earnshaw, 2001; Furlong & Cartmet, 1997; Mullaly, 2002; Wyn & White, 1997).

The narratives of intolerance were especially prevalent within the same-sex attracted youth group. Rejection and lack of support, often led to conflict with family, peers and school, that can result in school failure and disengagement with the community. Rejection and conflict experienced by these youth, often led to alienating behaviours, including anger-management issues, drug abuse, self-mutilation and suicide.

Refugee youth also had narratives of intolerance, of racial discrimination. However, these stories were not as prevalent as anticipated. Refugee youth were more concerned about learning to cope with their racial differences by trying hard to learn the language of their new country so they could partake of what they saw as an incredible array of opportunities in Australia for education and employment, in a country free from war and free from much corruption. They were dealing with acculturation issues. The refugee youth were concerned more for how they could make the most of the opportunities they saw here in Australia compared to the lack of freedom and opportunities in their home countries in Africa, particularly through education.

Participants in each research group wanted to address their concerns to make a meaningful difference. They wanted to explore creative ways to promote their own identity using various cultural arts media such as music, dancing, acting,

performing, art in the environment and organising fun children's artistic activities. They used varied cultural arts medias of their choice to actively promote a sense of community.

Youth Sense of Community with Peers

Feeling alienated in their local neighbourhoods, youth seek a sense of community from within their own youth sub-cultural groups, formed around their emerging identity explorations (Brinthaupt & Lipka, 2002; Cieslik & Pollock, 2002; Heaven, 2001; Kroger, 1996; McDonald, 1999). I spent time affirming the sense of community within the groups and exploring the identity of their youth sub-cultures. The sub-cultural identities are formed around the most valued part of their identity. For ethnic minority and refugee youth, their identity is often based on their cultural heritage. For same-sex attracted youth, their sexual identity is all important. Youth can also identify with various popular youth sub-cultures based on cultural arts and environment interests, such as popular music, alternative music, performance, art, or specific environmental issues.

The participants in this research embraced the opportunity to creatively explore their identity using their performance, music, dancing and artistic skills. The development of these youth sub-culture identity issues, including cultural arts and environment issues, can also flow into their adults lives, as they pursue various education, employment, hobbies, and community involvement pathways and opportunities.

Participants appreciated time to create projects to promote a sense of community with their peers. The intense time spent together, positively supporting each other to create their projects, gave them a sense of community within the groups. This built a sense of cohesion and confidence within each of the groups. Their sense of isolation was diminished by working on productive and meaningful projects to improve their communities.

Student participants in the first group became actively engaged by promoting their identities through community-building projects. They formed small groups based on their interests and community concerns. Most of the small groups chose cultural arts as a medium for their projects, including: dancing to popular music;

organising performances of peer group alternative music bands; and children's face painting and activities at a refugee cultural festival. Another community-building project incorporated artistic, environmental and Indigenous facets was developed by designing an Indigenous community garden.

Same-sex attracted youth participants in the second group became actively engaged by promoting and celebrating their sexual identity through a social action drama project, once again using a cultural arts medium.

Refugee participants in the third group became actively engaged by exploring and celebrating their acculturation and educational outcomes with a mix of traditional African and modern dancing. Participants in each group celebrated their opportunity for freedom of expression by creating and controlling their own celebratory community action projects.

Youth Identity Affirmation

Youth social identity affirmation is important to develop a sense of community within the youth group, with peers who have shared values (Gibson, 1993; Pretty, 2002; Skoe & Lippe, 1998; Watts et al., 1999). Early work with each group in this research involved positive affirmation of personal identity interests and passions. An appreciative inquiry approach was used to positive effect. Participants welcomed the opportunity for self-expression and positive affirmation of their identity. Participants explored and reflected on common themes within the group discussions and activities. The groups used a co-operative inquiry approach to explore their identity, with me as the researcher assisting each group to develop their own common themes. The participants shared common values and common interests, leading to a sense of community within each group.

For the first group, consisting of high school students, the identity game elicited a range of interests such as popular dance music, alternative music with live bands, performing arts, artistic pursuits and environmental interests. Many of these interests were pursued in their subsequent small group projects. For example, one group of students interested in popular dance music went on to celebrate this by organising a drug-free underage dance party, complete with DJs.

Another smaller group was interested in alternative music and promoting the live band music that their friends were involved in, so they went on to celebrate this by organising a Battle of the Bands at the school. Yet another group were more keen to pursue their interest in live performance and initiated a process to celebrate by starting their own community theatre group. A group were interested in fine arts and environmental issues and so pursued this interest through designing an Indigenous public garden. Each of these small groups pursued their identity interests using various artistic means from community arts to popular youth sub-culture concepts to environmental issues.

These students in a school setting, therefore, had a wide range of identity interests. They had come together to do a subject that was more than the usual theoretical work and involved becoming active, as the subject was called Working Community Program. However, they had not formed a group around one particular interest, so a wide variety of interests was to be expected, expressed and celebrated.

Social support groups, however, often evolve or are especially formed to support each other on a particular interest or identity issue. For example, the second group in this research, a social support group of same-sex attracted youth, shared a common sexual identity. Interestingly, it was found they shared a mutual interest in drama performance. They had other varied interests in sport and cultural arts, but the one interest shared by virtually the whole group was drama performance. This gave an immediate focus for the whole group to consider as a vehicle for some form of community project.

Meanwhile, with the final group of recently arrived refugee youth, it was thought likely that they would have some common cultural identity and acculturation issues. I initially thought the group may want to pursue racism issues, but the group had more positive ideas and interests. They had mentioned some particular racist incidents in their lives, but their over-riding concerns were elsewhere. They had a number of mutual interests including music and dancing, in sport (especially soccer), and religion (Muslim and Christian), and an

overwhelming interest in pursuing educational opportunities and in celebrating through dance.

Youth Community Concerns

Youth community concerns were also pursued using the same process of identifying personal concerns and group concerns to explore common themes. Participants developed critical thinking, with transformation learning processes, through group discussions and various activities. Often these group concerns were built on personal identity interests, or linked to form a community action project incorporating both identity and community concerns. For example, groups of students identifying music as their common interest, with one group organising DJ's for a dance party, another group promoting student bands and yet another promoting their own community theatre with a musical performance. Another group assisting with the children's activities at a cultural refugee festival to assist in the provision of community services to those even more marginalised than themselves. The group who designed the Aboriginal public garden to contribute to the local community environment.

Same-sex attracted youth had sexual identity as a common issue. They related to some cultural elements of the homosexual community with its bent on subversion of dominant culture ideals (Beemyn & Eliason, 1996; Goldman, 1996; Seidman, 1997). The participants revealed a flare for drama and performance. The group realised their mutual interest in performance and already knew their common concern for heterosexist attitudes. They decided to develop their own drama vignettes on dealing with homosexual issues within the school environment. In the process of developing the vignettes, they also were working on problem-solving issues to deal with heterosexism for themselves and their youth subculture of same-sex attracted youth.

Refugee youth have a common ethnic cultural identity arising from their more traditional cultures of origin (Brough et al., 2003). They also have acculturation issues, being given refugee status in a new country (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Sonn & Fisher, 2005). They have family adjustment issues with culture changes and loss of traditional identity associated with language, traditional

cultural practices, re-education, re-skilling, shift in family dynamics (Fantino & Colak, 2001; Kovacev & Shute, 2004; Prilleltensky, 1993). The refugee youth in this research had already discovered their common interest in dancing,. They also already knew their mutual concern for further education in order to get a skilled job and make the most of living in a country full of opportunities. In their pilot bridging program for refugee youth, the teachers assisted them in organising an awards ceremony to celebrate their small educational successes so far in their first year in a new country. We also encouraged their love for music and dancing. I had invited an African psychology student who had also been a refugee to assist them in pursuing their passion for dancing and to incorporate the dancing in the celebration day. The teachers organised a compact disc with music chosen by the students, with each student contributing their favourite song and with a group photo of them with their names on the cover. They danced to this music they had chosen, creating a further sense of community within the group. This process appeared to assist with the acculturation issues the participants faced in adjusting to a new culture. While the participants were still often facing continued trauma within the family at home, when they came together and danced and watched the video of their dancing, they did so with much laughter. This could be seen as part of a healing process, a way of creating a sense of community for these recently arrived refugees (Fantino & Colak, 2001; Hosking, 1990; Kaplan, 1998; Malpede, 1999; Mekki-Berrada et al., 2001; Miller, 1999; van der Veer, 2000).

Youth Hope for a Better World

Participants in each group of this research regularly told narrative stories of alienation in their local neighbourhoods (Burke, 2004; Greene, 1995; Miles, 2002a). The students told of lack of entertainment and opportunities for self-expression, and lack of suitable facilities, leading to drug abuse problems. The same-sex attracted youth told of heterosexist attitudes with rejection from family, friends, school and work. The refugee youth spoke of the lack of peace and educational opportunities in their home countries, missing family in home countries, and the lack of English language skills.

School students living in a low socio-economic area feel unsupported and that they are discriminated against with lack of youth services and entertainment in their neighbourhood. They were concerned that their peers were turning to unsafe illicit drug taking practices leading to unsafe environments to live in. They need opportunities to express their youth sub-culture identities, such as music, drama and performing, and using their art skills to promote an improved cultural environment. Students also appreciated opportunities to learn about historical and contemporary environmental issues such as Indigenous survival techniques experienced by the young men undertaking the garden project. For the young women in the children's work project, this gave them an opportunity to provide assistance to community members at a local cultural event celebration. The students celebrated their identity through cultural arts community-building projects.

Same-sex attracted youth experience more direct discrimination against their sexual identity leading to personal conflict and rejection by family and friends, and in their school and work environments. The same-sex attracted youth embraced the opportunity to express their sexual identity in a positive way through drama vignette workshops. These gay youth celebrated and promoted their sexual identity with a social action project.

Refugee youth have experienced complete disruption and loss of their traditional cultural identity, language and family members, with accompanying discrimination issues in their new country. They struggle with a new culture, a new language and forming new social bonds. The bridging program allowed time for acculturation issues to be addressed. The participants spent time appreciating both traditional and Western cultures through mixing the dancing styles, also through outings to the zoo seeing different exotic animals from both cultures, from African elephants to Australian wombats, and with organising awards ceremonies, both formal and informal, appreciating the good educational opportunities in Australia. They explored and celebrated their emerging acculturation through participation in educational opportunities. Provided with opportunities for freedom of expression, refugee and immigrant youth can

celebrate their cultural identity (Beavis, 2002; Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994; Jones, 1998; Manji, 1997; Saunders, 1997).

Youth in each group experienced forms of alienation from their local community. Table 21 shows the various cultural identities in relation to the community projects undertaken by the different participant groups.

Novel and Surprising Outcomes

The school students included a number of students who were at risk of disengaging from school. Initially some of these students showed little motivation to become engaged in the process. Yet when they realised that they had the freedom to not only choose their own meaningful community project, but also how they were to manage the project and promote it in their own way, they took responsibility for the success of their project. Also, some of these at-risk students took on leadership roles within their project groups to encourage others within the group to be committed to manage and promote their particular community project and/or event.

In the case of the student dance party group the leadership and project management skills were extended to taking on responsibility to encourage other students in the class and outside of the class, and in fact in other schools, to attend their event and to behave with due care and consideration of others at the event so that it would be a success and so that they might be able to organise another such event in the future. Interestingly, in another local secondary college at around the same time, a similar style drug-free dance party was organised at the school, however they had problems with drunken students.

Yet, there were no such problems at this function with the students themselves organising the whole event and encouraging other students to behave correctly as the students themselves were taking responsibility for the safe and secure environment for all attendees. Youth can appreciate the space to create meaningful projects where they have a sense of control, to act responsibly and with pride (Davis, 1999; Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Wierenga et al., 2003)

Table 21
Cultural Identity and Community Projects

YOUTH GROUP	Personal identity affirmation	Cultural identity needs	Community action projects implemented
Student underage dance party	Youth sub-culture appreciation of music and dance	Promote more entertainment for youth to stop thinking about drugs	Youth actively organising their own entertainment (rather than be passively entertained)
Student battle of the bands	Youth sub-culture appreciation of alternative music	Provide venues for youth alternative musicians to perform and be appreciated	Youth and music teacher actively organising own style of performance within schools (rather than only academic studies at school)
Student children's activities at cultural refugee festival	Female students' appreciation of creative arts and working with children and getting friends involved in community activities	Celebrate local cultural diversity at community events and provide activities for children with the help of artistic friends	Young women actively organise children's activities with community workers at community events (rather then be passively entertained as children themselves)
Student Aboriginal Park design	Male students' appreciation of artistic design and environment issues in local community parklands	Promote improved environment through parklands and more appreciation for cultural heritage	Young men actively initiate garden design projects for local community parklands with promotion of Indigenous cultural heritage
Student community Theatre group	Female students' appreciation of skills in the performing arts	Promote local community opportunities for amateur theatre performance for youth	Young women actively initiating a new community theatre group for youth (rather than being sidelined by adult groups)
Gay community social group	Gay appreciation of the drama performance and critical awareness of heterosexism	Promote pride in homosexual identity and a safe environment especially in disadvantaged areas with heterosexist attitudes	Combat heterosexist by promoting same-sex friendly school environments by performing at a teachers' forum to encourage policy change and contribute to a resource manual for teachers and students
African recent refugees in school	African youth appreciation of both African and modern music and dancing	Promote pride in African love of music and dance in Australia where there is freedom from war, with the opportunity to celebrate own culture mixed with popular youth culture	Celebrate the promotion of educational programs that give refugees opportunities to appreciate their African cultural identities while learning life-skills for Australian living (by organising their award celebration day including time for dancing).

The students leadership and project management skills improved markedly when they realised that they were given free reign and full responsibility for their actions. Also, they were making meaningful connections with the wider community sector, where the community workers were reinforcing the responsibility they had to follow correct procedures in relation to public expectations and rules and regulations for public safety, and for the success of their projects By creating something of value the students acquired the interest and skills for service learning and citizenship (Checkoway, 1998; Holdsworth, 2003; Turner & Baker, 2000).

Students who were experiencing difficult personal and family problems and conflict at the time of the program, expressed their appreciation of value of the program for them. Most of them were able to fully participate and were proud of their achievements. Only one student was unable to participate properly and even she appreciated the lessons to be learnt from the experience of being involved in meaningful community project (Atweh et al., 1998; de Kort, 1999; Education Foundation, 2002).

The same-sex attracted youth surprised us by all showing a common interest in drama. The youth leader, who had worked with the group for some time, thought they might be more interested in a sport, or other artistic or environmental issue. She was pleasantly surprised to find the strong mutual interest in drama, as she was already involved with community theatre with another group, and so was able to share her knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm with the group. This created a real camaraderie with the group for a shared sense of connection and much creativity and laughter within the group during the workshop sessions.

The same-sex attracted youth gave so much of themselves during the workshops and the camp. They shared their personal concerns and insights, with some writing their own poems and creating music with singing and a guitar. This added to the richness and creativity, with much laughter and camaraderie, providing a cathartic mutual understanding of their concerns, and strengthening their social identity in the process Finding common interests to build on the positive aspects of social identity and to strengthen social connectedness is

important for well-being of disadvantaged youth (Dalton et al., 2001; Fuller et al., 2002; Zeldin & Topitzes, 2002).

The African youth surprised me with their mutual interest in celebrating education and their cultural identity. I expected their main concern to be racism and racist attitudes towards them, and how to deal with that within the community. However, they were more concerned with celebrating their educational achievements and prospects for the future in joyful expression of both traditional and popular culture in music and dance. Also, some of the group were keen to be involved in performance at a local refugee cultural festival, but others were nervous of performing at a large public event, especially with only a short time to practice. So a compromise was made with their own celebration of a smaller public event with other students who were also refugees, with some informal dancing at the end. Refugee and immigrant youth can appreciate an environment where they can celebrate their own valued cultural traditions, as well as, make the most of the opportunities in their adopted environment (Berry, 2001; Bottomley, 1992; Goodkind & Foster-Fishman, 2002).

The African youth showed a strong cohesion within the group, even though they were from different Horn of African countries, with different languages, religions, traditions and various attitudes towards their home countries and various family conflicts to contend with in their new environment. However, their commonalities appeared to be much stronger, including: similarities in cultural values of their African heritage, including music, dancing, and hospitality; their common values of respectfulness of each other, with the young men treating the young women as their sisters; their common second language of Arabic; and their common aspirations of making the most of their educational opportunities in Australia. The social connections developed by refugee youth are very important to their well-being in adjusting to a new culture (van der Veer, 2000).

The African youth not only had aspirations for self-improvement through education, but also wanted to show compassion and help others less fortunate than themselves. Many had long-term goals of working with other refugees here in Australia or back on their home countries of Africa to help improve the lives of

their people. So their educational goals were not only for themselves but for the common good, as active citizens of their new country and where possible back in their home countries in the future. By interacting and supporting each other from their common experience towards their common goals, the refugee youth were able to begin to consider supporting other survivors.(Fantino & Colak, 2001; Kaplan, 1998; Ramaliu & Thurston, 2003).

Improved Community Connectedness

Participants in the research affirmed their own identity and community concerns and these common visions were developed into community projects. Youth designed and youth-led community action projects were created by the participants in each of the groups. This, arguably, led to an increased sense of community within the group with freedom of expression to develop common themes for a shared event.

The participants also began to make connections with the wider community, through the community action project events, for an increased sense of community. The community projects often involved cultural arts in order to make connections with the local community.

Community arts projects are about claiming one's right to tell existing stories about self and community and to create new ones (Boal, 1979; Thomas & Rappaport, 1996). Cultural arts serve as a means by which society reminds itself of the stories it wants to remember.

In the face of dominant cultural narratives, many communities can "uncover and create their own stories, expressed through artistic performance owned by the people themselves, rather than by an elite class of artists and patrons" (Thomas & Rappaport, 1996, p. 317).

Common narratives in the current study, included alienating experiences within their local neighbourhoods, with traumatic narratives told by participants in each group. However, participants expressed feelings of a sense of community within their youth sub-culture groups, based on their common cultural or sexual identity. Working within these groups of acceptance, they created community

projects to begin to form new enhanced narratives. Participants thus created their own sense of community connectedness.

Table 22 outlines these transformative processes leading from an alienated oppressive state through the participatory process of empowerment to a sense of community connectedness.

Sustaining Community Connectedness

Post-research feedback from participant youth, youth leaders and teachers, revealed a new sense of community connectedness. This new connectedness was shown with further community projects and community involvement initiated independently by various individuals and groups after the research.

For example, a few members of group of school students who organised an underage dance party during the intervention decided to organise another party the following semester after the teacher and I had both left the school.

They initiated and undertook the whole project with some support from the local community dance venue manager. This event was also very successful. These students were actively pursuing a community-building project of their choice.

Another example was the same-sex attracted social group who participated in drama vignettes workshops for a teachers' forum on same-sex friendly environments in schools, who went on to organise another social action. In the following semester they invited another Victoria University student to assist them and their worker to organise their own local forum to discuss issues of heterosexism in the local community. This also was successful with much discussion generated. They were pursuing their social activism through this further project.

Table 22
Transformative Processes

Level of Analysis/ Intervention	**Oppression and alienation** (state)	**Liberation/Empowerment** (process)	**Wellness with sense of community** (outcome)
Community structures (macro)	Awareness of socio-economic disadvantage with lack of local funding, resources, educational and employment pathways for youth, especially disengaged youth, homosexuals and refugees. Lack of safe environments with heterosexism and racism issues.	Social action (by community workers, educators, researchers and youth) to organise community partnerships for more funding and resources, especially educational and employment pathways for youth, especially refugees. Creating safe environments for youth especially same-sex attracted.	Promotion of improved youth educational and employment pathways and safe environments, both at policy level and working directly with youth on community projects to improve their personal pathway opportunities and work towards a safer environment through celebration and policy change.
Group organising (meso)	Youth in passive and powerless state of receiving limited educational resources and limited educational and employment pathways with lack of safe environment especially for homosexuals and lack of security for refugees	Social action to work with youth to organise peer supported community projects to celebrate youth, promote cultural identity and promote safe environments and pathways especially for disengaged youth, same-sex attracted and refugees	Action research with youth to celebrate youth and promote pathways and safe environments, with youth also gaining improved group organisational skills, peer-support and improved sense of community.
Personal identity (micro)	Youth feel powerless to change disadvantage of limited funding / pathways for education / employment and lack of safe / secure environment	Social action work with youth to promote critical thinking for action projects promoting leadership and teamwork skills, peer-support and citizenship, to improve personal educational and employment pathways, and to address safety issues through celebration and policy change.	Youth involved in community projects feel a sense of community engagement, pride, empowerment, connectedness, (with decreased isolation and anger-management issues), improved safety, with relatively improved personal pathways in education and employment.

Additionally, one of the same-sex attracted youth group participants went on to compere (MC) a local youth festival organised across schools in the local area. At one of the planning meetings, when she met a student from another school, she commented to the student that she remembered being given a hard time by her because she was gay. Yet she continued to treat the offending young woman in a friendly manner, which was her style. This same gay young woman also volunteered to participate in a program to train youth to be involved in community radio and she went on to have her own one-hour spot with a friend every week for a semester. Their radio show dealt with issues of interest to youth, including sexuality issues.

Another one of the same-sex attracted youth group went on to be involved in a local community theatre group for gay youth organised by the youth worker. He performed with the group in the following semester.

The African refugee youth, who organised a celebration of their educational achievements, expressed a mutual interest in pursuing educational opportunities here in Australia as a way of continuing their community involvement. At a graduation ceremony, six months after the intervention, many of the students proudly told of their continuing educational pursuits. One of the young women from Sudan commented that I would be proud of her since she now attended school everyday, with no late notes, all assignments handed in with no late ones. A young woman from Somalia while continuing to wear her flowing garments with her head scarf, had now proudly added her school jumper with its emblem over the top of her traditional clothing. They were showing positive signs of a developing maturity and acculturation with improved attitude and attendance at school, with completion of assignments, on their educational pathways. They were pursuing active involvement in educational opportunities.

Reflections on the Appreciative Approach to Participation

Youth Participation

A participatory approach is valuable for working with marginalised youth (Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Schwab, 1997). This participatory approach or co-operative inquiry incorporated concepts of: affirmation theory from organisational

psychology; critical thinking or transformational learning, promoting social justice awareness and problem-solving skills from educational theories; and self-expressive community arts from creative arts applications (Ciofalo-Lagos, 1997; Greene, 1995; Mayo, 2000; Miles, 2002a; Mulvey & Mandel, 2003; Thomas & Rappaport, 1996).

An appreciative inquiry approach was adopted with participants to: (1) discover *the best of what is*, by affirmation of participants' various youth sub-cultural issues through games, activities and group discussions; (2) dream *what could be*, by group discussions with participants inviting them to think critically, using transformative learning theory, about community concerns and possible community projects to begin social transformation; (3) design *what should be*, by participants planning, implementing and evaluating their own youth-led and youth-designed community action projects; and (4) reach the destiny of successfully completing a community project of *what will be*, for improved narratives towards social transformation (Barrett & Fry, 2002; Cooperrider et al., 1995; Fry, Barrett, Seiling, & Whitney, 2002; Whitney, Cooperrider, Garrison, & Moore, 2002).

Community Partnerships

Community partnerships of trust are required in order to achieve credible participatory research outcomes (Curriculum Corporation, 2002; Nelson et al., 2001). Community agencies undertaking active policy development and participatory programs, with good accountability processes and connections with other community and government agencies, are often connected to the grassroots community, with a high level of credibility in that local community (Cuthill, 2002; Fawcett et al., 1995; Nelson et al., 1998). This study developed a strong community partnership with a well regarded community agency to successfully access appropriate youth groups in both community and educational settings.

Values-based community partnerships require funding and commitment to long-term projects to achieve and sustain community improvements (Einspruch & Wunrow, 2002; Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Sherman & Torbert, 2000; Weeks, Hoatson, & Dixon, 2003). A long-term commitment is required of both the

funding bodies and the community agency management. Long-term funding is often provided by government agencies with some assistance from philanthropic trusts, charitable and business agencies. However, funders can often change their funding priorities or decide to only offer seeding or short-term funding, making long-term funding difficult to acquire at times.

Long-term commitment can also be difficult for community agencies who have to juggle a variety of priorities of policy and program commitments and may need to change their priorities for various reasons. Additionally, community agencies need to deal with changes in staffing when funding changes, or staff leaving due to burn-out or need for a change. Community workers also need to be committed to full participation, where they are not in total control of the program, but encourage youth to take the lead (Atweh et al., 1998; Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Robottom & Colquhoun, 1992).

Community Development Principles

Community development principles are required to implement community partnerships, to assist with obtaining resources and gaining improvements within socially disadvantaged communities, in order to achieve sustainable community grassroots social transformation outcomes (Beilharz, 2002; Botes & Rensburg, 2000; Bradley et al., 2004; Connell & Kubisch, 2001; Fawcett et al., 1995).

Educational institutions have a role to play in assisting their community partners to obtain these resources for their local communities. By working in partnership, educational institutions can use their expertise in research principles and grant applications to assist with the provision of appropriate resources to community agencies. The educational resources can include human resources in the form of students and staff with research expertise, plus appropriate funding to undertake the research in partnership with the community agency for the local community.

Community development principles, of working towards social transformation, are reflected in the principles of action research. Action research is a form of community development, where the participants develop their own resources, their social capital, and acquire other resources to work towards social

transformation in their local community (Almeida-Acosta, 1983; Arriaga & Oskamp, 1998; Berkowitz, 2000; Flynn, Ray, & Rider, 1994).

This action research approach needs to be fully supported by the community development workers within the community partnership agencies (Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Stacey et al., 2003; Wilkins, Bryans, Hetzel, Cutler, & Ellis, 1993). Youth workers need to be committed to fully supporting the youth participants, while allowing youth the take the lead. They need to guide the youth from the background, offering appropriate advice and options, to assist them to achieve successful outcomes. Youth workers need to be committed to youth-designed community projects. Their community agency management need to be committed to long-term community partnerships to support sustainable youth-led youth-designed community transforming projects.

Evaluation

The research approach involved cycles of planning, action and reflective evaluation (Atweh et al., 1998; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). The evaluation process was undertaken by the participants and myself throughout the research process, including a written and oral evaluations at the end of the process by all involved. The self-evaluations were complemented by evaluations from the other community partners involved in the processes and outcomes of the research (Estrella, 2000; Reason, 1994).

For example, with the recently arrived refugees, continual invaluable evaluation came from the African under-graduate student, assisting with the refugee youth. She had also been a refugee, but had been in Australia for two more years with a less disruptive educational experience than the participants. She could articulate her narratives of similar experiences in a traditional Africa culture and her own and observed acculturation issues for African youth and families in Australia.

Evaluations were also provided by the youth workers, teachers and other community workers involved with various aspects of the projects undertaken by the participants. Reflective feedback and evaluations were provided throughout

the action research processes and often incorporated into the next cycle of the process to assist with the successful outcomes of the projects.

Positive reflective evaluations also took place in the form of video recordings. I recorded many creative and fun planning stages and events of the various projects undertaken by the participants. The video recordings were shown to each of the groups and copies were provided to each participant involved at the end of each project, as a gift to them for their valuable contributions. This provided an affirmative record of positive shared memories of shared events to assist in strengthening their experiences of new improved narratives.

However, while participants completed written evaluations, they were not able to be involved in the analysis of their evaluations, due to various constraints, including limited time with educational groups and changes of membership of the social group.

Time limitation was a major factor with the two educational groups of mainstream school students and the refugee bridging course, as only one semester was allocated for each program. In each program the community projects were completed towards the end of the semester, with only enough time remaining to completed verbal group reflections and individual written evaluations. But not sufficient time for detailed analysis by the participants of their experiences and evaluations.

However, if the programs were able to be completed over two semesters, instead of one, (as was being piloted in another school), then the participants could be involved in more extensive reflections and interpretation of their experiences. The Working Community Program with the school students was initially envisioned as having time for students to reflect on the personal benefits of the program on their own future careers and citizenship possibilities (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002b; Turner, 2002). This would only be possible with more time.

For the social support group of same-sex attracted youth, time constraints were not such an issue, as the social program was more flexible than educational programs. However, unlike educational programs, the group was not static, with

constantly changing membership. Fortunately, during the workshops and performances, while there was some change in group membership, a core group of about half the group remained constant, so there was some continuity through the project and evaluations were completed. However, after the performance, when further analysis of their experiences could have been conducted there were significant numbers of new members arriving and some older ones leaving due to changed personal circumstances. So detailed analysis of their experiences would have been unworkable.

However, the new group with some original members was able to go on and do more action research together on dealing with heterosexism by conducting their own public forum with another student researcher and the same youth worker the following semester.

Youth Benefits

Youth participation was the focus of this research, with participants planning and implementing community action projects, thereby improving their own problem-solving skills, arguably leading to an improved sense of empowerment and well-being (Checkoway et al., 1995; Headley, 2002). Participants reported benefiting from teamwork, leadership and communication (TLC) skills development. They learnt program management skills that could be of assistance in further study and future work. These improved interpersonal skills could also be beneficial in their social relationships.

This research experience provided a practical educational approach for improved career opportunities and future community involvement. For example, participants could feel more able to pursue opportunities to undertake volunteer or paid community work, or be involved in activist groups, political issues, environment issues, or the cultural arts scene. An active participatory approach, with the opportunity for freedom of expression, can arguably improve the well-being of the participants, to experience an improved sense of community both with peers and the wider community.

Participants expressed an improved sense of well-being in the form of improved self-confidence. For example, school student participants in an

evaluation session two years later said that they felt prouder than ever of their achievements and that they had taken on more leadership tasks within the school community after their involvement in the project. One of their school teachers also made comments that the participants in this Working Community Program had taken on more leadership roles within the life of the school community, compared to students who had not undertaken the program.

Youth can benefit from participatory programs where they are able to take the lead in organising projects of their choice and design, with support from adult workers. Community and educational workers need to offer appropriate support to the youth, especially in the early stages of the project dreaming and designing.

Youth with little experience in leadership need guidance in the background with appropriate suggestions of feasible options and positive ways forward for successful outcomes. They cannot be left to stumble and fall from their inexperience or through lack of suitable guidance. This would only re-affirm their belief that they are inadequate and alienated from their communities. This guidance, however, needs to be accompanied by positive affirmation of their appropriate ideas and interests. Affirmation of their identity and work undertaken can be provided verbally at every opportunity, as well as recorded appropriately. For example, as previously mentioned, recording events on camera or video and providing copies of photos or videos to participants involved.

Community Connectedness

Participants in this research reported significant improvement in their sense of community connectedness. Using a participatory research approach, the youth affirmed their sub-culture identity and explored their community concerns. By planning, implementing and reflecting on their own community action projects, the participants actively began to weave new improved narratives (Carroll, 2001; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Rappaport, 1995). Emerging common narratives of mutual cultural identity, began to form.

Youth are often alienated by the dominant cultural narratives perpetuated by the mass-media and by their experiences within the local community (Daniel & Cornwell, 1993; Eckersley, 2004). For example, dominant cultural narratives

include the stereotyping of socially disadvantaged youth being involved with illicit drug taking, leading to youth feeling sidelined and unappreciated within their communities (United Nations Economic and Social Council Secretary General, 2004). Additionally, same-sex attracted youth often experience the dominant cultural narrative of heterosexism leading to experiences of rejection at home, school, work and other public places (Hillier et al., 1998).

For refugee youth, the dominant cultural narrative experienced can be that of racial discrimination, where they experience rejection on public transport or in other public situations (Coventry et al., 2002). Refugee youth also experience the loss of their traditional cultural narratives with its cultural values, practices and language (Barnes, 2003). These traditional cultural narratives are replaced by a very different dominant cultural narrative that often contradicts and appears to destroy the previous narrative, leading to feelings of alienation.

Youth experiencing traumatic personal narratives of alienation from their local communities can choose to participate as a group in an enclave of safety. By participating in a group they risk dependency on the group in order to explore their hopes for a better world, creating a comic vision of an accepting world. Youth participating in a group can develop community projects of creative comic self-expression in order to experience enhanced group narratives of community connectedness.

Youth participants in this research designed and created their own community action projects, based on their own sub-cultural identity, thereby creating their own sense of community connectedness.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Reflections on Youth Participation

Youth Free to Celebrate and Connect

Participants in the research began a social transformation process of moving from a position of feeling alienated and powerless, to one of being able to make positive contributions to their social disadvantaged communities. This research provided a unique opportunity for participants in each group to became co-operative inquirers, learning how to undertake imaginative and problem-solving, solution focused approaches to research. Participants were able to affirm their own social identities and organise their own ways of celebrating that social identities within their local community neighbourhoods, thus facilitating the beginnings of social transformation for themselves and their local communities..

This chapter will outline the lessons learnt from: (1) the appreciative approach to participation undertaken in this research; (2) the limitation of the research; (3) the sustainability issues for further youth participation; and (4) and future directions for youth participation in the community.

Lessons from Participation

Non-Participation

Youth today live in a world of constant change that can be alienating and result in non-participation. Socially disadvantaged youth can feel particularly alienated from their local communities, which may lack educational and community resources for them and display discriminatory attitudes towards them by community members. Further alienation can occur in an academically focused schooling process, with few support networks, resulting in disengagement from school. Marginalised youth questioning their sexuality face heterosexism at school and in their local neighbourhoods. Refugees and migrants face alienation due to language barriers and race discrimination in their local communities. Living in socially disadvantaged areas one can experience alienation with lack of

adequate community support or opportunities for them to celebrate their identity and to fully participate in the local neighbourhood community.

Discovery of Best of Who You Are

Youth appreciate exploring their own identity to re-discover the best of who they are. Identity affirmation approaches are useful to build on the strengths and positive aspects of these socially disadvantaged youth. They need to be able to freely express their identity including: cultural identity; sexual identity; and any other youth subculture identities. Youth celebrated their identities though their own choice of cultural arts and environmental projects. In a supportive safe environment, youth themselves can create their own sense of community connectedness.

Taking time with youth participants to understand and appreciate the best of who they are, is particularly important with youth who have suffered trauma or significant rejection in their lives. In this research, the same-sex attracted youth had experienced significant rejection from their families and peers, and the recently arrived refugees had experienced trauma due to their refugee experience and cultural differences from their countries of origin. These two groups appreciated the time spent discovering or re-discovering their sense of identity.

Participation programs to engage at-risk youth are becoming increasingly utilised in a variety of imaginative formats (Checkoway et al., 1995; Foundation for Young Australians, 2001; Headley, 2002). The participants in such programs experienced various levels of empowerment and accompanying levels of control within the program. Often, however, the program content is determined by program leaders, leaving the participants feeling constrained by the pre-determined directions.

In the current research participants had the opportunity to consider their own identity with their peers in order to design their own projects, to connect in meaningful ways to their own local neighbourhoods, to make a difference. Participants who had felt alienated from their local neighbourhoods were able to work with their sub-cultural groups to affirm their identity and make new positive connections with their local communities.

An appreciative research approach allowed for reflection on the social structures with which youth interact. The sub-cultural aspects of youth are of interest in their own right, but they are of more interest as part of a symbiotic relationship with broader aspects of social change (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Mackay, 1999; Miles, 2002b). In contrast to dominant cultural views, what researchers argued is that youth cultures do not reflect a relative rebelliousness, but rather reflect the creative ways in which youth interpret the structural and cultural changes that surround them (Calcutt, 1998; Furlong & Cartmet, 1997; Miles, 2002b; White & Wyn, 1998; Wyn & White, 2000).

The research sought to work with these creative youth sub-cultures, to affirm their identity and lifestyle issues, and to provide participants with opportunities to explore ways to use this creative energy to design their own community action projects. Traditionally, youth cultural identities have been considered to simply be a reflection of more fundamental structural aspects of youth transitions (Cieslik & Pollock, 2002; Miles, 2000). Researchers argued that youth cultural experiences represent the actual area within which they seek to cope with, and at times defy, the ups and downs of structural change (Miles, 2002b). The process of individuation represents a key aspect of the experience of social change for youth. Youth could be seen as rebelling from within. In an individualised society the opportunities to rebel are less obvious than they were in the past (Calcutt, 1998). Rather, youth call upon aspects of consumer culture, which they can use to construct their identities, while rejecting those aspects to which they do not relate (Eckersley, 2004; Ginwright & James, 2002; Mackay, 1999). Youth are not passive, even though they are not often politically vocal. They can use the resources provided for them by consumer culture to cope with the rapidity of social and structural change (Miles, 2002b; White & Wyn, 1998).

Lifestyles can be viewed as the cultural arena in which youth navigate aspects of personal, structural and social change (Cieslik & Pollock, 2002; Furlong & Cartmet, 1997; Miles, 2002b). Lifestyles can be seen as lived cultures in which individuals actively express their identities, but in direct relation to their position in relation to the dominant culture. A sociology of lifestyles is promising, insofar as it may produce an understanding of the inter-play between structure and agency

that operates in the context of the everyday lives of youth. This paradoxical situation is manifested most readily through the lifestyles that are an active expression of their relationship with the risk society (Furlong & Cartmet, 1997; Miles, 2000). In short, the lifestyles of youth reflect that while, on the one hand, the opportunities open to youth in a global society appear to be immense, on the other there are structural constraints that inevitably restrict their ability to be free (Miles, 2002b).

Dreaming of What Could Be

Socially disadvantaged youth often lack opportunities for self-expression. They can also lack opportunities and support to pursue suitable educational, recreational and employment pathways. However, youth can envision an improved community, appreciating opportunities to freely express their views and ideas of what could be. They appreciate the opportunity to explore their mutual community concerns and their ideas for community improvements.

Designing What Should Be

Youth appreciate opportunities for practical self-expression to design their own community projects. Youth can express their ideas by actively designing and leading their own community action projects. Supported creative programs can be of benefit to marginalised youth who often have few opportunities to freely express their creativity within the wider community (Yates & Youniss, 1996). Schools can offer creative programs to support social identity explorations and provide opportunities for community connection programs to engage and retain their students. Peer support and mentoring programs, leadership and interpersonal skills programs, and community projects, can also assist with retention of youth at-risk of disengagement from school (Delgado, 1996; Fyson, 1999; Hedin & Eisikovits, 1982).

Same-sex attracted youth, who often suffer rejection from family and friends, need support for their emerging sexual identity, including supported social programs and the promotion of same-sex attracted friendly environments in schools and in the local community.

Recent refugee and migrant youth require extra support in many areas including: counselling for past traumas and current family issues; social support programs; and language and bridging programs. Youth from other countries also need time to work through acculturation issues, to affirm and celebrate their cultural heritage and their identity in the new country, within supported educational programs.

Destiny of What Will Be

Youth participating in this research created for themselves the beginnings of social transformation both for themselves and their local communities. They did so through affirmation, where youth had opportunities within a trusting environment to build on their own social, cultural and sexual identity to create community projects of their choice.

Lessons Learnt for Future Projects

Small Local Project

This particular research has been a small action research project with limited groups and limited numbers of youth participants. There was not a large sample size, with multiple groups, allowing for validity of the phenomenological findings. However, other small youth participation projects with socially disadvantaged youth, have successfully been completed in many parts of the world (Mayo, 2000; Prentki, 2003; Schwab, 1997). Participation projects were unique in that the youth themselves choose their own form of local celebratory project based on affirmation of aspects of their own cultural identity.

Safe and Trusting Environments

Participants perceived a high level of support from the youth workers and teachers involved with each group. Youth need to feel safe and supported by youth workers and teachers before and during the action research process for successful outcomes. They need to feel that they are trusted by supportive adults in order to trust themselves and assist in building trusting relationships within the group. This trust can enable youth to confidently work together on action projects to make a meaningful contribution to the community.

Style of Researcher and Youth Workers

A positive, affirming and encouraging approach, by researchers and youth workers, is required for youth participation programs. They need to be shown trust and acceptance, inviting them to affirm their identity, including their social, cultural and sexual identity. Researchers and youth workers also need networking skills to link up with a wide range of community partners, as appropriate, to assist in the creation of sustainable community projects.

Youth need to be given freedom of expression and control, taking the lead and making critical decisions throughout the participation process. Adults can offer suggestions at the early stages of the action research process, and suggest appropriate contacts as necessary. But the adults need to be able to let go and give control to participants, while providing background support when necessary.

Participation involves inviting youth to be creative and to take control themselves. They need to be shown appreciation to encourage the sharing of skills and knowledge, while being offered support when necessary. They can be encouraged to provide mutual support and teamwork for each other. Appreciation for their creative work can also be demonstrated by photographing and filming project work and outcomes. At the end of the project each participant can be given a token of appreciation for their work, such as a copy of a video or photographs, or some kind of appropriate certificate of successful project completion. This provides a positive and tangible way to give something back to the participants and helps strengthen their positive narratives from the participation, for a more sustainable transformation.

Sustainability Issues

Partnerships Across Sectors

Committed partnerships across community sectors with expertise and funding are required for sustainable community development programs with youth participation. Community partnerships require co-operation between diverse community sectors including: research; education and training; government; community agencies; local businesses; philanthropic trusts; and community

volunteer groups (Nelson et al., 2001). Sustainable, trusting community partnerships are needed with agencies and government in order to use an action research approach.

The education sector, at various levels, can be involved in partnership programs for mutual benefit for the sector and their partner agencies. In the tertiary and community education sector, community partnerships require a strong commitment in time and funding from both the university and the community and any government agencies involved in the projects. The local community agencies and government bodies can benefit from the academic and research expertise of the university. Meanwhile, the university can benefit from the community and government bodies for appropriate practical student placements for hands-on experience in the local community.

Primary and secondary school education partnerships with other agencies require the school's commitment of time and funding. A whole-or-school approach can be taken towards the development of sustainable community partnerships. Adequate professional development training and support for teachers taking on extra work with community projects is also required.

Community agencies need to be committed to community partnerships with appropriate allocated funding. This can be a challenge with limited funding for youth workers and the high turnover of youth workers and teachers, especially in socially disadvantaged areas.

Local governments also need to be committed to providing adequate funding and appropriate support for community partnerships. On-going funding for youth worker and policy support roles is often an issue, with only seeding and pilot project funding forthcoming from philanthropic trusts and government grants in many cases. The usual requirement for government funding of appropriate outcomes of a specific nature with a specific project brief can be an issue. An action research approach is often open-ended, as the participants themselves decide what will happen. Funding guidelines often have a requirement to specify exactly how the proposed project funds will be used and what will be the likely outcomes. In action research, control is taken out of the hands of the professionals

and given to the young participants. This can often be confronting and difficult for adults to relinquish control to local socially disadvantaged youth.

Educational and Employment Pathways

In order to build a sense of community connectedness, more educational and employment pathways for socially disadvantaged youth are required. There needs to be a commitment from various levels of government to opportunities for local youth. This includes the need for specific community and bridging programs for special groups, such as recently arrived refugees and migrants (Goodkind & Foster-Fishman, 2002; Ramaliu & Thurston, 2003; Weine et al., 2004; Wessells, 2004).

Refugee and migrant youth groups need more access to educational programs. Refugees often have heavy restrictions on the educational programs they can undertake depending on their visa status. Refugees and recent migrants often cannot afford the heavy financial costs of some educational programs. More bridging programs are needed after basic language skills programs in order to access entry into full secondary or community (or TAFE) programs. Adequate financial support for educational costs and other living expenses are also required for recently arrived refugee youth and their families (Kaplan, 1998).

Youth-at-risk need programs and settings that have less emphasis on academic achievement and more emphasis on personal and practical skills. More funding is required for programs with an emphasis on building identity and self-esteem through community based programs, practical skills programs, interpersonal skills and mentoring programs, and adventure and team building programs (Kinnevy, Healey, Pollio, & North, 1999; O'Hearn & Gatz, 2002; Zoerink et al., 1997).

Educational Setting Issues

Funding for additional community programs in school settings is a major issue for teachers, who often struggle to receive adequate funding for students to have access to transport to community venues, promotional materials, project materials and the like.

Time limitations are also an issue with teachers and youth workers. Multiple programs and activities are vying for the limited time of staff and students. Staff have little time to develop community connections for community projects.

Another major issue is the high turnover of staff and lack of professional development in public schools. This makes continuity of programs and professional development of new staff a real challenge, in an area that needs further resourcing. Support for staff to make community connections and assistance with programs where students go into the local community is also needed.

Social Program Issues

Community agencies continually face limited funding for ongoing provision of social support programs. Often only seeding funding and pilot program funding can be sought, with ongoing funding an issue. There are also attrition issues in social settings with hight staff turnovers. Voluntary participation in social support groups for youth can mean a high turnover in participants. Youth work with limited funding and resources can prove stressful leading to a high turnover of youth worker staff.

Promotion of Youth Participation

Promotion of meaningful youth participation is beginning to be addressed in many parts of the world. Currently youth participation is a popular issue with some governments. However, Australian government funders tend to want more outcomes with less resources with each funding round. The current trend is for less ongoing funding availability. However, a local state government body has recently funded a practical handbook on youth participation called *Creating change in your community* (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2004), which emphasises youth empowerment.

I worked in partnership with youth consultants, and a wide range of local youth workers in various community and educational settings and with potential youth participants to create further youth participation partnerships and programs. This has included working in partnership with a number of local community

agencies involved in youth work to work with students across a number of public schools to organise a community project of the student's choice. This resulted in a youth festival in a local skate park in November 2003, with information stands, rides, food and a bike riding competition organised by the students. I videoed the event and gave copies to each of the partner organisations to share with youth participants and for promotion of future events.

Future directions

Whole Community Approach

Community partnerships and coalitions are ways forward towards social transformation and sustainability in disadvantaged communities. Partnerships and coalitions could include: local government; community agencies; schools; businesses; community groups such as Rotary and Lions Clubs; and local cultural and religious groups. Community partnerships and coalitions of mutual support encourage social entrepreneurship providing a whole community approach within marginalised communities with and for their youth.

Imaginative Approach

Further research and promotion of community connectedness programs for and with disadvantaged youth, using a whole community approach with extended partnerships, is a way forward from this research. Programs with extensive community partnerships could incorporate more appreciative activities, using the imagination of marginalised and at-risk youth to promote affirmation of identity and community concerns for an enhanced future community. For example, youth creating their own community theatre with video movies for affirmation of youth sub-culture narratives. Other possible ways forward could include: working with local community artists; heroes and cultural icons for celebratory events; and projects to improve public, educational or cultural spaces.

Promotion could include the provision of workshops on the action research approach incorporating appreciative inquiry techniques, for organisations, youth workers, teachers and youth. Workshops and on-going programs would need to

provide a safe and trusting environment where youth feel affirmed and able to make a meaningful contribution to the community.

If sufficient time is allocated for meaningful creative projects, participants could be involved in further analysis of their experiences and evaluations, contributing to a final group report of their work in creative ways. For example, one semester could involve the designing of their research proposals and the another semester for actively undertaking their community projects, with plenty of time to evaluate and analyse their work and contribute to a final group report on their research. The report could be written, including stories, photos and artwork. Alternatively it could be a video recording or DVD of participant experiences that they produce themselves. This would further enhance the participants experience of an appreciative approach to action research.

Also, if time allowed, participants could reflect on the personal benefits of managing their projects on their own future careers opportunities and citizenship possibilities. For example, a community role model or an expert in an area of interest could be invited to a presentation of the participants work where experiences are shared, skills and experience recognised and future prospects envisioned.

An appreciative approach with full engagement and participation of youth and/or adults within their particular community can be adapted and promoted for mutual benefit of the individuals involved and the whole community. This appreciative approach is adaptable to a variety of youth settings from schools to social and community focused groups to youth decision-making councils and bodies. The appreciative approach has also been shown to be of benefit to adult groups in various settings and could be further promoted within business corporations, community and government organizations to promote full participation of the members of any particular community. Each member of the community can feel appreciated and valued for their opinion and can participate in visioning exercises and in new initiatives to improve the particular environment within a an organisation or a wider community initiative, for mutual benefit

(Barrett & Fry, 2002; Barrett & Peterson, 2000; Cooperrider et al., 1995; Ludema et al., 1997).

A grassroots positive appreciative approach involving all participants in creative expression and practice rather than a top-down imposed decision making process, encourages meaningful involvement and commitment to the process and outcomes, to improve any particular community environment and work towards social transformation of the individuals and the whole community.

Ongoing research, promotion and funding is required to continue to provide youth (and adults), especially the socially disadvantaged, with opportunities to discover their dreams and design their destinies, creating their own sense of community connectedness and a more hopeful future for themselves and their communities.

REFERENCES

Aboriginal Coordinating Council. (2003). Which way you mob! Youth project. Retrieved 5 May, 2003, from http://www.whichway.accq.org.au

Ackoff, R. L. (1981). *Creating the corporate future*. New York: Wiley.

Adler, A. (1959). *Understanding human nature*. New York: Premier Books.

Al-Yaman, F., Sargeant, H., & Bryant, M. (2003). *Australia's young people: Their health and wellbeing 2003* (No. 50). Canberra: Australian Institute of Health & Welfare.

Alder, C., & Sandor, D. (1990). Youth researching youth. *Youth Studies, Nov*, 38-42.

Allamani, A., Casswell, S., Graham, K., Holder, H. D., Holmila, M., Larsson, S., et al. (2000). Introduction: Community action research and the prevention of alcohol problems at the local level. *Substance Use and Misuse, 35*, 1-10.

Almeida-Acosta, E. (1983). Development of a participatory research center as part of an ongoing rural development program. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 19*, 295-306.

Alparone, F. R., & Rissotto, A. (2001). Children's citizenship and participation models: Participation in planning urban spaces and children's councils. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 11*, 421-434.

Anderson-Butcher, D., Newsome, W. S., & Ferrari, T. M. (2003). Participation in Boys and Girls Clubs and relationships to youth outcomes. *Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 39-55.

Argyle, M. (1967). *The psychology of interpersonal behaviour*. London: Penguin.

Armstrong, K. (1993). *A history of God: The 4,000 year quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of community participation. *American Institute of Planners Journal, 35*, 216-224.

Arriaga, X. B., & Oskamp, S. (Eds.). (1998). *Addressing community problems: Psychological research and interventions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Artist Services. (1997). Teamwork [videorecording]. On *Teamwork* [Nettforce National Employment and Training Taskforce,]. Melbourne: Artist Services P/L.

Ashton-Warner, S. (1986). *Teacher*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Atweh, B., Christensen, C., & Dornan, L. (1998). Students as action researchers: Partnerships for social justice. In B. Atweh, S. Kemmis & P. Weeks (Eds.), *Action research in practice: Partnership for social justice in education* (pp. 114-138). London: Routledge.

Australian Centre for Equity through Education. (1996). *School and community action for full service schools - making it work: The views of education, health, and community service practitioners presented at a national conference on full service schools.* Paper presented at the National Conference, Adelaide.

Australian Centre for Equity through Education. (2001). *Building relationships: Making education work – A report on the perspectives of young people*. Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs with Australian Youth Research Centre.

Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2000). National youth suicide prevention strategy (1995-9). Retrieved 2 April, 2003, from www.aifs.gov.au/ysp/

Australian Red Cross. (2002). *People of concern, refugees and asylum seekers: A global issue*. Melbourne: Australian Red Cross.

Baker, J. M. (2001). *How homophobia hurts children: Nurturing diversity at home, at school, and in the community*. New York: Harrington Park Press.

Baldry, E., & Vinson, T. (Eds.). (1991). *Actions speak: Strategies and lessons from Australian social and community action*. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.

Banks, C. K., & Wideman, G. (1996). 'The company of neighbours': Building social support through the use of ethnography. *International Social Work, 39*, 317-328.

Banyard, V. L., & LaPlant, L. E. (2002). Exploring links between childhood maltreatment and empowerment. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 687-707.

Barnes, D. (Ed.). (2003). *Asylum seekers and refugees in Australia: Issues of mental health and wellbeing*. Sydney: Transcultural Mental Health Centre.

Barrett, F., & Fry, R. (2002). Appreciative inquiry in action: The unfolding of a provocative invitation. In R. Fry & F. Barrett (Eds.), *Appreciative inquiry and organizational transformation: Reports from the field* (pp. 1-23). Westport, Conn: Quorum Books.

Barrett, F. J. (1995). Creating appreciative learning cultures. *Organizational Dynamics, 24*, 36-49.

Barrett, F. J., & Peterson, R. (2000). Appreciative learning cultures: Developing competencies for global organizing. *Organization Development Journal, 18*(2), 10-21.

Bartle-Haring, S. (1997). The relationships among parent-adolescent differentiation, sex-role orientation and identity development in late adolescence and early adulthood. *Journal of Adolescence, 20*, 553-565.

Batson, C. D., Ahmad, N., & Tsang, J.-A. (2002). Four motives for community involvement. *Journal of Social Issues, 58*, 429-446.

Baumeister, R., Dale, K., & Muraven, M. (2000). Volition and belongingness: Social movements, volition, self-esteem and the need to belong. In S. Stryker, T. Owens & R. White (Eds.), *Self, identity, and social movements* (pp. 239-251). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Baumeister, R., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*, 497-529.

Beavis, K. (2002). *Safe places: A community cultural development workers' guide to working with young people from a refugee background*. Brisbane: Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma.

Beemyn, B., & Eliason, M. (Eds.). (1996). *Queer studies: A lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender anthology*. New York: New York University Press.

Behnia, B. (2004). Trust building from the perspective of survivors of war and torture. *Social Service Review, 78*, 26-41.

Beilharz, L. (2002). *Building community: The shared action experience*. Bendigo, Vic: Solutions Press.

Berger, J., Mohr, J., & Philibert, N. (1982). *Another way of telling*. New York: Pantheon.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. London: Penguin.

Bergson, H. (1917). *Laughter: An essay on the meaning of comic* (C. Bruceton & F. Rothwell, Trans.). New York: MacMillan.

Berkman, L. F., & Glass, T. (2000). Social integration, social networks, social support, and health. In I. Kawachi & L. F. Berkman (Eds.), *Social epidemiology* (pp. 137-173). New York: Oxford University Press.

Berkowitz, B. (2000). Community and neighborhood organization. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 331-357). New York: Kluwer Academic.

Berkowitz, B., & Wolff, T. (1996). Rethinking social action and community empowerment: A dialogue. In M. B. Lykes, A. Banuazizi, R. Liem & M. Morris (Eds.), *Myths about the powerless: Contesting social inequalities* (pp. 296-316). New York: Kluwer Academic.

Berman, M. (1984). *The reenchantment of the world*. Toronto: Bantam Books.

Berman, S. (1999). *Learning through community service for the multiple intelligences classroom*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Berry, J. W. (2001). A psychology of immigration. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*, 615-632.

Berryman, D. L. (2000). Riding the winds of change. *Journal of Leisure Research, 32*, 7-11.

Bess, K. D., Fisher, A. T., Sonn, C. C., & Bishop, B. J. (2002). Psychological sense of community: Theory, research, and application. In A. T. Fisher, C. C. Sonn & B. J. Bishop (Eds.), *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications, and implications* (pp. 3-22). New York: Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers.

Bessant, J. (2000). Social action and the internet: New forms of political space. *Just Policy / Advocacy and Social Action, September*, 109-117.

Blum, R. W. (1998). Healthy youth development as a model for youth health promotion. *Adolescent Health, 22*, 368-375.

Boal, A. (1979). *Theatre of the oppressed* (C. A. McBride & M.-O. L. McBride, Trans.). London: Pluto Press.

Bond, G. (2003). Melbourne Youth Learning Opportunities (MYLO). Retrieved 15 February, 2003, from http://mams.rmit.edu.au/a2e5nmvm70zv1.pdf

Bond, L., Belenky, M. F., & Weinstock, J. (2000). The Listening Partners Program: An initiative toward feminist community psychology in action. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 28*, 697-730.

Bostock, J., & Freeman, J. (2003). 'No limits': Doing participatory action research with young people in Northumberland. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 13*, 464-473.

Botes, L., & Rensburg, D. V. (2000). Community participation in development: Nine plagues and twelve commandments. *Community Development Journal, 35*, 41-58.

Bottomley, G. (1992). *From another place: Migration and the politics of culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss* (Vol. 1). New York: Basic Books.

Boyden, S. (1987). *Western civilisation in a biological perspective: Patterns in biohistory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Bradley, B. S., Deighton, J., & Selby, J. (2004). The 'Voices' Project: Capacity-building in community development for youth at risk. *Journal of Health Psychology, 9*, 197-213.

Brewer, M. B., & Silver, M. D. (2000). Group distinctiveness, social identification, and collective mobilization. In S. Stryker, T. J. Owens & R. W. White (Eds.), *Self, identity, and social movements* (Vol. 13, pp. 153-171). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Brimbank City Council. (2000). *Brimbank Youth Action Plan 2001-2003*. Melbourne: Brimbank City Council.

Brinthaupt, T. M., & Lipka, R. P. (Eds.). (2002). *Understanding early adolescent self and identity: Applications and interventions*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Brodsky, A. E., & Marx, C. M. (2001). Layers of identity: Multiple psychological senses of community within a community setting. *Journal of Community Psychology, 29*, 161-178.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brophy, M. (2001). *The study circle: Participatory action research, with and for the unemployed.* Victoria University, Melbourne.

Brough, M., Gorman, D., Ramirez, E., & Westoby, P. (2003). Young refugees talk about well-being: A qualitative analysis of refugee youth mental health from three states. *Australian Journal of Social Issues, 38*, 193-209.

Brown, E. (1999). The scope of volunteer activity and public service. *Law and Contemporary Problems, 62*(4), 17-42.

Brown, L. D., & Tandon, R. (1983). Ideology and political economy in inquiry: Action research and participatory research. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 19*, 277-294.

Bruner, J. S. (1993). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Burfoot, D. (2003). Arguing for a better future: Children and young people's participation. *Youth Studies Australia, 22*, 44-51.

Burgess, J. (2000). Youth and the future of community renewal. *National Civic Review, 89*(1), 27-32.

Burgin, V. (1982). *Thinking photography*. London: Macmillan.

Burke, A. (2004). Once upon a time ... The power of digital storytelling. *Educare News, March,* 50-51.

Burman, E. (1997). Minding the gap: Positivism, psychology, and the politics of qualitative methods. *Journal of Social Issues, 53*, 785-801.

Butterworth, I. M. (1999). *Adult environmental education: A community psychology perspective.* Unpublished PhD, Victoria University, Melbourne.

Byng-Hall, J. (1979). Re-editing family mythology during family therapy. *Journal of Family Therapy, 1*, 103-116.

Cadell, S., Karabanow, J., & Sanchexz, M. (2001). Community, empowerment, and resilience: Paths to wellness. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 20*, 21-35.

Calcutt, A. (1998). *Arrested development: Popular culture and the erosion of adulthood*. London: Cassell.

Calhoun, C. (1991). The ideology of intellectuals and the Chinese student protest movement in 1989. In C. G. Lemert (Ed.), *Intellectuals and politics: Social theory in a changing world* (pp. 113-140). London: Sage.

Callaghan, K. (1993). Movement psychotherapy with adult survivors of political torture and organized violence. *The Arts in Psychotherapy, 20*, 411-421.

Campbell, E., Adams, G., & Dobson, W. (1984). Familial correlates of identity formation in late adolescence: A study of the predictive utility of connectedness and individuality in family matters. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 13*, 509-525.

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Knowledge, education and action research*. London: Falmer Press.

Carr-Gregg, M. (2003, April). Youth, schools and suicide. *In Psych: Bulletin of the Australian Psychological Society Ltd, 25,* 18-20.

Carroll, J. (2001). *The western dreaming: The western world is dying for want of a story*. Sydney: HarperCollins.

Carroll, L., & Anderson, R. (2002). Body piercing, tatooing, self-esteem and body investment in adolescent girls. *Adolescence, 37*, 627-637.

Carroll, M. A. (1994). Empowerment theory: Philosophical and practical difficulties. *Canadian Psychology, 35*, 376-381.

Cattell, V. (2001). Poor people, poor places, and poor health: The mediating role of social networks and social capital. *Social Science & Medicine, 52*, 1501-1516.

Chavis, D. M., & Pretty, G. M. H. (1999). Sense of community: Advances in measurement and application. *Journal of Community Psychology, 27*, 635-642.

Cheadle, A., Wagner, E., Walls, M., & Diehr, P. (2001). The effect of neighborhood-based community organizing: Results from the Seattle Minority Youth Health Project. *Health Services Research, 36*, 671-789.

Checkoway, B. (1998). Involving young people in neighborhood development. *Children and Youth Services Review, 20*, 765-795.

Checkoway, B., Finn, J. L., & Pothukuchi, K. (1995). Young people as community resources: New forms of participation. In P. Adams & K. Nelson (Eds.), *Reinventing human services: Community and family-centered practice* (pp. 189-202). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Chesler, M. A. (1991). Participatory action research with self-help groups: An alternative paradigm for inquiry and action. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 19*, 757-768.

Christopher, S., Dunnagan, T., Duncan, S. F., & Paul, L. (2001). Education for self-support: Evaluating outcomes using transformative learning theory. *Family Relations, 50*, 134-142.

Cieslik, M., & Pollock, G. (2002). *Young people in risk society: The restructuring of youth identities and transitions in late modernity*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Ciofalo-Lagos, N. (1997). Community development initiated by the youth: An intergenerational and multicultural approach to community-based quality of life. *Dissertation-Abstracts-International:-Section-B:-The-Sciences-and-Engineering, 57(11-B)*(7273).

Coakes, S. J., & Bishop, B. J. (2002). Defining the nature of participation in rural Australian communities: A qualitative approach. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 635-646.

Coggan, C., & Norton, R. (1994). Reducing self-directed harm (suicide and attempted-suicide) among young people: A public health approach? *Community Mental Health in New Zealand, 8*, 26-31.

Colby, A., & Damon, W. (1999). The development of extraordinary moral commitment. In M. Killen & D. Hart (Eds.), *Morality in everyday life: Developmental perspectives* (pp. 342-370). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cole, P. (1988). Developing socially responsible youth. *The Bulletin of the National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, 7*, 16-20.

Colic-Peisker, V., & Walker, I. (2003). Human capital, acculturation and social identity: Bosnian refugees in Australia. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 13*, 337-360.

Conger, J. J., & Galambos, N. L. (1997). *Adolescence and youth: Psychological development in a changing world* (5th ed.). New York: Longman.

Connell, J. P., & Kubisch, A. C. (2001). Community approaches to improving outcomes for urban children, youth, and families: Current trends and future directions. In A. Booth & A. C. Crouter (Eds.), *Does it take a village?: Community effects on children, adolescents, and families* (pp. 177-201). Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Cooperrider, D., Barrett, F., & Srivastva, S. (1995). Social construction and appreciative inquiry: A journey in organizational theory. In D. M. Hosking & H. P. Dachler (Eds.), *Management and organization: Relational alternatives to individualism* (pp. 157-200).

Cooperrider, D. L., & Whitney, D. (1999). *Collaborating for change: Appreciative Inquiry*. San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler Communications.

Cornell University Empowerment Group. (1989). Empowerment and family support. *Networking Bulletin, 1*(2), 1-23.

Corsaro, W. A. (2005). *The sociology of childhood* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Cossa, M. (1992). Acting out: A pilot project in drama therapy with adolescents. *Arts in Psychotherapy, 19*, 53-55.

Coventry, L., Guerra, C., MacKenzie, D., & Pinkney, S. (2002). *Wealth of all nations: Identification of strategies to assist refugee young people in transition to independence*. Hobart: Australian Clearing House of Youth Studies.

Cowen, E. (1994). The enhancement of psychological wellness: Challenges and opportunities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 22*, 149-179.

Cowen, E. (2000). Community psychology and routes to psychological wellness. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 79-99). New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers.

Cowen, E., & Kilmer, R. (2002). Positive psychology: Some plusses and some open issues. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 449-460.

Cox, E. O. (1991). The critical role of social action in empowerment oriented groups. In A. Vinik & M. Levin (Eds.), *Social action in group work*. New York: Haworth Press.

Crowhurst, M. (1999). Working against heterosexism: Gay school experiences. In R. White (Ed.), *Australian youth subcultures: On the origins and in the mainstream* (pp. 168-177). Hobart: Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies.

Curriculum Corporation. (2002). MindMatters: A mental health promotion resource for secondary schools. Retrieved 12 August, 2003, from http://online.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/resources/comm_matters.htm

Cuthill, M. (2002). Exploratory research: Citizen participation, local government and sustainable development in Australia. *Sustainable Development, 10*, 79-89.

D'Augelli, A. R., & Patterson, C. (1995). *Lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities over the lifespan: Psychological perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dalton, J. H., Elias, M. J., & Wandersman, A. (2001). *Community psychology: Linking individuals and communities.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Damon, W. (1990). *The moral child: Nurturing children's natural moral growth*. New York: Free Press.

Damon, W. (Ed.). (1995). *Greater expectations: Overcoming the culture of indulgence in our homes and schools*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks.

Damon, W., & Eisenberg, N. (Eds.). (1998). *Handbook of child psychology* (Vol. 3: Social, Emotional & Personality Development). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Daniel, A. E., & Cornwell, J. (1993). *A lost generation?* Sydney: The Australian Youth Foundation.

Davidson, F. H., & Davidson, M. M. (1994). *Changing childhood prejudice: The caring work of the schools*. Westport, OT: Bergin & Garvey.

Davis, B. G. (1999). Motivating students. *From Tools for Teaching* Retrieved 18 May 2004, 2004, from http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/motiv.htm

de Kort, G. (1999). *Youth participation*. Bangkok/New York: Human Resources Development Section, Social Development Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Delanty, G. (2003). *Community*. London: Routledge.

Delgado, M. (1996). Community asset assessments by Latino youths. *Social Work in Education, 18*, 169-179.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). *Sociological methods: A sourcebook* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Department of Education and Training Victoria. (2002a). *Creating Conversations training manual on drug issues*. Melbourne: Department of Education & Training Victoria.

Department of Education and Training Victoria. (2002b, Feb 2002). Working Community online resource – Vocational education in schools. Retrieved 12 July, 2003, from www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/voced/working_community/model/index.htm

Department of Family and Community Services. (2002). Stronger families and communities strategy. Retrieved 12 October, 2003, from www.facs.gov.au/sfcs/

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. (2004). Australia's refugee and humanitarian program facts sheet. Retrieved 1 March 2004, 2004, from http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/60refugee.htm

DeVitis, J. L., Johns, R. W., & Simpson, D. J. (Eds.). (1998). *To serve and learn: The spirit of community in liberal education*. New York: P. Lang.

Duckett, P. S., & Fryer, D. J. (1998). Developing empowering research practices with people who have learning disabilities. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 8*, 57-66.

Duffy, C. (2003). *Social problem solving skills training for young adolescents.* Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Swinburne University, Melbourne.

Dugan, T. F., & Coles, R. (Eds.). (1989). *The child in our times: Studies in the development of resiliency*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Dunham, H. W. (1986). The community today: Place or process. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 399-404.

Dwyer, P., & Wyn, J. (2001). *Youth, education and risk: Facing the future*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Eaker, D. G., & Walters, L. H. (2002). Adolescent satisfaction in family rituals and psychosocial development: A developmental systems theory perspective. *Journal of Family Psychology, 16*, 406-414.

Earnshaw, L. (2001). Resilience and entrepreneurship in at-risk youth. *Family Centre Newsletter, University of Queensland,* 3-4.

Eckersley, R. (2004). Separate selves, tribal ties, and other stories: Making sense of different accounts of youth. *Family Matters, 68*, 36-43.

Education Foundation. (2002). *The r.u.MAD? Program: Making a difference in the community*: Education Foundation.

Education Foundation. (2003). r.u.MAD? (Are you making a difference?). Retrieved 10 September, 2003, from http://www.rumad.org.au/

Einspruch, E. L., & Wunrow, J. J. (2002). Assessing youth/adult partnership: The Seven Circles (AK) experience. *Journal of Drug Education, 32*, 1-12.

Eisen, A. (1994). Survey of neighborhood-based, comprehensive community empowerment initiatives. *Health Education Quarterly, 21*, 235-252.

Elliott, A. (2001). *Concepts of the self*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Emslie, M. (1999). Coming out or staying in: Dilemmas of young lesbians and gay men. In R. White (Ed.), *Australian youth subcultures: On the margins and in the mainstream* (pp. 159-167). Hobart: Australian Clearinghouse of Youth Studies.

Erikson, E. (1956). The problem of ego identity. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 4*, 56-121.

Erikson, E. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton.

Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.

Estrella, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Learning from change: Issues and experiences in participatory monitoring and evaluation*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications & International Development Research Centre.

Ethnic Youth Issues Network. (1994). Given a chance: A video training manual on working with refugee young people. Melbourne: Ethnic Youth Issues Network.

Evans, K., Rudd, P., Behrens, M., Kaluza, J., & Woolley, C. (2003). *Taking Control: Young adults talking about the future in education, training and work*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

Fals Borda, O. (2001). Participatory (action) research in social theory: Origins and challenges. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp. 27-37). London: Sage.

Fals-Borda, O., & Rahman, M. A. (Eds.). (1991). *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with participatory action-research*. New York: Apex Press.

Fantino, A. M., & Colak, A. (2001). Refugee children in Canada: Searching for identity. *Child Welfare, 80*, 587-596.

Farrell, A., Tayler, C., & Tennent, L. (2004). Building social capital in early childhood education and care: An Australian study. *British Educational Research Journal, 30*, 623-632.

Fawcett, S. B. (1984). Creating and using social technologies for community empowerment. *Prevention in Human Services, 3*, 145-171.

Fawcett, S. B., Paine-Andrews, A., Francisco, V. T., Schultz, J. A., Richter, K. P., Lewis, R., K, et al. (1995). Using empowerment theory in collaborative partnerships for community health and development. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 23*, 677-698.

Finn, J. L., & Checkoway, B. (1998). Young people as competent community builders: A challenge to social work. *Social Work, 43*, 335-345.

Fisher, A. T., & Sonn, C. C. (1999). Aspiration to community: Community responses to rejection. *Journal of Community Psychology, 27*, 715-725.

Fisher, A. T., & Sonn, C. C. (2002). Psychological sense of community in Australia and the challenges of change. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 597-609.

Fisher, A. T., Sonn, C. C., & Bishop, B. J. (Eds.). (2002). *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications, and implications*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Flynn, B. C., Ray, D. W., & Rider, M. S. (1994). Empowering communities: Action research through Healthy Cities. *Health Education Quarterly, 21*, 395-405.

Forman Jr., J. (2004). Criminal law: Community policing and youth as assets. *The Journal of Criminal Lwas and Criminology, 95*, 1-48.

Foundation for Young Australians. (2001). Youth partnership and participation. Retrieved 2 June 2002, from www.youngaustralians.org/

Francisco, V. T., Fawcett, S. B., Schultz, J. A., & Berkowitz, B. (2001). Using Internet-based resources to build community capacity: The community tool box. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 29*, 292-300.

Frantz, T. G. (1998). Visioning the future of social systems: Evolutionary and discontinuous leap approaches. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science, 15*, 173-183.

Freedman, J., & Combs, G. (1996). *Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities* (1st ed.). New York: Norton.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Seabury Press.

Frith, M., & Frith, K. (1993). Creating meaning from media messages: Participatory research and adolescent health. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Early adolescence: Perspectives on research, policy, and intervention.* (pp. 419-430). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Frith, S. (1986). *The sociology of youth: Themes and perspectives in sociology* (2nd ed.). Ormskirk: Causeway.

Fry, R., Barrett, F., Seiling, J., & Whitney, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Appreciative inquiry and organizational transformation: Reports from the field*. Westport, Conn: Quorum Books.

Frydenberg, E. (1997). *Adolescent coping: Theoretical and research perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

Frydenberg, E., Lewis, R., Kennedy, G., Ardila, R., Frindte, W., & Hannoun, R. (2003). Coping with concerns: An exploratory comparison of Australian, Colombian, German, and Palestinian adolescents. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 32*, 59-66.

Fullarton, S. (2002). *Student engagement with school: Individual and school-level influences* (No. 27). Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Fuller, A. (1998). *From surviving to thriving: Promoting mental health in young people*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Fuller, A., McGraw, K., & Goodyear, M. (2002). Bungy jumping through life: A developmental framework for the promotion of resilience. In L. Rowling, G. Martin & L. Walker (Eds.), *Mental health promotion and young people: Concepts and practice* (pp. 84-95). Sydney: McGraw-Hill.

Furlong, A., & Cartmet, F. (1997). *Young people and social change: Individualization and risk in late modernity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Fyson, S. J. (1999). Developing and applying concepts about community: Reflections from the field. *Journal of Community Psychology, 27*, 347-365.

Gall, J. P., Borg, W. R., & Gall, M. D. (2005). *Applying educational research: A practical guide* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

García, I., Giuliani, F., & Wiesenfeld, E. (1999). Community and sense of community: The case of an urban barrio in Caracas. *Journal of Community Psychology, 27*, 727-741.

Garnets, L., & D'Angelli, A. (1994). Empowering lesbian and gay communities: A call for collaboration with community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 22*, 447-470.

Garrod, A. (1992). *Adolescent portraits: Identity, relationships, and challenges*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Gergen, M. M., & Gergen, K., J. (2000). Qualitative inquiry: Tensions and transformation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gibson, C. M. (1993). Empowerment theory and practice with adolescents of color in the child welfare system. *Families in Society, 74*, 387-396.

Giesbrecht, N., & Rankin, J. (2000). Reducing alcohol problems through community action research projects: Contexts, strategies, implications, and challenges. *Substance Use and Misuse, 35*, 31-53.

Gilman, R. (2001). The relationship between life satisfaction, social interest, and frequency of extracurricular activities among adolescent students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 30*, 749-767.

Ginwright, S., & James, T. (2002). From assets to agents of change: Social justice, organizing, and youth development. *New directions for youth development, 96*, 27-46.

Giroux, H. (1988). Critical theory and the politics of culture and voice: Rethinking the discourse of educational research. In R. R. Sherman & R. B. Webb (Eds.), *Qualitative research in education: Focus and methods* (pp. 190-210). New York: Falmer.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1979). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research* (2 ed.). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Glasser, W. (1998). *Choice theory: A new psychology of personal freedom*. New York: HarperCollins.

Glenwick, D. S., & Jason, L. A. (Eds.). (1993). *Promoting health and mental health in children, youth, and families*. New York: Springer Publishing.

Glover, S., Burns, J., Butler, H., & Patton, G. (1998). Social environments and the emotional wellbeing of young people. *Family Matters, 49*, 11-16.

Glover, T. (2003). The story of the Queen Anne memorial garden: Resisting a dominant cultural narrative. *Journal of Leisure Research, 35*, 190-213.

Goffman, E. (1956). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Goldman, R. (1996). Who is that Queer Queer? Exploring norms around sexuality, race, and class in queer theory. In B. Beemyn & M. Eliason (Eds.), *Queer studies: A lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender anthology* (pp. 169-182). New York: New York University Press.

Goodkind, J. R., & Foster-Fishman, P. G. (2002). Integrating diversity and fostering interdependence: Ecological lessons learned about refugee participation in multiethnic communities. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 389-409.

Graham, D. (1972). *Moral learning and development: Theory and research*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.

Graham, K., & Chandler-Coutts, M. (2000). Community action research: Who does what to whom and why? Lessons learned from local prevention efforts (international experiences). *Substance Use and Misuse, 35*, 87-110.

Greeff, A. P., & Le Roux, M. C. (1999). Parents' and adolescents' perceptions of a strong family. *Psychological Reports, 83*, 1219-1224.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. New York: Jossey-Bass.

Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (1998). *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gusfield, J. R. (1975). *The community: A critical response*. New York: Harper Colophon.

Habermas, J. (1974). *Theory and practice* (J. Viertel, Trans.). London: Heienmann.

Haggerty, R. (Ed.). (1994). *Stress, risk, and resilience in children and adolescents: Processes, mechanisms, and interventions*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hamilton, R. J., & Moore, D. (2004). *Educational interventions for refugee children: Theoretical perspectives and implementing best practice*. London ; New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Hannam, D. (2000). Learning democracy is more than just learning about democracy. *Connect: Journal Supporting Student Participation, April*, 1-2.

Harlow, H., F., & Harlow, M., K. (1966). Learning to love. *American Scientist, 54*, 244-272.

Harre, N. (2003). Identity projects with a service orientation. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 55*, 46-46.

Harre, N. (2004). Community service or activism as an identity project. *Journal of Community Psychology, in press*.

Harris, J. R. (1999). *The nurture assumption: Why children turn out the way they do*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hart, R. (1997). *Children's participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*. New York: UNICEF.

Hart, R., & Schwab, M. (1997). Children's rights and the building of democracy: A dialogue on the international movement for children's participation. *Social Justice, 24*, 177-191.

Hartley, R., Hartnell-Young, E., & Maunders, D. (1997). *Opting in to active citizenship: A discussion paper on a national youth civic service scheme for Australia*. Melbourne: Centre for Youth Affairs and Development, RMIT in conjunction with The Myer Foundation,.

Hawkins, J. D., Catalano, R. F., & Miller, J. Y. (1992). Risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug problems in adolescence and early adulthood: Implications for substance abuse prevention. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*, 64-105.

Headley, S. (2002). *Young people at the centre: Participation and social change*. London: York Publishing Services.

Heaven, P. C. L. (2001). *The social psychology of adolescence*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.

Hedin, D. P., & Eisikovits, R. A. (1982). School and community participation: A cross-cultural perspective. *Childhood Education, 59*, 87-94.

Heilman, R. B. (1978). *The ways of the world: Comedy and society*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Helve, H., & Wallace, C. (Eds.). (2001). *Youth, citizenship and empowerment*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative Inquiry: Research into the human condition*. London: Sage.

Heron, J., & Reason, P. (2001). The practice of co-operative inquiry: Research 'with' rather than 'on' people. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 179-188). London: Sage publications.

Hetzel, S., Watson, S., & Sampson, L. (1992). Participation and partnership. *Youth Studies Australia, Winter*, 33-36.

Heywood, I. (2002). Urgent dreams: Climbing, rationalization, and ambivalence. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *McDonaldization: The reader* (pp. 60-66). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Hillier, L., Dempsey, D., Harrison, L., Beale, L., Matthews, L., & Rosenthal, D. (1998). *Writing themselves in: A national report of the sexuality, health and well-being of same-sex attracted young people*. Melbourne: LaTrobe University.

Himmelman, A. T. (2001). On coalitions and the transformation of power relations: Collaborative betterment and collaborative empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 29*, 227-284.

Holdsworth, R. (2003, October). *Youth participation.* Paper presented at the 2003 Local Government Youth Services Conference, City of Casey, Melbourne.

Holdsworth, R. (2004). *Real learning real futures: a brief evaluation and reflection - A Derwent District Partnership*. Hobart: Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Tasmanian Department of Education.

Holdsworth, R., Cahill, H., & Smith, G. (2003). *Student Action Teams: Phase 2 - 2001-2002* (Research Report No. 22). Melbourne: Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne.

Hosking, P. (1990). *Hope after horror: Helping survivors of torture and trauma*. Sydney: Uniya.

House, J. S. (1981). *Work stress and social support*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Huygens, I. (1997). *Towards social change partnerships: Responding to empowerment of oppressed groups with voluntary depowerment of dominant groups.* Columbia, South Carolina, USA: Paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the Society for Community Research and Action.

Inspire Foundation. (2002). *Act Now Pilot North Sydney: Evaluation report*. Sydney: Inspire Foundation.

Israel, B. A., Checkoway, B., Schulz, A., & Zimmerman, M. (1994). Health education and community empowerment: Conceptualizing and measuring perceptions of individual, organizational, and community control. *Health Education Quarterly, 21*, 149-170.

Itzhaky, H., & York, A. S. (2000). Sociopolitical control and empowerment: An extended replication. *Journal of Community Psychology, 28*, 407-415.

Jacobs, J. (1963). *The death and life of great American cities*. New York: Vintage Books.

Jaffe, M. L. (1998). *Adolescent psychology*. New York: J. Wiley and Sons.

James, S., & Prilleltensky, I. (2001). Cultural diversity and mental health: Towards integrative practice. *Clinical Psychology Review, 22*, 1133-1154.

James, S. E., Johnson, J., Raghaven, C., Lemos, T., Barakett, M., & Woolis, D. (2003). The violent matrix: A study of structural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal violence among a sample of poor women. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 129-141.

Johnson, C. (2003). Heteronormative citizenship: The Howard Government's views on gay and lesbian issues. *Australian Journal of Political Science, 38*, 45-62.

Johnson, L. (1993). *The modern girl: Girlhood and growing up*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Jones, L. (1998). Adolescent groups for encamped Bosnian refugees: Some problems and solutions. *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 3*, 541-551.

Kahane, R., & Rapoport, T. (1997). *The origins of postmodern youth: Informal youth movements in a comparative perspective*. New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Kaplan, I. (1998). *Rebuilding shattered lives*. Melbourne: Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.

Kawachi, I., & Berkman, L. F. (2000). Social cohesion, social capital and health. In I. Kawachi & L. F. Berkman (Eds.), *Social epidemiology* (pp. 174-190). New York: Oxford University Press.

Kawachi, I., & Kennedy, B. P. (1999). Social capital and self-rated health: A contextual analysis. *American Journal of Public Health, 89*, 1187-1194.

Keiser, M. (2000). Young adults and civic participation. *National Civic Review, 89*, 33-38.

Kellehear, A. (Ed.). (1996). *Social self, global culture: An introduction to sociological ideas*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Kemmis, S. (2001). Exploring the relevance of critical theory for action research: Emancipatory action research in the footsteps of Jurgen Habermas. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research* (pp. 91-102). London: Sage.

Kids Who Make A Difference Foundation. (2001). Kids who make a difference. Retrieved 15 August, 2003, from http://www.kidswhomakeadifference.org/

Kieffer, C. (1982). The development of empowerment: The development of participatory competence among individuals in citizen organisations. *American Psychological Association Division 27 Newsletter, 16,* 13-15.

Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2000). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 279-309). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

King, M. L. (1967). *Chaos or community*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Kinnevy, S. C., Healey, B. P., Pollio, D. E., & North, C. S. (1999). BicycleWORKS: Task-centered group work with high-risk youth. *Social Work with Groups, 22*, 33-48.

Kirsch, H., Andrade, S., Osterling, J., & Sherwood-Fabre, L. (1995). Empowerment, participation, and prevention: Use of the community promoter model in Northern Mexico. In H. W. E. Kirsch (Ed.), *Drug lessons & education programs in developing countries* (pp. 179-194).

Kitzinger, C. (1997). Lesbian and gay psychology: A critical analysis. In D. R. Fox & I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Critical psychology: An introduction* (pp. 202-216). London: Sage.

Kohler, M. C. (1982). Developing responsible youth through youth participation. *Child and Youth Services, 4*, 5-12.

Kovacev, L., & Shute, R. (2004). Acculturation and social support in relation to psychosocial adjustment of adolescent refugees resettled in Australia. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 28*, 259-267.

Kovachava, S., & Wallace, C. (1994). Why do youth revolt?: Some reflections from young people and politics in Eastern and Western Europe. *Youth & Policy, 44*, 7-20.

Kroger, J. (1996). *Identity in adolescence* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Labov, W. (1982). Speech actions and reactions in personal narrative. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Analyzing discourse: Text and talk* (pp. 219-247). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Latina, S. (1997). Mantel on the table. *Social Justice, 24*, 86-99.

Laverack, G. (2001). Measuring community empowerment: A fresh look at organizational domains. *Health Promotion International, 16*, 179-185.

Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lee, J. (1997). Women re-authoring their lives through feminist narrative therapy. *Women & Therapy, 20*, 1-22.

Leming, J. S. (2001). Integrating a structured ethical reflection curriculum into high school community service experiences: Impact on students' sociomoral development. *Adolescence, 36*(141), 33-45.

Lesnie, V. (2004). *A last resort?: National inquiry into children in immigration detention* (No. 0642269890). Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Australia.

Levine, B. L. (1986). The tragedy of the commons and the comedy of community: The commons in history. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 81-99.

Lewis, B. (1998). *The kid's guide to social action: How to solve the social problems you choose and turn creative thinking into positive action*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing.

Linne, R. (2003). Alternative textualities: Media culture and the proto-queer. *Qualitative studies in education, 16*, 669-689.

Little, W., Fowler, H. W., Coulson, J., Onions, C. T., & Friedrichsen, G. W. S. (1973). *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on historical principles*. Oxford: Oxford University.

Loots, L. (1997). Re-remembering protest theatre in South Africa. *Critical Arts Journal, 11*, 142-153.

Ludema, J., Cooperrider, D., & Barrett, F. (2001). Appreciative inquiry: The power of the unconditional positive question. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp. 189-199). London: Sage.

Ludema, J., Wilmot, T. B., & Srivastva, S. (1997). Organizational hope: Reaffirming the constructive task of social and organizational inquiry. *Human Relations, 50*, 1015-1052.

Mackay, H. (1999). *Turning point: Australians choosing their future*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan Australia.

Malpede, K. (1999). Chilean testimonies: An experiment in theatre of witness. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 29*, 307-316.

Manji, I. (1997). *Risking utopia: On the edge of a new democracy*. Ontanio: Douglas & McIntyre.

Mankowski, E., & Rappaport, J. (1995). Stories, identity and the psychological sense of community. In E. S. Mankowski & R. E. Thomas (Eds.), *Advances in social cognition* (Vol. 7, pp. 211-226). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Mankowski, E., & Rappaport, J. (2000). Narrative concepts and analysis in spiritually-based communities. *Journal of Community Psychology, 28*, 479-493.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York: Viking Press.

Maton, K. (2000). Making a difference: The social ecology of social transformation. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 28*, 25-57.

Matysik, G. J. (1999). Adolescents as co-researchers: An examination of the effects of a participatory research project on adolescent development. *Dissertation-Abstracts-International-Section-A:-Humanities-and-Social-Sciences., 60(5-A)*(1784).

Mayo, M. (2000). *Cultures, communities, identities: Cultural strategies for participation and empowerment*. New York: Palgrave.

McDonald, K. (1999). *Struggles for subjectivity: Identity, action, and youth experience*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

McIntosh, V. V., Bulik, C. M., McKenzie, J. M., Luty, S. E., & Jordan, J. (2000). Interpersonal psychotherapy for anorexia nervosa. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 27*, 125-139.

McIntyre, A. (2000). Constructing meaning about violence, school, and community: Participatory action research with urban youth. *Urban Review, 32*, 123-154.

McLaughlin, M. W., Irby, M., & Langman, J. (1994). *Urban sanctuaries: Neighborhood organizations in the lives and futures of inner-city youth*. San Fancisco: Jossey-Bass.

McMillan, D. (1996). Sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology, 24*, 315-326.

McMillan, D., & Chavis, D. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 6-23.

McPhie, L., & Chaffey, C. (1998). The journey of a lifetime: Group work with young women who have experienced sexual assault. *Gecko: A journal of deconstruction and narrative ideas in therapeutic practice, 1*.

McTaggart, R. (Ed.). (1997). *Participatory action research: International contexts and consequences*. Ithaca, NY: Sate University of New York Press.

Mekki-Berrada, A., Rousseau, C., & Bertot, J. (2001). Research on refugees: Means of transmitting suffering and forging social bonds. *International Journal of Mental Health, 30*, 41-57.

Meucci, S., & Redmon, J. (1997). Safe spaces: California children enter a policy debate. *Social Justice, 24*, 139-151.

Meucci, S., & Schwab, M. (1998). Children and the environment: Young people's participation in social change. *Social Justice, 24*(3), 1-10.

Miles, S. (2000). *Youth lifestyles in a changing world*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Miles, S. (2002a). *Communities of youth: Cultural practice and informal learning*. Burlington, UK: Ashgate.

Miles, S. (2002b). Victims of risk? Young people and the construction of lifestyles. In M. Cieslik & G. Pollock (Eds.), *Young people in risk society: The restructuring of youth identities and transitions in late modernity* (pp. 58-73). Aldershot: Ashgate.

Miller, K. E. (1999). Rethinking a familiar model: Psychotherapy and the mental health of refugees. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 29*, 283-306.

Miller, K. E. (2004). Beyond the frontstage: Trust, access, and the relational context in research with refugee communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 33*, 217-227.

Mitchell, P. (2000). Adolescents and social policy. *Youth Studies Australia, 19*, 14-16.

Moane, G. (2003). Bridging the personal and the political: Practices for a liberation psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 91-101.

Mohamed, S., Francis, S., Grogan, P., & Sparks, V. (2002). *All I ask for is protection: Young people seeking asylum in Australia* (No. 12). Melbourne: Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues.

Morreall, J. (1999). *Comedy, tragedy and religion*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Morsillo, J. (2003). Social action with youth: A beginning to empowerment and well-being. In E. Martin & J. Booth (Eds.), *Courageous Research* (pp. 99-113). Melbourne: Common Ground Publishing and Victoria University.

Morsillo, J. (2004). Social action drama with same-sex attracted youth. *The Community Psychologist, 37,* 10-13.

Morsillo, J. (2005). Social action drama. *Narrative Network News, March/April,* 10-18.

Morsillo, J., & Prilleltensky, I. (in press). Social action with youth: Interventions, evaluation and psychopolitical validity. *Journal of Community Psychology*.

Moshman, D. (1999). *Adolescent psychological development: Rationality, morality, and identity*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Mullaly, B. (2002). *Challenging oppression: A critical social work approach*. Ontario: Oxford University Press.

Mullender, A., & Ward, D. (1991). Empowerment through social action group work: The 'self-directed' approach. In A. Vinik & M. Levin (Eds.), *Social Action in Group Work* (pp. 125-139). New York: Haworth Press.

Mulvey, A., & Mandel, C. (2003). *Using cultural activism for local and global safety and democracy: UMass Lowell's College V-Day Campaign and The Laramie Project.* Paper presented at the Democracy Symposium 2003, University of Massachusetts Lowell Center for Diversity and Pluralism.

Nash, A. (2001). *People.dot.community: A resource for effective community activism*. Geelong West, Vic: Villamanta Legal Service.

Nelson, G., Amio, J. L., Prilleltensky, I., & Nickels, P. (2000). Partnerships for implementing school and community prevention programs. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 11*, 121-145.

Nelson, G., Ochocka, J., Griffin, K., & Lord, J. (1998). "Nothing about me, without me": Participatory action research with self-help/mutual aid organizations for psychiatric consumer/survivors. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 26*, 881-912.

Nelson, G., Prilleltensky, I., & MacGillivary, H. (2001). Building value-based partnerships: Toward solidarity with oppressed groups. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 29*, 649-677.

Nestler, E., & Malenka, R. (2004, March 2004). The addicted brain. *Scientific American, 290,* 78-86.

O'Connor, B. (1997). Safe sets: Women, dance and 'Communitas'. In H. Thomas (Ed.), *Dance in the city* (pp. 149-172). London: Macmillan.

O'Hearn, T. C., & Gatz, M. (2002). Going for the goal: Improving youths' problem-solving skills through a school-based intervention. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 281-303.

O'Neill, P. (2000). Cognition in social context. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 115-132). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Ollis, D., Mitchell, A., Watson, J., Hillier, L., & Walsh, J. (2002). *Safety in our schools: Strategies for responding to homophobia*. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, La Trobe University.

Onyx, J., & Bullen, P. (2000). Measuring social capital in five communities. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 36*, 23-42.

Pancer, S. M., & Cameron, G. (1994). Resident participation in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures prevention project: The impacts of involvement. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 13*, 197-211.

Patton, G., Bond, L., & Butler, H. (2003). Changing schools, changing health? Design and Implementation of the Gatehouse Project. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 33*, 231-239.

Patton, G. C., Glover, S., Bond, L., Butler, H., Godfrey, C., Di Pietro, G., et al. (2000). The Gatehouse Project: A systematic approach to mental health promotion in secondary schools. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 34*, 586-596.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pearce, N. (2003). Is *social capital* the key to inequalities in health? *American Journal of Public Health, 93*, 122-129.

Pearl, A. (1978). Towards a general theory of valuing youth. In A. Pearl, D. Grant & E. Wenk (Eds.), *The value of youth* (pp. 1-15). Thousand Oaks, CA: Responsible Action Press.

Peterson, N. A., & Reid, R. J. (2003). Paths to psychological empowerment in an urban community: Sense of community and citizen participation in substance abuse prevention activities. *Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 25-38.

Phillips, N. (1990). Wellness during childhood/adolescent development. *Prevention Forum, 10*, 110-114.

Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, dreams and imitation*. New York: Norton.

Piaget, J. (1977). *The moral judgement of the child*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Pipher, M. (2002). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls* (Vol. 4). New York: Ballantine Books.

Prentki, T. (2003). Save the children? – Change the world. *Research in Drama Education, 8*, 39-53.

Pretty, G. (2002). Young people's development of the community-minded self: Considering community identity, community attachment and sense of community. In A. T. Fisher, C. C. Sonn & B. J. Bishop (Eds.), *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications, and implications* (pp. 183-204). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Pretty, G., Andrewes, L., & Collett, C. (1994). Exploring adolescents' sense of community and its relationship to loneliness. *Journal of Community Psychology, 22*, 346-358.

Prilleltensky, I. (1993). The immigration experience of Latin-American families: Research and action on perceived risk and protective factors. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 12*, 101-116.

Prilleltensky, I. (1994). Empowerment in mainstream psychology: Legitimacy, obstacles, and possibilities. *Canadian Psychology, 35*, 358-375.

Prilleltensky, I. (1996). Human, moral, and political values for an emancipatory psychology. *Humanistic Psychologist, 24*, 307-324.

Prilleltensky, I. (2000). Value-based leadership in organizations: Balancing values, interests, and power among citizens, workers, and leaders. *Ethics & Behavior, 10*, 139-158.

Prilleltensky, I. (2001). Value-based praxis in community psychology: Moving towards social action and social justice. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 29*, 747-778.

Prilleltensky, I. (2003a). Poverty and power. In S. C. Carr & T. S. Sloan (Eds.), *Poverty and psychology: From global perspective to local practice* (pp. 19-44). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Prilleltensky, I. (2003b). Understanding, resisting and overcoming oppression: Toward psychopolitical validity. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 195-201.

Prilleltensky, I., & Nelson, G. (1997). Community Psychology: Reclaiming social justice. In D. Fox & I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Critical Psychology: An introduction* (pp. 166-184). London: Sage.

Prilleltensky, I., & Nelson, G. (2000). Promoting child and family wellness: Priorities for psychological and social interventions. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 10*, 85-105.

Prilleltensky, I., Nelson, G., & Peirson, L. (2001). The role of power and control in children's lives: An ecological analysis of pathways toward wellness, resilience and problems. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 11*, 143-158.

Puddifoot, J. E. (2003). Exploring personal and shared sense of community identity in Durham City, England. *Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 87-106.

Putnam, R. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American communities*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Ramaliu, A., & Thurston, W. E. (2003). Identifying best practices of community participation in providing services to refugee survivors of torture: A case description. *Journal of Immigrant Health, 5*, 165-172.

Rapoport, R. N. (1987). *New interventions for children and youth: Action-research approaches*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 9*, 1-25.

Rappaport, J. (1987). Terms of empowerment/exemplars of prevention: Towards a theory for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 15*, 121-148.

Rappaport, J. (1994). Empowerment as a guide to doing research: Diversity as a positive value. In E. J. Trickett, R. J. Watts & D. Birman (Eds.), *Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context* (pp. 359-382). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Rappaport, J. (1995). Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 23*, 795-807.

Rappaport, J. (2000). Community narratives: Tales of terror and joy. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 28*, 1-24.

Raskoff, S. A., & Sundeen, R. A. (1999). Community service programs in high schools. *Law and Contemporary Problems, 62*, 73-111.

Reason, P. (Ed.). (1994). *Participation in human inquiry*. London: Sage.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. London: Sage.

Reimer, J., Paolitto, D. P., & Hersh, R., H. (1983). *Promoting moral growth: From Piaget and Kohlberg* (2nd ed.). Prospect Heights, Il: Waveland Press.

Riedel, E. (2002). The impact of high school community service programs on students' feelings of civic obligation. *American Politics Research, 30*, 499-527.

Ristock, J. L., & Taylor, C. G. (1998). *Inside the academy and out: Lesbian/gay/queer studies and social action*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Ritzer, G. (2002). *McDonaldization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Robottom, I., & Colquhoun, D. (1992). Participatory research, environmental health education and the politics of method. *Health Education Research, 17*, 457-469.

Rolison, M. (2002). Factors influencing adolescents' decisions to engage in risk-taking behaviour. *Adolescence, 37*, 585-597.

Rothman, J., Erlich, J. L., & Tropman, J. E. (Eds.). (2001). *Strategies of community intervention: Macro practice* (5th ed.). Itasca, Il: FE Peacock Publishers.

Rutter, M. (1999). Resilience concepts and findings: Implications for family therapy. *Journal of Family Therapy, 21*, 119-144.

Rutter, M. (2000). Resilience reconsidered: Conceptual considerations, empirical findings, and policy implications. In J. P. Shonkoff & S. J. Meisels (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood intervention* (2nd ed., pp. 651-682). London: Cambridge University Press.

Rutter, M., Giller, H., & Hagell, A. (1999). *Antisocial behavior by young people*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Salzer, M. S. (1998). Narrative approach to assessing interactions between society, community, and person. *Journal of Community Psychology, 26*, 569-580.

Sarason, S. B. (1974). *The psychological sense of community: Prospects for a community psychology*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Saunders, D. (1997). Invisible youth reappear! A review of two youth produced videos. *Social Justice, 24*, 100-104.

Saunders, L. (1998). Testing a model of empowerment in an early adolescent sample. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences & Engineering, 58*(6-B), 3343.

Savin-Williams, R. C., & Cohen, K. M. (1996). Psychosocial outcomes of verbal and physical abuse among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths. In R. C. Savin-Williams & K. M. Cohen (Eds.), *Lives of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals: Children to adults* (pp. 181-200). Orlando, FL, US: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Schafer, R. (1976). *A new language for psychoanalysis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.

Schwab, M. (1997). Sharing power: Participatory public health research with California teens. *Social Justice, 24*(3), 11-32.

Seidman, S. (1997). *Difference troubles: Queering social theory and sexual politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Selener, D. (1997). *Participatory action research and social change*. Ithaca: Cornell Participatory Action Research Network, Cornell University.

Selman, R. L., & Selman, A. P. (1979). Children's ideas about friendship: A new theory. *Psychology Today, 13*, 71-80.

Shek, D. T. L. (1998). A longitudinal study of the relations of family factors to adolescent psychological symptoms, coping resources, school behavior and substance abuse. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health, 10*, 155-184.

Sherman, F. T., & Torbert, W. R. (Eds.). (2000). *Transforming social inquiry, transforming social action: New paradigms for crossing the theory/practice divide in universities and communities*. Boston: Kluwer Academic.

Simmons, A. (2001). *The story factor: Secrets of influence from the art of storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

Skoe, E., & Lippe, A. v. d. (Eds.). (1998). *Personality development in adolescence: A cross national and life span perspective*. New York: Routledge.

Sloan, T. S. (1996). *Damaged life: The crisis of the modern psyche*. London: Routledge.

Sonn, C. C. (2002). Immigrant adaptation: Understanding the process through sense of community. In A. T. Fisher, C. C. Sonn & B. J. Bishop (Eds.), *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications and implications* (pp. 205-222). New York: Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers.

Sonn, C. C., & Fisher, A. T. (1998). Sense of community: Community resilient responses to oppression and change. *Journal of Community Psychology, 26*, 457-472.

Sonn, C. C., & Fisher, A. T. (2005). Immigration and adaptation: Confronting the challenges of cultural diversity. In G. Nelson & I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Speer, P. W., Jackson, C. B., & Peterson, N. A. (2001). The relationship between social cohesion and empowerment: Support and new implications for theory. *Health Education & Behavior, 28*, 716-732.

Stacey, K., Webb, E., Hills, S.-L., Lagzdins, N., Moulds, D., Phillips, T., et al. (2003). What's in if for ...? Benefits and dilemmas in the practice of youth partnership accountability. *Youth Studies Australia, 22*(3), 36-43.

Stein, C. H., & Mankowski, E. S. (2004). Asking, witnessing, interpreting, knowing: Conducting qualitative research in community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 33*, 21-35.

Stoll, K. (2002). *Youth and sustainability: Social capital, social entrepreneurship and youth civic engagement as building blocks for sustainable communities - a case study of the headquarters youth facility*. Perth: WA government.

Stoneman, D. (2002). The role of youth programming in the development of civic engagement. *Applied Developmental Science, 6*, 221-226.

Strategic Partners. (2001). *Innovation and best practice in schools: Review of literature and practice* (No. 0642455392). Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs.

Stringer, E. T. (1999). *Action research: A handbook for practitioners* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stryker, S., Owens, T. J., & White, R. W. (2000). *Self, identity, and social movements*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stukas, A. A., & Dunlap, M. R. (2002). Community involvement: Theoretical approaches and educational initiatives. *Journal of Social Issues, 58*, 411-428.

Stukas, A. A., Switzer, G. E., Dew, M. A., Goycoolea, J. M., & Simmons, R. G. (1999). Parental helping models, gender, and service-learning. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 18*, 5-18.

Tacey, D. J. (2000). *Re-enchantment: The new Australian spirituality*. Sydney: HarperCollins.

Tagg, J. (1988). *The burden of representation: Essays on photographies and histories*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education.

Tajfel, H. (Ed.). (1982). *Social identity and intergroup relations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tantum, D. (1990). Shame and groups. *Group Analysis, 23*, 31-43.

The Australian. (2003, 28 March 2003). Anxious agitators. *The Australian,* p. 15.

Thomas, H. (1997). *Dance in the city*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Thomas, R. E., & Rappaport, J. (1996). Art as community narrative: A resource for social change. In M. B. Lykes & A. Banuazizi (Eds.), *Myths about the powerless: Contesting social inequalities* (pp. 317-336). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Thompson, N. (2003). *Promoting equality: Challenging discrimination and oppression* (2nd ed.). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tonucci, F., & Rissotto, A. (2001). Why do we need children's participation? The importance of children's participation in changing the city. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 11*, 407-419.

Totikidis, V., & Robertson, D. (2004). Wellness and liberation in the lives of culturally diverse communities (Phase-one of the Community Wellness Project). *Network, 16*(2), 52-63.

Travers, M. (2001). *Qualitative research through case studies*. London: Sage.

Turner, D. (2002). *Running on passion* (Unpublished draft). Melbourne: Department of Education and Training, Victoria.

Turner, D., & Baker, P. (2000). *Developing citizenship in secondary schools: A whole-school resource*. London: Kogan Page.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P., Reicher, S., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorisation theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Ungar, M., & Teram, E. (2000). Drifting toward mental health: High-risk adolescents and the process of empowerment. *Youth and Society, 32*, 228-252.

United Nations Economic and Social Council Secretary General. (2004). *World Youth Report 2005*. Geneva: United Nations.

University of NSW Centre for Applied Economic Research. (2003, 18 Nov 2003). Work for the dole comes under attack. *Financial Review,* p. 3.

Valaitis, R. (2002). "They don't trust us; we're just kids." Views about community from predominantly female inner city youth. *Health Care for Women International, 23*, 248-266.

Van Benschoten, E. (2000). Youth-led civic organizing: Countering perceptions of apathy and redefining civic engagement (a conversation with Joel Spoonheim of the Active Citizens School). *National Civic Review, 89*, 301-307.

van der Veer, G. (2000). Empowerment of traumatized refugees: A developmental approach to prevention and treatment. *Torture, 10*, 8-11.

Van Moorst, H. (1983). *Working with youth: A political process* (Occasional Paper 8). Melbourne: Footscray Institute of Technology.

Van Uchelen, C. (2000). Individualism, collectivism, and community psychology. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 65-78). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Victorian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Promotion Officers, & Farnan, C. (2001). *STEP Manual: An educational resource for those working with indigenous, refugee and same sex attracted young people*. Melbourne: Victorian Department of Human Services.

Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture. (1996). *Guide to working with young people who are refugees*. Melbourne: Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture.

Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture. (2002). *The Rainbow Program for children in refugee families: A collaborative, school-based program to support refugee children and their families*. Melbourne: Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture.

Victorian Government. (2000). *Suburbs in time*. Melbourne: Department of Infrastructure, Victorian Government.

Vinson, T. (2004). *Community adversity and resilience: The distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales and the mediating role of social cohesion*. Melbourne: Jesuit Social Services.

Wadsworth, Y. (1997). *Do it yourself social research* (2nd ed.). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Wallerstein, N., & Bernstein, E. (1988). Empowerment education: Friere's ideas adapted to health education. *Health Education Quarterly, 15*, 379-394.

Wandersman, A., & Florin, P. (2000). Citizen participation and community organizations. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of Community Psychology* (pp. 247-272). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Waters, E., & Baur, L. (2003). Childhood obesity: Modernity's scourge. *Medical Journal of Australia, 178*, 422-423.

Watts, R. (1993). Doing ethnography with young people: How and why? In R. White (Ed.), *Youth subcultures: Theory, history and the Australian experience* (pp. 124-135). Hobart, Australia: National Clearinghouse for youth studies.

Watts, R., Griffith, D. M., & Abdul-Adil, J. (1999). Sociopolitical development as an antidote for oppression: Theory and action. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 27*, 255-271.

Watts, R. J., & Serrano-Garcia, I. (2003). The quest for a liberating community psychology: An overview. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 73-78.

Weeks, W., Hoatson, L., & Dixon, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Community practices in Australia*. Melbourne: Person Education, Australia.

Wehbi, S. (Ed.). (2004). *Community organizing against homophobia and heterosexism*. Montreal: Haworth Press.

Weine, S., Muzurovic, N., Kulauzovic, Y., Besic, S., Lezic, A., Mujagic, A., et al. (2004). Family consequences of refugee trauma. *Family Process, 43*, 147-161.

Wessells, M. G. (2004). Terrorism and the mental health and well-being of refugees and displaced people. In F. M. Moghaddam & A. J. Marsella (Eds.), *Understanding terrorism: Psychosocial roots, consequences, and interventions* (pp. 247-263). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Westhorp, G. (1987). *Planning for youth participation: A resource kit*. Adelaide: Youth Sector Training, Council of SA.

White, M. (2004a). *Narrative practice and exotic lives: Resurrecting diversity in everyday life*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications.

White, M. (2004b). Working with people who are suffering the consequences of multiple trauma: A narrative perspective. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, 1*, 45-76.

White, R. (Ed.). (1993). *Youth subcultures: Theory, history and the Australian experience*. Hobart: National Clearing House for Youth Studies.

White, R. (Ed.). (1999). *Australian youth subcultures: On the margins and in the mainstream*. Hobart: Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies.

White, R., & Wyn, J. (1998). Youth agency and social context. *Journal of Sociology, 34*, 314-327.

Whitmore, E. (1994). To tell the truth: Working with oppressed groups in participatory approaches to inquiry. In P. Reason (Ed.), *Participation in human inquiry* (pp. 82-98). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Whitmore, E., & McKee, C. (2001). Six street youth who could . . . In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp. 396-402). London: Sage.

Whitney, D., Cooperrider, D. L., Garrison, M., & Moore, J. (2002). Appreciative inquiry and culture change at GTE: Launching a positive revolution. In R. Fry & F. Barrett (Eds.), *Appreciative inquiry and organizational transformation: Reports from the field* (pp. 165-180).

Wierenga, A., Wood, A., Trenbath, G., Kelly, J., & Vidakovic, O. (2003). *Sharing a new story: Young people in decision-making*. Melbourne: Australian Youth Resource Centre, University of Melbourne for Foundation for Young Australians.

Wiesenfeld, E. (1996). The concept of "we": A community social psychology myth? *Journal of Community Psychology, 24*, 337-347.

Wilkins, V., Bryans, K., Hetzel, S., Cutler, A., & Ellis, J. (1993). Youth participation in youth-focused research. *Youth Studies Australia, 1993*.

Williams, C., & Westermeyer, J. (Eds.). (1986). *Refugee mental health in resettlement countries*. Washington DC: Hemisphere.

Withers, G., & Russell, J. (2001). *Educating for resilience: Prevention and intervention strategies for young people at risk*. Melbourne: ACER Press.

Wohl, B. J. (2000). The power of group work with youth: Creating activists of the future. *Social Work with Groups, 22*, 213-219.

Women's Health West. (2001). *Talking Health Resource Kit: Migrant and refugee women and depression in the context of resettlement*. Melbourne: Women's Health West.

Wren, B. A. (1986). *Education for justice* (2nd ed.). London: SCM Press.

Wyn, J. (1995). 'Youth' and citizenship. *Melbourne Studies in Education, 36*, 45-63.

Wyn, J., & White, R. (1997). *Rethinking youth*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Wyn, J., & White, R. (2000). Negotiating social change: The paradox of youth. *Youth and Society, 32*, 165-183.

Yassa, N. A. (1999). High school involvement in creative drama. *Research in Drama Education, 4*(1), 37-50.

Yates, M., & Youniss, J. (1996). Community service and political-moral identity in adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 6*, 271-284.

Yates, M., & Youniss, J. (Eds.). (1999). *Roots of civic identity: International perspectives on community service and activism in youth*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Yeich, S., & Levine, R. (1992). Participatory research's contribution to a conceptualization of empowerment. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 22*, 1894-1908.

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Youniss, J., Bales, S., Christmas-Best, V., Diversi, M., McLaughlin, M. W., & Silbereisen, R. (2002). Youth civic engagement in the twenty-first century. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 12*, 121-148.

Youniss, J., McLellan, J. A., & Yates, M. (1997). What we know about engendering civic identity. *American Behavioral Scientist, 40*, 620-631.

Youniss, J., & Yates, M. (1999). Youth service and moral-civic identity: A case for everyday morality. *Educational Psychology Review, 11*, 361-376.

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. (2004). *Creating change in your community: A handbook for young people*. Melbourne: State of Victoria.

Youthgas, & Lenn, R. (2003). Youthgas: Community building, service and volunteering. Retrieved 30 October, 2003, from http://www.youthgas.com/topics/community.htm

Zeldin, S. (2002). Sense of community and positive adult beliefs toward adolescents and youth policy in urban neighborhoods and small cities. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 31*, 331-342.

Zeldin, S., & Topitzes, D. (2002). Neighborhood experiences, community connection, and positive beliefs about adolescents among urban adults and youth. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 647-669.

Zemke, R. (1999). Don't fix that company! Appreciative inquiry in organization development. *Training, 36*(6), 26-34.

Zimmerman, M. (1990a). Taking aim on empowerment research: On the distinction between individual and psychological conception. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 18*, 169-177.

Zimmerman, M. (1990b). Toward a theory of learned hopefulness: A structural model analysis of participation and empowerment. *Journal of Research in Personality, 24*, 71-86.

Zimmerman, M. (1995). Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 23*, 581-600.

Zimmerman, M. (2000). Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational and community levels of analysis. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 43-63). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Zimmerman, M., & Rappaport, J. (1988). Citizen participation, perceived control and psychological empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 16*, 725-750.

Zimmerman, M. A., & Zahniser, J. H. (1991). Refinements of sphere-specific measures of perceived control: Development of a sociopolitical control scale. *Journal of Community Psychology, 19*, 189-204.

Zoerink, D. A., Magafas, A. H., & Pawelko, K. A. (1997). Empowering youth at risk through community service. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 26*, 127-138.

APPENDIX 1
CONSENT FORMS AND INFORMED CONSENT

Student Consent Form

Victoria University of Technology

with Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service

Consent Form for SAY Project

[Social Action with Youth Project]

Information

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into promoting well-being of youth in St Albans. You will be required to participate in group work with other youth to problem solve ways to improve the local community for youth as part of your participation in the Western English Language School bridging program.

Agreement

I, _____(full name)

of _____(full address)

[Consent of a **parent** or guardian is also required if under 18 years]

I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the research:

Title:	**Social Action with Youth**
By:	**Victoria University** of Technology
Partner:	**Good Shepherd** Youth and Family service
Researcher:	**Julie Morsillo**, PhD student

I certify that the objectives of the research, together with any risks to me associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully **explained** to me by Julie Morsillo

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any **questions** answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this research at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept **confidential**.

Signed: **.....** **Date: .....**

Witness other than the researcher:

.....

Any queries to:

Julie Morsillo, PhD researcher - <morsillo@bigpond.net.au> Phone: 03 9354 0004
or Dr Adrian Fisher, Victoria University – Phone 03 9688 5221

Further queries or complaints to:

Principal, Western English Language School – Phone: 03 9311 9325

Parental consent

Victoria University of Technology

with Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service

Parental Consent Form for SAY Research

[Social Action with Youth Project]

Information

We would like to invite your child to be a part of a study into promoting well-being of youth in St Albans. Your child will be required to participate in group work with other youth to problem solve ways to improve the local community for youth as part of their participation in the Western English Language School bridging program.

Agreement

I, _____(full name)

of _____(full address)

I certify that my child is _____ years old, and being under-age my permission as a parent is being sought.

I am voluntarily giving my consent for my child to participate in the research:

Title:	**Social Action with Youth**
By:	**Victoria University** of Technology
Partner:	**Good Shepherd** Youth and Family service
Researcher:	**Julie Morsillo**, PhD student

I certify that the objectives of the research, together with any risks to me associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully **explained** to my child by Julie Morsillo

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any **questions** answered and that I understand that I can withdraw my child from this research at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept **confidential**.

Signed: **.....** **Date: .....**

Witness other than the researcher:

.....

Any queries to:
Julie Morsillo, PhD researcher - <morsillo@bigpond.net.au> Phone: 03 9354 0004
or Dr Adrian Fisher, Victoria University – Phone 03 9688 5221
Further queries or complaints to:
Principal, Western English Language School – Phone: 03 9311 9325

APPENDIX 2
PROMPT MATERIALS OF GAMES, ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS

Social Action with Youth Project

Session 1 – Introduction with youth groups

PASSION GAME: All stand in the middle to start. Ask questions about interests and abilities and passions about self and the community. Stay in the middle if not sure or don't care or move to the one side (or towards one side on a continuum) if they agree or the other side if disagree.

Questions:

I'M PASSIONATE ABOUT OR I REALLY ENJOY:

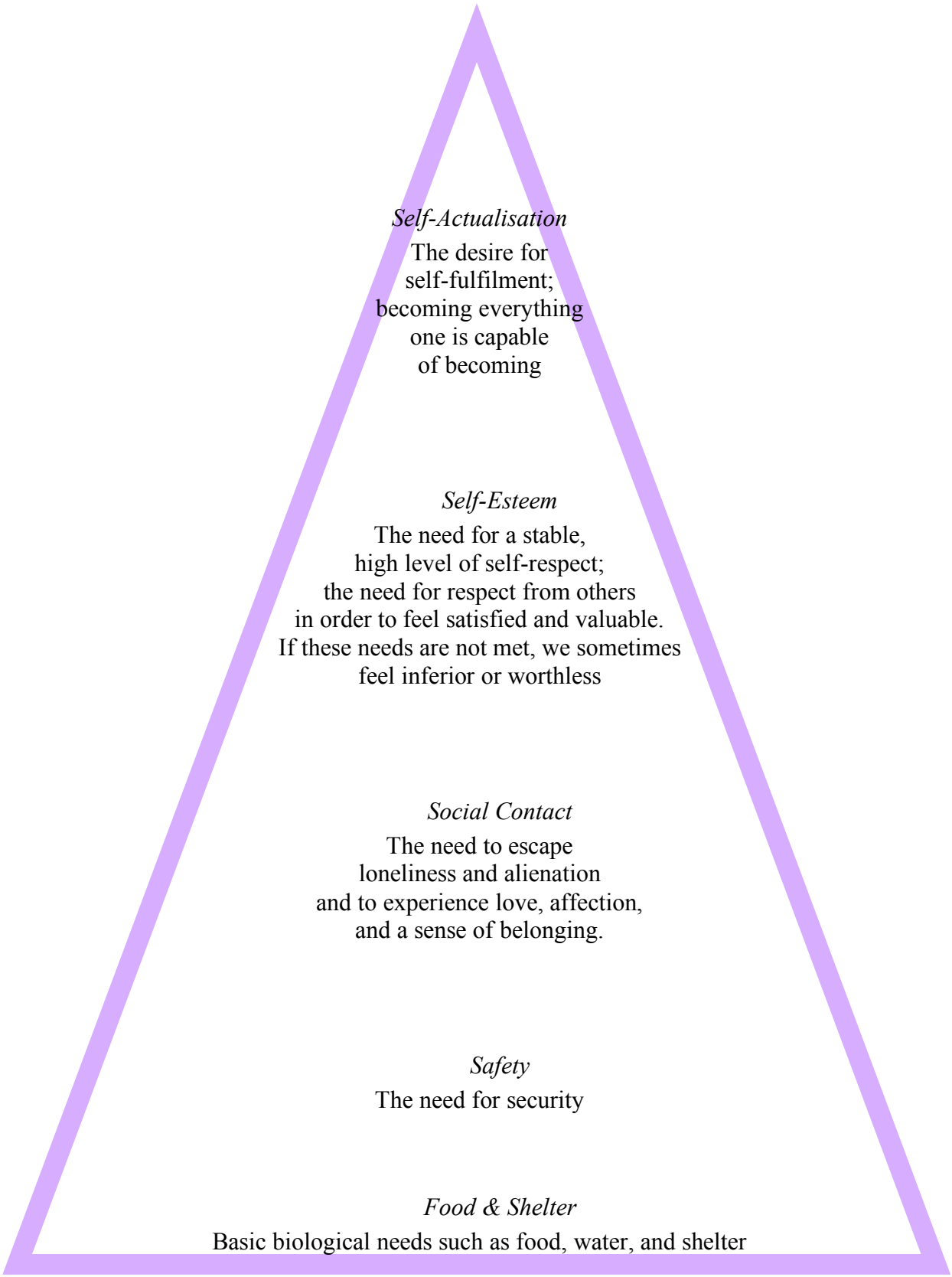
[NO DON'T CARE YES]

- SPORT – watching games eg. football, soccer, tennis, cricket
- SPORTS – playing team sports for fun or for the challenge to win
- FITNESS – keeping the body in shape eg. gym work, walking, jogging, swimming etc
- MUSIC – listening to or playing music
- DANCING – watching or dancing to any kind of music
- PERFORMING – Acting, singing, dancing on stage, community theatre
- ARTS – eg. painting, drawing, sculpting, crafts, dress-making etc
- NATURE – eg. gardening, bush-walking, BBQs, picnics, outdoor living
- TRAVEL – watching Getaway type shows, holidays away somewhere, beaches, like to go overseas
- THRILL SEEKING ACTIVITIES – or dream of such eg. hang-gliding, skiing, absailing, roller-coaster
- GOOD FOOD – cooking up a storm in the kitchen or going out for good food (NOT junk food)
- HANGING OUT – with friends, just talking or watching stuff together
- LOCAL SERVICES for youth – interested to help improve services for youth eg. recreation, health, housing, training
- ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES – discussions or documentaries or hearing about interest groups saving the world
- MULTICULTURAL ISSUES – eating different ethnic foods, learning or involved in cultural festivals and celebrations
- REFUGEE ISSUES – discussions or news or assistance to support refugees

[Adapted from a commonly used getting-to-know you game]

Used in SAY Project 2002-3, by Julie Morsillo, PhD Research, morsillo@bigpond.net.au

Hierarchy of Needs
by Abraham Maslow



Self-Actualisation

The desire for
self-fulfilment;
becoming everything
one is capable
of becoming

Self-Esteem

The need for a stable,
high level of self-respect;
the need for respect from others
in order to feel satisfied and valuable.
If these needs are not met, we sometimes
feel inferior or worthless

Social Contact

The need to escape
loneliness and alienation
and to experience love, affection,
and a sense of belonging.

Safety

The need for security

Food & Shelter

Basic biological needs such as food, water, and shelter

Quest for well-being

Discuss questions about well-being. Well-being means being well, to be well or feeling well. People are not all the same and will need different things for their well-being. Well-being may mean something different depending on your gender, age and background. Discuss what well-being means for you.

Questions:

- **The meaning of well-being and the lack of well-being:**
- What does well-being mean for you?
- What does the lack of/or the opposite of well-being mean for you?
- **Positive things about your present state of well-being:**
- What is good about your present state of personal well-being?
- What is good about your present relationships with other people?
- What is good about the present conditions in your life and community?
- **Negative things about your present state of well-being:**
- What is not so good or missing for your personal well-being at present?
- What is not so good or missing in your present relationships with other people?
- What is not so good or missing in terms of the present conditions of your life and community?
- **Actions or changes that could improve well-being in your local community:**
- What are some of the things that you and other people who live in St Albans could do to improve well-being in the community?
- What could other people (health and community service workers, governments, researchers) do to help us improve well-being in our community?

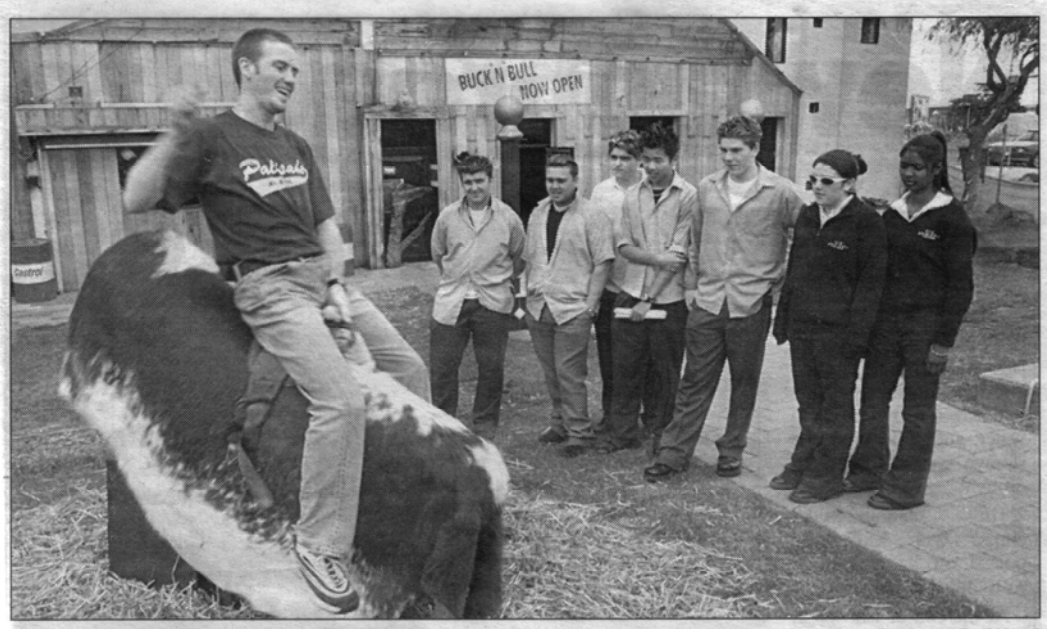
PASSION CHART

Introducing students to the spirit of working community

Students are asked to identify what they are passionate about in terms of both interests, courses and beliefs and in terms of who they care about in their community. Students work in pairs or small groups on a passion chart. They are asked to document their ideas with graphics if they wish, using coloured poster paper. The Passion posters are presented to the class and students are invited to read the charts and ask questions about the ideas represented on the charts. Students are given adequate time to discuss what they have learned about their classmates. They are encouraged to link up with students who have expressed similar interests or passions.

Adapted from notes of Working Community Program: http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/voced/working_community/model/index.htm

APPENDIX 3
MEDIA COVERAGE



Skilled rider: Keilor Downs College students learn the finer points of mastering the bucking bronco from Buck and Bull Hotel manager Tristian Jackson-Bistro. **Pictures: Ted Kloszynski**

Teens pool talent for a dance party

By Amanda Fisher

KEILOR Downs Secondary College students will hold an underage dance party in Tottenham on November 9.

Year 10 students organised the event as part of their curriculum, Working Community Program.

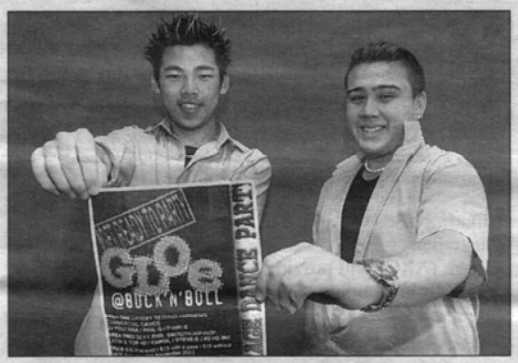
Teacher Rick Hudson and Victoria University PhD student Julie Morsillo supported the students' idea to run a drug-free event.

Nine students are involved in the project.

Ms Morsillo has worked with the Year 10 class as a researcher, assisting Mr Hudson.

She said the experience gained by the students would stay with them after the project was completed.

"We are engaging their passion, what they love to do, music and art," said Ms Morsillo.



Promotion: Minh Dang, 15, and Benjamin Stevens, 16, designed posters for the party.

"It is using their personal passion to make a difference."

Ms Morsillo said the event would help young people take control of their lives.

"Young people can be empowered to use their youthful passions to work as a group to improve their local community ... and collective wellbeing," she said.

The underage dance party will provide Brimbank youth with a fun and safe event, without alcohol or drugs.

"The youth are empowered by their community connections and learning ways to solve community problems together," said Ms Morsillo.

Sunshine police youth officer Jon Reader said the event demonstrated a co-operative approach.

"It is good to see young people being heavily involved in organising these events," he said.

The Working Community Program is part of a broader community project.

Community Wellness Project is a collaborative program between Victoria University and Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services.

Students from the class participated in the Brimbank Cultural Refugee Festival on October 12.

The project's results will be displayed on November 22 at an evaluation day. Students will also produce their own handbooks for social change.

The underage dance party will be held at the Buck and Bull Hotel, 249 Sunshine Rd, Tottenham. Soft drink will be supplied and a courtesy bus will run from Sunshine station on the night, tickets are $15.

Julie Morsillo

Young people inspired to have a SAY

"WE'RE sick of seeing syringes left lying around the place. There needs to be more entertainment for young people around here, so they don't think about drugs." (Year 10 student at start of SAY program.)

"The best part of the program was the freedom to organise your own community event, as you feel proud of your own achievement." (Year 10 musician who organised a school battle of the bands.)

Julie Morsillo, community psychology PhD researcher at Victoria University in Melbourne, believes that the secret to getting young people involved in projects to improve their local community, is to inspire them to believe they can really make a difference.

Morsillo is working in partnership with the Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, in Melbourne's west, on a program called Social Action with Youth (SAY).

"Youth often feel powerless to address the social issues confronting their communities, yet they have enormous potential to contribute to community wellbeing and social justice," she says. "This project is about enabling youth to realise their potential for a social contribution to the community.

"Youth, particularly from disadvantaged communities, need to feel able to contribute positively to the collective wellbeing of their family, friends and neighbours," she added.

Though this concept is not new, Morsillo believes that there are few comprehensive evaluations of the empowerment processes and outcomes of youth participation in such projects.

Her evaluations are based on her observations and self-reporting by the youth participants. The research documents the experiences, knowledge and skills gained by the young people participating in their self-chosen projects.

Working for three months last year with Year 10 students and their teacher at Keilor Downs Secondary College, Morsillo learnt that their passions – and skills - included music, art and performance.

"The highlight of my experience," said a student who has now organised and promoted two underage dance parties, "has been the satisfaction we all felt when the night that we had been planning, stressing over and having sleepless nights about became a rip roaring success. It was a real adrenalin rush."

"The project gives you the freedom to let you go out into the community and see what you can come up with," said a student who helped organise a refugee cultural festival. "Working on different projects in the community gives you a sense of satisfaction that you were able to put something back into the community for once."

Another student, who designed an Aboriginal garden with an Aboriginal park ranger, said that the SAY project " really opened my eyes. And now I know I can still contribute to the community, and make a small difference. Adding it up with other people's efforts you can make a big difference overall."

Morsillo is now working in a community setting with her second youth group – Generation Q, a group of gay and lesbian young people, 15 to 22 years, who meet weekly for support and social events. Group members have decided to combat homophobia in their local community through the use of community theatre, and will perform at a teachers' forum on gay issues in mid-May.

Another group of marginalised young people in the western suburbs of Melbourne are recent refugees from the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan. In second semester, Morsillo will be working with these people with a teacher from the Western English Language School in Tottenham.

"I'm looking forward to discovering what community projects these recently arrived young people will be inspired to take on in their new community."

Morsillo has presented her on-going research at a number of conferences and will be speaking at an international conference in New Mexico, USA in June.

Inquiries: morsillo@bigpond.net.au
Further reading:
www.goodshepherd.com.au/gsyfs/say/

■ Morsillo was an inaugural arts student at Victoria University's St Albans Campus. She completed a graduate diploma in child & adolescent psychology at the University of Melbourne, while working at the Equal Opportunity Commission as a community education worker. She then went into policy work on managing diversity issues for the Victorian government. She completed a masters in social science (international development) at RMIT, while doing policy guides for Australia Red Cross International. She is back at Victoria University for this PhD research.

APPENDIX 4
THEMES FROM STUDENT GROUP EVALUATIONS

Themes from School Student Group Written Evaluations

1. Freedom of expression (inc freedom & control to choose and design own project)

- The best part of the program would be the freedom to organize your own community event as you feel proud of your own achievement *(Bands - Female A)*
- It was great where you were the one who got to decide on what you would be doing. It gives you the freedom to let you go out into the community and see what you can come up with. *(Children-Female T)*
- The freedom and trust that is put in us throughout the semester gives us confidence and a lot more room to personalize our projects. This freedom is the gateway that gave our project the individuality and special feel that we enjoyed so much. *(Children - Female J)*
- The best part was the freedom. The fact that we were allowed to decide the project that we do and were allowed to leave the school grounds to work on it. *(Children - Female L)*
- It was the best subject of the year. The skills I think I have developed have been confidence, communication, organizing and independents (sic), due to my experience it has taught me that we can organize and do what we want if we really want it. (Children-Female B)
- The best part of the program that you weren't under the teachers control all the time. You were independent and self-determinate. We didn't have any set task by the teacher and you decided to work or not. This was based on a project that you have only had to get it running or finished. We worked pretty well because we were all in control and most of the time, we shared confidence without much arguments. *(Dance-Male M)*
- The best part would be thinking up what to organize for the youth in our area. The program was good because you would be in control for a change. *(Dance-Female R)*
- Phone calls sharpened our skills with communicating because we slowly got the hang of talking to strangers and not being shy to express our own ideas to the other person. *(Garden-Male V)*
- The best part was the chance to be in control of what we wanted to do in helping our community *(Garden - Male J)*

2. Development of leadership, organisational and teamwork skills (develop problem-solving)

- Skills I have developed through the program are: leadership, communication and teamwork, organizing skills, experience in organizing an event and confidence. *(Bands – Female A)*

- We worked together quickly as a group to adapt to the crowds of children we had to deal with. The meetings with Tiffany and Melanie (community service workers) gave us the independence and presented us with problems that we had to tackle, not just as individuals, but as a group. These problems helped to strengthen our teamwork and leadership skills. It is a great way to build skills, and give you a realization of what YOU are capable of and what YOU can achieve when you put your mind to it. I am glad that had the opportunity to build my skills in such a way that I have never experienced in school before. The fact that this one program can offer so much more

is really something and I look forward to using the skills I have developed in all my subjects and even out of school. *(Children – Female J)*

- Everyone organized what needed to be done and people to do that. To all of the interviews that we had we were always ready and prepared with note and questions. Everyone really worked together to get everything done and when there was a big decision everyone put in their view across and came up with a solution together. I have developed by being more confident and contributing more to the group. The skills that I developed as a result of the experience was how to handle formal interviews, controlling and communicating to kids, organizing a kids stall (the raffle, the prizes, the supplies, transportation and the funding) and how to work well in a team. *(Children – Female L)*

- Our group used teamwork, leadership and communication in several meetings where we worked together in discussing our ideas with confidence and listening to our replies. We all worked well together in achieving success in our project and working on this project gave us all the opportunity to get to know each other. We were an organized group that got things done and the end result came out to be a great day and fun for all. On the actual day of our event we kept everything running well as we all co-operated and worked well as a team which made the day run smoothly with no problems we couldn't handle. *(Children – Female B)*

- I think I have come a long way from the beginning of the program until now. I have gained experience in organizational skills. I together with my group took on adult responsibilities and actually pulled it off. I tried to support everyone's ideas and input. Planning an underage (dance party) can be extremely hard work as I found out along the way. I got appointed the task of looking around for security, Djs, lighting and sound for the event. Surprisingly, once I started I was on a role (sic) and really enjoyed looking people up and booking them. *(Dance – Male D)*

- Mr Hudson is one of the best teachers. With Julie (researcher) expertise, we were able to meet new people and make it possible. The best part of the program that you weren't under the teachers control all the time. You were independent and self-determinate. We didn't have any set task by the teacher and you decided to work or not. This was based on a project that you have only had to get it running or finished. We were able to show lots of leadership on the day. All the say through the project, we were capable to communicate very well under pressure, to change ideas, choosing things etc. I have developed excellent skills and new friends throughout the program. The skills I developed throughout would be 'finding solutions'. I was able to identify the main problem in our project and instead of letting the other members do it, I tried to solve it with different solutions. I was able to be flexible in the designing. I was listening to them instead of arguing with them. Throughout our project I was able to set some short group/personal goals like trying to manage our time, completing the project and getting more involved for my personal goal. *(Dance – Male M)*

- Our group decided to work together because we all had an interest in performing arts. Our group worked well together, without any arguments or disputes. Teamwork, leadership and communication are all very important as when working in a group these are the essential tools for succeeding in the task at hand. Our group discussed wording of our application for a government grant and took turns ringing up contacts etc. We all worked well together feeding off each other's ideas. Throughout the program I have developed organizational skills as well as problem solving skills. Skills that I originally developed in an earlier leadership program were defined and I'm now confident enough to do things that I would usually hand over to someone else. Our group worked together as a team, as our project is such a

long term one, we each had input on filling out applications, structuring our vocals etc. I attended a meeting regarding government grants and informally spoke to a council member, who gave us recommendations and told us she would be speaking to the mayor about our project. *(Theatre - Female C)*

- I think I have improved in many areas in leadership and organizing performances. The best part of the program is being able to go outside of school to organize the project as best as possible. There was no real bad part about the program. I think that I developed the ability to talk to people on the phone and have meetings with people I don't know. *(Theatre – Female A)*

- Teamwork discussing and interpreting ideas together to complete certain task given by the project organizer. Leadership, different people in my group were in charge of different responsibilities. I think my group worked together reasonably well in trying to achieve the aim of the project. We started really well and had plenty of motivation and inspiration but when we had trouble contacting the ranger, some of us suddenly lost total motivation in completing the design. At that stage we didn't work that well as a group but then we realized that we were rally behind compared to the rest of the class, so we got back on track and finished the project together as a group. *(Garden – Male V)*

3. Community connectedness
(awareness and making a contribution to the community)

- Helps you get a better perspective of yourself *(Children – Female B)*

- Working on different projects in the community gives you a sense of satisfaction that you were able to put something back into the community for once. If there was ever a chance to do something like this again I would love to be a part of it. When working on your project in a small group you get to interact with other people in the community, which is a thing you wouldn't normally get to do. Even making phone calls to different organizations and speaking to people at first was a bit daunting but after having to do it a number of times I now consider it as something I would be able to do easily. This is just an example of the many things, which you can gain from the experience. *(Children – Female T)*

- It's opened my eyes to the needs of our youths (sic) *(Dance – Male D)*

- Our group's plan was to convince our peers that this was going to be an exciting event and that our aim was to get underage people off the streets and take away their boredom for the night. I feel that there is not much for adolescents to do at night that is both safe and close to the western suburbs. These under ages are vital for the community and give teens a chance to unwind, let loose and make some friends at the same time. *(Dance – Male D)*

    - I attended a meeting regarding government grants and informally spoke to a council member, who gave us recommendations and told us she would be speaking to the mayor about our project. *(Theatre – Female C)*

    - I have learned a lot about how the world works outside of school grounds. *(Garden – Male A)*

- I developed my awareness to community issues and helping out the community. It really opened my eyes and now I know I can still contribute to the community, making a small difference which sums up with other peoples efforts, to make a big difference overall. The best part is definitely moving around and going places rather than being stuck in a classroom. Also visiting the park on a nice day, going for walks

and learning about other people's ways of life. The development of my attitude towards helping others has increased immensely and my attitude towards my responsibility and others has also changed as a result of my involvement in this program. *(Garden – Male V)*

- The best part was the chance to be in control of what we wanted to do in helping our community *(Garden – Male J)*

APPENDIX 5
HOT SEAT DILEMMAS

Dilemma 3: You're a 17 year-old gay guy. You have a crush on another guy at school but you're not sure if he's gay. Do you ask him out?

FOR	AGAINST
• You like him, go ask him.	• He could be straight and tease or bash you.
• He could be just straight acting.	• He could have a partner.
• He might be waiting for you to ask him out.	• He might just want to use you.
• It could be worth it.	• He'll probably tell everyone.
• You could ask a friend to ask him out for you.	• He might not want people to know.
• There's only one way to find out.	• Don't be stupid.

Dilemma 4: You have a 16 year-old bisexual daughter. Her sexuality makes no difference to you and you love her the same. Do you tell the rest of your family?

FOR:	AGAINST:
• It's who she is and you want to share it with the family.	• What if they reject her?
• They'll find out anyway, it's better coming from you.	• It's not your place to tell them. It's up to her.
• She shouldn't have to hide who she is.	• It's not something to gossip about.
• You want the family to know that you're proud and supportive.	• You'll start trouble in the family.
• It will stop the rumours.	• It will start rumours.
• Once everyone knows about it, you can talk through the issues.	• You'll lose her trust.
• Once they know, she can be open about her relationships.	• She'll never tell you anything again.

Dilemma 5: You're 16 years old and your best friend is gay. He is being bullied, verbally and physically, by a group of students at school. Do you stand up for your friend?

FOR:	AGAINST:
• He's you're friend. You have to help him.	• He might be you're friend, but are you prepared to be called gay for him?
• A whole group against one person isn't fair.	• Like one more person would make a difference.
• What goes around comes around.	• You'll get picked on as well. Think about yourself.
• If you care about your friend you'll help them.	• Does he care about you the way you care about him?
• If you were in trouble, you'd want him to help you.	• How do you know he'd help you? So why help him?
• You're best friends. Best friends don't dessert each other.	• Sometimes you have to run to save yourself.
• Would you let someone you care about get hurt because other people don't think they're "normal"?	• He needs to learn how to stand up for himself.

Dilemma 6: You're 16 and your best friend is a lesbian. Other girls at school have been gossiping about her and ask you if she's a lesbian. Do you out her to your friends?

FOR:	AGAINST:
• Tell them, she doesn't care if they know.	• You can't, she might get teased.
• She might meet some other lesbians at school, make friends or even get a date.	• It will ruin your friendship.
• Once the other girls know, she can talk openly about it.	• Her parents don't know and someone could tell them.
• She'll feel more comfortable about herself because she has nothing to hide.	Teachers might treat her differently.
• There's nothing wrong with it, she should be open.	• It's up to her when she tells people.
• You'll stop the gossip.	• It's no one's business but her own. Let them gossip.

APPENDIX 6
GENERATION Q WRITTEN EVALUATIONS

GENERATION Q Written Evaluations
Sense of Belonging at Generation Q

- Generation Q is a great organisation to be a part of it - you are same sex attracted. Generation Q it's been a big help for me and to the others *(Female T)*
- It is good having Gen Q as it's a place to be free make friends and have fun and it helps us express ourselves and to be what we want to be it helps us to deal with gay issues and to help us with whatever it maybe. But through all of my time spent with Gen Q it has helped me to become the person I am and not to be afraid of being gay *(Male J).*
- I like this group to make friends, going to places, talk about our problems etc *(Female R)*
- What I have about being in Generation Q is the atmosphere, and the great people who attend, the things that we talk about really relate. Most or all of the people who attend can talk and feel safe and not feel like an outsider *(Female S)*
- Generation Q is a great youth group that allows people to be themselves and express their opinions free from discrimination. Young GLBTI people are under the supervision of group leaders who understand and support that person and offer advice to make things better. *(Male St)*
- A good thing about having a youth group in St Albans for homosexuals is that you meet other young males and females in your surrounding area and also so you can talk with them about things you can't speak to heterosexuals about! Also it is really good cause you don't have to stress about things that you can't talk about cause you can talk to either the youth worker or your friends in the group. Also you don't feel threatened at all when you are around the group cause you can be yourself and you don't have to be something or someone cause everybody wants you to be yourself and not someone else and you won't get discriminated against for it. *(Male AJ)*
- What's good about being part of GQ I think it's good having a SSA group because you get to discuss issues, meet new people and get to share how your week has been. I think it's good to have some sort of thing that you can relate to without dealing with harassment and discrimination. I really like the atmosphere of Generation Q and the people that attend *(Male M).*

Freedom of expression through drama workshops and forum

- The drama stuff we did was great. It was fun to express how we feel about homophobia *(Male Sc)*
- The drams / skit program run by Julie and Jemma has been great in communicating issues associated with the queer community in an often humorous yet serious manner. *(Male St)*
- The camp is the second best thing so far, being able to go somewhere else and being able to be ourselves and work together to write drama stuff *(Male Sc)*

- The forum was the best experience out of all! All these people were totally willing to listen to us and our thoughts on how to fix the homophobia problems at schools. I got to talk about how I felt and it was great! *(Male Sc)*
- Being a part of the forum for teachers (to beat homophobia in schools) was a great experience to express my thought on how to beat the homophobia. The drama part of it was funny and hopefully meaningful to the teachers *(Female T)*
- Working with Julie was heaps heaps and heaps of fun. Keep up the good work Julie!! *(Female T)*
- Julie has been, I believe, beneficial to Gen Q because she has been a great help with the activities *(Male St)*
- It was fun to do *(Anonymous)*
- I enjoyed writing the scripts *(Anonymous)*
- I liked the fun of writing them *(Anonymous)*
- I enjoyed making our own ideas in groups and working in groups and talking about what we wanted *(Anonymous)*
- I enjoyed making up the arguments for the against the 16 year old telling her friends and I enjoyed making the leaders and the loud mouth do the acting! *(Anonymous)*
- I enjoyed the activities but don't like drama or acting *(Anonymous)*
- I enjoyed acting and expressing myself and seeing how people really thought about homosexuality issues within the community. I've never done any work so quick as this, easy, got a choice in the topic, so invigorating, could bring out whatever you wanted to say, as wouldn't do it in front of most people, but all these people are supportive of homosexuals *(Anonymous)*

APPENDIX 7
AFRICAN YOUTH EVALUATIONS

African Refugee Concerns in Written Evaluations

Name	Life in Africa	Life in Australia	Interests	Hopes
Female B from Eritrea	It is a very nice country and it has very nice tress and the weather was nice even in winter it is warmer and the people are very friendly and all Eritrea people always they talked honestly.	In Australia there are a lot of schools even when you finish study you can start work easily. So I like Australia and here always peace and everything is cheap. So you can buy anything.	I like to listen to music.	I like more study. My dream is to be an air hostess.
Male D from Eritrea	My country has natural views like the mountains and rivers	I didn't like living in Australia till now because I am missing my home country and the natural views and my Mum, my friends. I missed every thing in my home country.	Democracy. We would like to become a republic. We don't want to be under the Queen because if the Queen wants goodness for us she wouldn't take money from us. That's why we want to be a republic. If something bad happens to Australia that means it happens for us and we will die for Australia.	I want to improve my soccer skills and the country. I would like to do something for Australia but cannot by myself. We have to join to each other to do big things or something. I hope to hear my voice, because if Australia is a republic we will be comfortable and we can help every one, we can help the poor countries, we can do whatever we want. Come on join me if you are interested in my idea.
Male Ai from Eritrea via Sudan	My country has kind people and the weather and the resources of fruit and fish	They are a good curriculum and a good work	I like sport, running and soccer and like Arabic poetry. I like to watch the news. I like my family and my mother cook and I like my religion.	More study. I want to be psychiatrist.
Male A from Eritrea via Sudan	My country has beautiful views, nice people and I feel comfortable there. eg Kind, help any time you need them.	I got the opportunity to complete my studying and I have a chance to get a good job and a lot of money.	How to rebuild the poor countries? It is important to live in peace without wars and without discrimination between the people. To have education, food, peace and freedom, with no war discrimination or poverty.	I would like to improve my education, job skills and my bank account.
Female E from Ethiopia via Sudan	Sudan has good people. I like Sudan, but every day is hot and not freedom. The people have beautiful dress and clothes. There is some restriction with clothing as Muslims	I like Australia because we have freedom and school. The country Australia you can work anything because we have freedom.	I like music, African music. I like soccer. I like to eat but I don't like to cook.	I like more study school. I want to work in an office.

Name	Life in Africa	Life in Australia	Interests	Hopes
Female H from Ethiopia	It is very nice weather and very nice Ethiopian food. Ethiopia is the best country because the best animals in Ethiopia, like elephants.	This country is very nice country also freedom in Australia nice and the Australian government is very good because the refugee people is here with help money and food.	I like school. I like fun and music.	I want to learn more English. I would like to have a job. I want to help religions. I want to do more reading about the bible. I want to know stories from another country. I want help young people in Ethiopia to know how to come to Australia.
Male K from Ethiopia	In Ethiopia I lived with my family and all my cousins. I miss my country because my family lived there still. I miss them.	Australia is more developed than my country because the government is good. Transport to school is good also. There is freedom and Australia is beautiful and peaceful country.	I like bible study. I like singing in the choir. I want to study. I want to learn more English.	I will do more study. When I have finished study I want to do more learning for the nursing. Then I want to help for the patient person. I like to help the old people
Female M from Ethiopia	I feel relax psychologically and most of my family and friends live there	I like Australia because it is a free country but it is hard to live without my family	I like to play on the computer. I want to use my computer skills to help others with their projects, maybe with flyers or advertising.	To want to complete my study and to get a nice job with nice wages. I would like to help people with food. Teach people how to cook.
Male S from Ethiopia			We like music and reggae. We like school. We like soccer. We like football. We like basketball.	We would like to organize a party. I would like to help refugees.
Feamle T from Ethiopia			I would like to celebrate with food and drink.	I want to learn of history of Ethiopia, Africa. I would like to do work. I would like to learn more English. I would like to have peace.
Male R from Ethiopia via Kenya	My country has natural views like mountain and beach and transport	I didn't like living in Australia until now because I missing my family and my home country and my natural views. I have home sick and life boring in Australia. I miss my home country.	How to rebuild the poor countries? It is important to live in peace without wars and without discrimination between the people. To have education, food, peace and freedom, with no war discrimination or poverty.	I would like to improve my education and government benefit and employment.
Male B from Ethiopia via Sudan	I like Sudan but I don't like the weather because always hot and windy. I like Sudan food and kind people of drinks and the people's lucky	I like Australia. When I came to Australia I am very happy. Australia is very nice country more than the other countries. The government is good and in Australia is all free.	I like school because I don't know anything and I need too learn. I need to do more study in maths, geography and history also study much after school. I need to play soccer also football.	I like to study more. I want a good job to make money and be happy. I need to visit Africa.

Name	Life in Africa	Life in Australia	Interests	Hopes
Female H from Ethiopia via Sudan			We like music and reggae. We like school. We like soccer. We like football. We like basketball.	We would like to organize a party. I would like to help refugees.
Male S from Ethiopia via Sudan			I like music and dance. I like sport and school. My favourite sport is basketball.	I want to help young people for sport.
Female S from Somalia via Kenya	In Africa there is a lot of my family there. We spent a lot of time and learnt about more people from there. All my friends are still there so I miss them. I learned at school and we grow up there. Good things about where I came from is that there were a lot of schools.	It is a good country and good people and it is quiet place where you can relaxes all your life. Good government and beautiful country. Good school and also study are good.	I like to be educated. I like sport. I would like to have a good education to join with another people to know country they people.	I like to help refugees. I would like to help whose who have family problems. First I would like to help refugees with water and food and secondly to give them shelter. Those in Africa and Asia. That is my dream and I wish to help them. I would like to work for UNHCR. *(United Nations High Commission for Refugees)*
Male D from Sudan	Sudan has good weather.	School is good.		I would like to have a job.
Male E from Sudan			I like soccer and dancing.	
Male Z *Sudan via Egypt*	The weather is nice and school and I like most the river. I like to hang around in the shopping with my friends.	All my family are here and I have a good school in Australia. Australia has nice weather and is a beautiful country and I like Australia because all my friends they are here.	I like soccer and music. I like to do work.	I would like to help some people. I want to be an engineer. I want to help people. If someone falls down, if someone has no transport, if someone gets hurt. Maybe I could drive the bus or help them another way.
Female A from Sudan via Egypt	My country is exactly like Australia (in many ways) but is different like freedom	I have school and everything in Australia	I like school. I like helping people. I like music and dance and fashion.	One I need is my father. If he came to Australia I will become happy. I need to be in South Melbourne always with my family. I want to do psychology in the future.
Male M from Sudan via Kenya	I like Kenya and Sudan because UNHCR provide us food and house	I like Australia because of the school in Australia is very good.	I would like to have sport games. I would like my religion.	I would like to improve to do more study. I would like to have a job. I would like peace.