



“I don’t want this to stop; I want it to keep going”

Waimarino Youth Photovoice Report

Ken Taiapa

Helen Moewaka Barnes

Tim McCreanor

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SHORE and Whariki Research Centre
School of Public Health, Massey University
PO Box 6137 Wellesley St, Auckland



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

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Naku te rourou, nau te rou rou, ka ora ai te iwi

Sustenance of the people is a collective effort

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Nga mihi nui ki a koutou.

1. Executive Summary

Photovoice is a participatory method of using photographic images and critical dialogue to document and describe social issues. This report outlines the process and findings of research undertaken by young people living in Waimarino, with support from the Raetihi Community Trust and the SHORE and Whariki Research Centre of Massey University, using a Photovoice method to investigate and report on the needs and perspectives of young people and to build their capabilities. We began with a customized Photovoice training session for the young people to provide an understanding of the method and ensure their safety during the data collection process. Then a group of youth researchers, took photographs of relevant features in their community, collaborated to make a selection from the full collection and developed critical dialogue to articulate the meanings contained in each chosen image. These elements were assembled into a PowerPoint presentation and delivered to community meetings by the young people for discussion and feedback.

The Power Point presentation for stakeholder and funder consultation at community feedback hui and to support the development of evidence-based policy and community action to address youth identified needs in Waimarino was the key output. The findings reported here are grouped into 2 main categories; Things participants like about their community, and Things participants would like to Change. Participants recommendations for positive change focus on the suggestion of a 'youth hub' to centre and co-ordinate youth opportunities, and options to address issues of access and transport for young people in the Waimarino district.

The report closes with a discussion on insights developed from the research process to share learnings and reflections on the method. This includes consideration of other outcomes achieved by the process which include the establishment and maintenance of positive connections between young people. Also of significance were enhanced capabilities among young people, increased participation in decision-making processes, better understanding of youth perspectives on their community, and enhanced relationships among stakeholders.

Jude Rivlin of the Raetihi Community Trust coordinated and maintained contact with the young people while Ken Taiapa of Whariki, guided the group through the research processes.

2. Introduction

High quality research has been identified as an important part of developing effective approaches and interventions with young people (Jensen, Kaiwai, McCreanor & Moewaka Barnes, 2006; Kerr et al., 2006, McLaren, 2002; Ministry of Youth Development, 2002). Furthermore the benefits of youth participation in community development initiatives related to young people has been acknowledged and articulated in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (2002). Thus the most effective and grounded research about initiatives that relate to young people includes the voices of the young people themselves. Advocating for a strengths-based approach to youth development based on robust research, the strategy highlights the need for positive collaborations between academic researchers, youth workers and youth (MYD, 2002). Reinforcing this philosophy is recognition of the need for youth development approaches which encourage the participation of young people in their communities through research and decision-making processes (Denny 2004; Douglas 2006; McLaren 2002; Kaiwai, Moewaka Barnes, Taiapa & McCreanor, 2009; Warne, Snyder & Gadin, 2013; Wilson et al. 2007).

The Wai 4 Y Photovoice project in the Waimarino District of central Te Ika a Maui, was a collaboration between the Raetihi Community Trust, local young people, and the SHORE and Whariki Research Centre, Massey University. The aim of the project was to build capabilities among young people and to support them to conduct research on the needs and understandings of the youth cohort in their community to support future development processes.

3. Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (2002)

In 2002 New Zealand adopted a new and dynamic approach to engaging young people which encouraged a shift in thinking at both policy and community levels. Based on a framework known as Positive Youth Development (Pittman et al. 2001) the basic tenet of this approach reconceptualised young people as pools of talent, skills and energies rather than as problems needing to be fixed (Damon 2004, Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2000, Pittman et al. 2002). In New Zealand the basis for such thinking is set out in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (YDSA) which provides guidelines for the development and implementation of youth development initiatives based on 6 key principles:

1. Understanding the 'big picture' for young people
2. Ensuring young people feel connected and have positive links with others in society
3. Taking a consistent, strengths-based approach which builds young people's resilience to risks and challenges
4. Supporting and equipping people and organisations to have successful, quality relationships with young people
5. Giving young people opportunities to have greater control over what happens to them, by seeking their advice, participation and involvement
6. Ensuring we have effective research, evaluation, and information gathering and sharing about young people

(Ministry of Youth Development 2008:22).

The application of these principles into the youth development field is aimed at providing a positive framework upon which youth identity and resilience can be structured and nurtured. The design and implementation of the Wai 4 Y Photovoice project were aligned to these principles to test their effectiveness using a Photovoice method and to contribute to the growing body of evidence of their effectiveness in working *with* young people.

4. Wai 4 Y Project

The current project emerged from conversations between Jude Rivlin from the Raetihi Community Trust and Ken Taiapa from SHORE and Whariki, about the issue of youth retention in Waimarino. The Waimarino District consists of 3 main settlements – Raetihi (1056), Waiouru¹ (1383) and Ohakune (1083), and other smaller outlying settlements. A closer look at the make-up of these communities is revealing, showing that European (63.7%) is the most common ethnic group in Ohakune followed by Maori (36.3%), whereas in Raetihi, Maori (53.6%) was the most common ethnic group followed by European (46.3%) (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Of particular interest is the high population of youth under the age of 15 in Raetihi (29.3%) and Ohakune (22.9%), both of which are above the national average of 21.5% (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). However, the region is further unique for its high rate of *depopulation* – it is recognized as having the highest drop for any territorial authority in the country; noted at 12.5% since 2006, which is in contrast to the nationwide population increase of 5.3% (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). The main industries in Waimarino include tourism and hospitality, farming, horticulture, military training, and the pulp, paper and saw mills. Based on Census 2006 data the average personal income in Ohakune is \$24,700 compared with \$19,100 in Raetihi (ibid).

Considering the largely youthful composition of these communities, the high number of young people leaving the area highlighted a significant community issue threatening sustainability and growth opportunities in the district. The idea of a youth needs assessment was discussed and it was decided this process should strongly engage local young people with guidance from the

Trust and SHORE and Whariki. A group of seven young people were identified and recruited by the Trust and through a group consensus they named themselves Wai 4 Y – a shorthand version of ‘Waimarino for Youth’ which, according to their perspective, was symbolic of the need for young people to feel the support of the wider community towards their growth and development. An initial research survey funded by the Whanganui Community Foundation was developed and conducted by Wai 4 Y, with support from Ken and Jude, to create a snapshot of the current status and future plans of local young people. The findings were compelling, showing that **52.9%** of respondents planned to leave the area mainly for reasons around tertiary study, employment, boredom, travel and more opportunities, while **38.2%** were undecided. The potential loss of such a high proportion of young people signaled a need for further research to better understand youth perspectives on what the drivers were for young people in Waimarino to either stay or leave. One youth, speaking about the survey findings of the youth researchers on that earlier project, had this to say:

I find in this community that a lot of the reasons why there's a problem with the youth is because people don't really know and they don't take the time to listen; they don't really think it's a problem. But this way if we say 80% of us say that it's a problem they have to say 'oh maybe it's a problem, we should look into it and see maybe they were right' sort of thing (Richard).

This highlights the importance of a youth voice and points to an opportunity for other stakeholders to develop and maintain positive connections with local youth so that they feel valued by the community and know that their input and perspectives are heard.

Following the successful completion of the youth survey it was decided that a qualitative research project was needed to flesh out the survey findings and to provide more definition on youth needs. Rather than using conventional methods such as interviews, a more innovative and dynamic approach was adopted.

5. Photovoice in Waimarino

At the outset there were 7 young people recruited into Wai 4 Y, however due to varying reasons by the end of the project this number dropped to 4. The young people involved in the Waimarino youth Photovoice project were Tangaroa Joyce, Zynaia Richards- Winter, Elijah Pue and Brooklyn Double. Ongoing support was provided by Jude Rivlin and others at the Raetihi Community Trust who organized training venues and coordinated participants throughout the research project; they managed payments, ran the budget, provided food for participants at training workshops and research sessions and maintained contact. SHORE and Whariki researchers Ken Taiapa, Pauline Dickinson and Jeff Adams provided remote support to the Trust and young people; listening to reflections on the process and providing guidance on aspects of the method as well as running training and analysis workshops. Further support came from researcher and community development consultant Jen Margaret who analyzed and reported on the initial survey findings and took part in research development discussions.

The findings reported here are the result of the energy, participation and commitment from the young people – with indirect support from adults to ensure the findings reflected youth perspectives and understandings. Developed and presented by the young people, the themes in the presentation highlight a number of strengths and criticisms of their community along with their recommendations for the development of future action plans.

6. Method

The Wai 4 Y Photovoice research was designed to build youth capabilities and competencies to support positive development for young people in Waimarino. To achieve this we worked with local stakeholders and the young participants, aged between 14 and 22, who were selected and recruited by our research partner the Raetihi Community Trust. Of the original 7 youth researchers, 5 attended the local Ruapehu College, one was hapu, and one had recently moved

to Wellington to study at Victoria University, but was passionate about being involved in a community development project in his hometown.

Young people are avid photographers taking photographs of friends, places and events with cellphones and sharing these on social media sites such as Facebook. Photovoice is a participatory action research method that combines taking photographs and critical reflection with social change (Bukowski & Buetow, 2011; Mitchell, Kearns, & Collins, 2007; Nelson & Christensen, 2009; Wang et al., 2007; Wang & Burris, 1994, Wood, 2011). This process encourages participants to represent their community through photographs, and to develop a group narrative to tell their story. Essential to this process is a strong empowerment focus based on building the capabilities and competencies of research participants to encourage their participation and to provide them with a voice. On this basis it offers a dynamic and flexible approach to knowledge creation that is particularly strong at including perspectives from socially marginalized groups on community issues which affect them; especially in the case of young people (Jensen et al, 2006; Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004). Photovoice enables them to develop a positive sense of social identity, participation and agency (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004) through its unique approach to dissemination of findings to community forums. For young people and other marginalized groups, this can be a transformative turning point.

7. Ethics

A low risk ethics application was submitted to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, signaling that we were working with the community but not expecting to encounter ethical dilemmas. Following this Ken ran a day-long workshop in Raetihi to train the youth in the Photovoice method and to answer questions related to the research. A key aspect of the training centred on participant safety. Discussion and examples were used to show the youth

how to take safe photographs of their community e.g. the avoidance of taking photographs that identify particular individuals without prior consent or of sensitive places such as gang-related areas. Emphasis also went on how to conduct the research in a safe manner which included things such as working in pairs, carrying cellphones and telling parents of their whereabouts. Findings from an earlier Photovoice project in Clendon and Mangere (Jensen et al, 2006) were examined and discussed as a group to give the young people insight into the method and a sense of the bigger picture.

8. Data Collection

The young people were given a timeframe of 4 weeks to take photographs of the things in their community they considered to be an *asset*, or something they would like to see *changed*. The intention was to create a database of images from which to draw those seen by consensus to represent important aspects of youth experience of this community. Group discussion was used in developing and articulating critical dialogue on the meaning in each image according to the young people. At the time of taking each photograph participants were encouraged to record their thoughts in a notepad on what each picture they took represented to them.

Although this method of data collection required the young people to think of their community in a slightly different way, they reported little difficulty in finding aspects of their community to photograph. They acknowledged a high level of enjoyment through being involved in the data collection process and a sense of ownership through being asked to provide their perspectives on the community as these showed them that their buy-in and participation towards positive change in their community were valued.

9. Analysis

The analysis was based on a process of critical reflection by the young people, conducted during a second day-long workshop in Raetihi facilitated by Ken. The purpose of the workshop was to support the young people to develop and apply an adaptation of the method of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to the photographs to draw out and agree upon meanings in the data. This involved finding the commonalities and points of difference between interpretations of images so they could be grouped into themes for further discussion and refinement. Using this technique enabled the young people to engage with, and make sense of the data to support the development of a Power Point presentation based on their findings.

Overall the analysis involved a four stage approach beginning with each participant selecting a shortlist of their seven favourite images to be included in the process. Once this was done they used the field notes they recorded during data collection to develop critical dialogue on what they liked or wanted to change in relation to each image. All of the photographs were then spread out on a table and the young people grouped them into themes and each image, along with its accompanying dialogue was reflected on collectively. This enabled Ken to facilitate discussion about the different meanings contained in each image which helped the group to reach a consensus on a final selection. The young people uploaded the chosen images and dialogue into a Power Point format and developed a youth narrative for the purpose of 3 community feedback forums in which they would present their findings to their community. The final product is a visual storyboard of youth perspectives and meaning-making about their community. The images that were not selected for this process were kept and stored in a database by the Trust for possible use in future community development initiatives.

10. Findings

The following section reports on the findings from the project by reproducing the main research output – the Power Point developed by the participants. We then provide a commentary on the themes that emerged from the research along with further information on the use of Photovoice as a tool for community development.

10.1 PowerPoint Presentation



Who are we?

- **Who?**
 - A group of young people from the Waimarino who are concerned about our towns.
- **What we did?**
 - Used cameras to capture our towns and how we as youth perceive them to be.

- **How did we do this?**
 - Took photos of the things we like in the community, and the things we would like to see improved.
- **Why?**
 - The survey we did last year at Ruapehu College found that the majority of students plan to leave the area after finishing college. We wanted to understand more about the reasons why.
 - More resources are being put toward tourism, rather than youth development.
 - We don't feel youth have a voice on community initiatives.

Waimarino Profile

- Waimarino is an area in the central North Island that refers to three small towns – Raetihi (1035), Ohākune (1101) and Waiouru (1383) and surrounding areas. We focused on Ohākune and Raetihi as we feel Waiouru is doing well with youth development.
- Figures from the latest census (2013) indicate Ruapehu district losing 12.7% of its population since 2006, the largest population drop for the country. This is in contrast to a nationwide population increase of 5.3%.
- There is a high youth population (people under 15 years of age) in Raetihi (29.3%) and Ohākune (22.9%) compared with the national average of 21.5%. (NZ Statistics 2006)

- The most common ethnic group in Ohākune is European (64.6%) followed by Māori (36.8%).
- The most common ethnic group in Raetihi is Māori (58.2%) followed by European (49.8%).
- The main industries in Raetihi and Ohākune are farming, market gardening, the pulp, paper and saw mills, hospitality and tourism with the ski field and outdoor recreation.



Things We Like About Our Towns



Safety



- Volunteer fire stations provide a sense of security and safety in both towns.
- Also a place for community members to unite.
- We need after hours doctor services in Ohākune and Raetihi.



Education – Mātauranga

- The provision of education for children is improving.
- Reason for people to come to Raetihi.
- Act as community 'hubs'- places where we unite & whānau engage.
- Valuable assets.
- Safety of children.
- Good mix of education & culture.
- Sense of unity needs to be taken into youth world also.



Culture



- Cultural festival and activities are provided at most schools in the area.
- Kōhanga Reo are providing Reo Māori opportunities to uri.
- Promotes the revitalisation of Te Reo Māori.

- Iwi involvement is good.
- Marae provides Tūrangawaewae.
- Keeping culture alive!



Community Initiatives



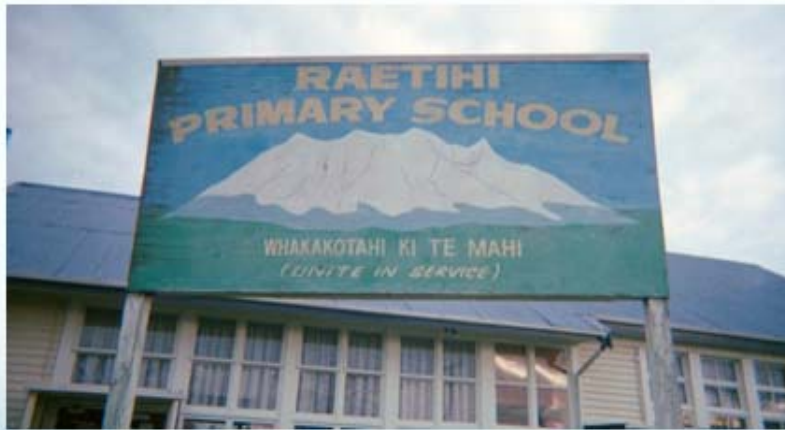
- Community groups like Raetihi Promotions and Community Trust run good events and initiatives.
- Ngāti Rangī Trust provide social services.
- Focus needed specifically for locals not just tourists.

Employment



- Hospitality industry predominant in the area for employment.
- Places like Angel Louise and Mountain Rocks cafes provide this for youth particularly.
- RAL (Ruapehu Alpine Lifts) has job opportunities.
- There is a need for the provision of careers advice to college students throughout all school years.
- A Youth Coordinator could do the above.

Unity - Kotahitanga



Recreational Opportunities



- Recreational facilities- swimming pools, the Royal Theatre, music equipment – all provide for 'something to do'.
- Provide possible career opportunities i.e drama at the theatre.
- Youth Worker could organise events around these facilities.



Things To Improve About Our Towns



Shops

- Lack of occupied shops.
- Affects morale of community.
- Need more businesses.
- Untidy.
- No competition = high prices.

In Raetihi our main street is full of empty shops which makes it look untidy and like no one cares. Because there's a lack of business, there's little competition therefore the prices are high.

Our recommendations?

- Tidy up.
- More business opportunities and choices.
- Local 'loyalty card'.
- We would take more pride in our town if we filled empty shops with more local business therefore creating a tidy space in which we live.



Recreation

- Lack of sports venues and facilities for youth — youth centre closed and council selling building (see photo of youth centre).
- Current facilities are dangerous and poorly maintained.
- Access to some are restricted by cost and transport.
- Need to ensure that young people have something to do and are kept off the streets.



It would be beneficial to the community if these facilities were upgraded and maintained as well as getting new ones that cater to all ages.

Recommendations

- More sports venues be created.
- Current facilities are upgraded.
- Improved access in terms of transport – increasing participation.
- More affordable and inclusive options.
- More 'age appropriate' choices.
- Establish a 'Youth Hub'.

'I feel disgusted when I see rubbish around town' - Youth



- Stray animals.
- Tagging looks untidy happens because we're bored and there's nothing to do.

What we recommend?

- More control of stray animals.
- Promote Graffiti – 'OK Graffiti'. Create an opportunity for us to learn how to make art out of Graffiti.



Transport



- Lack of organised transport between Ohākune and Raetihi e.g. for sports practice or work.
- Limited driver licensing facilities in the Waimarino.
- Costs money to travel elsewhere and sit the test.

What we recommend?

- More organisation around travel to recreational activities.
- Community organisations and College provide more training and workshops around driver licences – a co-ordinated approach
- Organise transport to city centres to undergo driver tests.

Nothing to do '*We are bored*'!



- No facilities.
- Lack of organised community events.
- **We are bored!**
- Leads to vandalism, drug & alcohol use and contributes to high teenage pregnancies.

← Busy day in Main Street Raetihi.

Recommendations

- Employ a full-time Youth Worker based in the community.
- Worker helps with co-ordination of events, career opportunities etc.
- Somewhere for us to go after school and in the holidays.
- Establish a youth centre/hub in the Main Street of Raetihi.



Youth Hub

- Run by a local youth worker
- Shared kai, transport, organised activities
- Information on local job opportunities, careers advice
- By youth for youth
- A place for youth to connect
- A place for the community to connect with youth



10.2 Commentary

The broad aim of the research was for the young people to document and describe what they like about living in their community, and what they would like to see changed. A number of themes, which focus on built and social environments, have been identified and articulated based on the group's understandings. These are discussed here to provide some context on youth perspectives for other stakeholders and policy makers to consider alongside wider community development discussions and strategies.

Things participants like about their community

Unity, Education & Culture

A common thread running through the things they like about their community is the value and importance of unity. This stands out in their perspectives on the sense of cohesion that was promoted through structured services and initiatives that made them feel part of a unified community. These included the delivery of education, the running of organized recreational events, involvement of local iwi initiatives, along with the presence of positive affirmations on signs in the community – for example the image above that shows the simple statement: *unite in service*. All of these are identified by the young people as key messages of social cohesion and highlights their need to feel connected to their community. They talked about their enjoyment of organized sports events where they could connect with wider social groups in a structured environment and their perceptions on the role and function of school highlight it as a place that brings people together in a positive pro-social atmosphere. They also identify culture as an important aspect of their community towards maintaining identity and language, as well as the contribution of key manawhenua group, Ngati Rangi and its delivery of social services.

Safety

The safety of their community was important to the young people. The volunteer fire brigade was seen as providing a key service that was vital to their sense of security and a place that was

able to unite people under the banner of safety. This sense of social obligation also extended towards them wanting after hour's doctor's facilities. **Employment**

The young people were enthusiastic at the notion of having a local job to balance with their school work as it enabled them to earn money and gain more freedom to pursue other interests. The potential for youth employment was highlighted as a positive thing in Waimarino and the hospitality sector was seen as being a major employer of local young people – especially the cafes and mountain operators. To support this even further they discussed the need for more support with careers guidance at school throughout all years of education. They believed this would help them to prepare their subject choices earlier so they could stream into their chosen career paths easier.

Things participants would like to Change

The Built Environment

A key focus was on the built environment which was identified as having an important influence on the identity of young people and how they feel about their community. The discussions leading up to the Power Point provided a critique on the appearance of the main street in Raetihi and the effects of this on their sense of pride and belonging. From their understandings, the high numbers of empty and derelict shops in Raetihi, combined with a lack of shopping options and competition led to an undermining of community morale. They felt that a revamp of the main street in Raetihi would encourage more business to open and operate locally, and that a loyalty card for locals, along with increased competition between shop owners, would make Raetihi a more vibrant and affordable place to live for residents.

Resources

Similarly they felt that more resources and attention could be devoted to improving the ambience of the wider community; reducing tagging and addressing the problem of stray animals were cited as specific examples. They put forward the suggestion of a designated

space where graffiti could be promoted as an opportunity to nurture the creativity of youth in a way that could become a community asset.

Another issue identified was the state of some recreational facilities in the community and the demotivating effects on young people in terms of engagement in sport, exercise and other activities. They argued for more facilities, improved access to such amenities and an upgrade of some existing equipment. Although some recreational facilities such as the swimming pools complex and the Royal Theatre were valued for providing young people with something to do, participants also raised a suggestion for more venues and facilities that were suitable for a range of age groups in the community. They believed this was justified by dangerous and poorly maintained existing facilities like playgrounds and basketball courts and a general lack of recreational options. They felt a need to increase youth access to facilities and participation in structured activities was essential to promoting pro-social behaviors in local young people. The cost of doing so was seen as being a major inhibitor for some young people in the community – which they believed left many dis-engaged and prone to anti-social behaviors such as smoking, drug and alcohol use and unsafe sex.

Transport

Local transport was identified as an area needing more consideration to ensure their access to the wider community. Participants signaled that they were often restricted from attending sports practices or work opportunities due to a lack of organized transport facilities between Raetihi and Ohakune. It should be noted this is in contrast to the survey findings where the question focused on transport to specific single events – as opposed to on-going regular commitments which is discussed here. It was felt these constraints were exacerbated by the existing process for youth to gain their driver's license training for which there were no local facilities. This placed the onus on young people and their families to organize transport to licensing facilities in either Taumaranui or Whanganui – more than an hour's drive away - along with the added cost of sitting the license tests.

Recommendations:

A Youth Hub

Part of the change they would like to see around creating a more vibrant community for youth was the development of a Youth Hub. They envisaged this as being a place where young people could hang out and connect with each other in a positive environment and have access to organized activities around the community. From their perspective this would give them the potential to be involved in creating a 'by youth for youth' space, and provide a place where the community could connect with the young people. They discussed the possibility of a paid local youth worker to coordinate this space, to work *with* the young people, and to be an interface with other community stakeholders. They suggested part of this role could be responsible for organizing structured activities for youth in the community as well as providing information on careers and local employment opportunities. When discussing potential locations for the hub they raised the possibility of using an empty building in the centre of Raetihi. There was a shared enthusiasm towards the idea of taking on the responsibility of developing and maintaining a premise they could base a Youth Hub in. This would be a firm step towards recognizing their important status as one of the stakeholder groups in the community, and being in the main street they felt would give them a sense of pride, ownership and a positive profile in the community. They were excited at the prospect of having an official place where, with the support of a youth worker, they could be involved in developing and implementing strategies to engage their peers – enhancing opportunities and reducing boredom.

Improve Access

Participants felt that most organized activities, events and work opportunities were mainly based in Ohankune. They believed this was a barrier for many youth who lived outside of Ohakune due a perceived lack of organized transport to and from events, exacerbated by the prohibitive cost of sitting their licenses. They argued that local provision or support with travel to licensing locations would encourage more young people to get their licenses which would in turn increase their access to recreational activities and other organized events. Alongside this they believed more organized transport options for those too young to get their drivers licenses

would help to increase overall youth participation locally in a range of forums and events. These reflections show a willingness by youth to connect and participate in more community events which, as previously stated, they believed would detract focus from other anti-social pass-times.

The insights from the young people reported on here give the community and policy maker's strong, grounded knowledge of youth frames on their neighborhood. They reflect useful understandings of the lives and wellbeing of young people in Waimarino.

10.3 Insights from the research process

One of the noted challenges through the project was coordinating young people to attend group meetings as some had family, work and sports commitments to navigate. This required on-going communication from Jude and the Trust to maintain contact with the participants to ensure their ongoing engagement. Involvement from parents to drop their children off at meetings, data collection activities and picking them up was vital to the sustainability of the project. The importance of buy-in from parents for this kind of research process was recognized by Jensen et al (2006) who noted the value of parents as “providers, advisors, supporters and admirers throughout the project. In spite of this commitment some of the young people dis-engaged from the project as a result of leaving the area, and other commitments such as work and family.

Alongside the findings produced from the research, the Waimarino Youth Photovoice project produced a number of positive outcomes in the community, driven by the commitment of youth researchers to provide a youth voice on community development processes. This was tangible in all participants who felt their involvement in the research was a way of making a more cohesive community for both young and old people alike:

A lot of times you see these things going on its adults, adults, adults, but now that people can see that there's actually some young people taking interest in the community sort of

thing it makes it more an inclusive community which I feel is a stronger community (Richard).

This comment highlights the need to create an opportunity for young people to have a say on things that affect them in their community. The initial youth needs survey was an effective way to introduce them to the research process, and the Photovoice project provided a more exciting and dynamic approach to using research as a tool to enhance positive relationships, to generate information on young people in Waimarino, and to give them a voice.

In line with the principles in the YDSA (2002) this project aimed to build the resiliency of local youth using a consistent strengths-based approach. In this instance the process was designed to empower youth by building their skills and capabilities to drive the research and to create a 'flavour' of youth research in the community. This approach included training and engaging them in research processes such as collecting and analyzing data along with reporting on research findings. For example, a key requirement in this process was speaking at community forums to give updates on the Wai 4 Y project. All youth researchers reported an increase in their interpersonal skills; in particular their confidence to speak publicly. As the participant below simply states:

I've gotten more comfortable speaking in front of large groups (Kiri).

Being more engaged in their community has enabled Wai 4 Y researchers to contribute towards building positive links at different levels across the community. Wai 4 Y team members observed these connections happening at multiple levels.

This has contributed to an observed increase in community awareness of the youth research being conducted in Waimarino in partnership with the Trust and SHORE and Whariki. This was reported on by youth researchers and the Raetihi Community Trust who outlined the interest from other stakeholders such as parents, the local College and other local organizations in what the young people were doing.

Just with the school offering to give us help if we needed any and also there's been some parents around the community that have given their time (Erin).

Increasing acknowledgement and support of the research from other stakeholders is an important process towards young people feeling more valued and connected to their community as it reaffirms their status as an important stakeholder group. As Erin points out, this has extended into wider collaborations with offers of hands-on support from parts of the community to assist the youths. These relationships are integral to the implementation of the community action plan being developed based on the recommendations of the survey and the photovoice project.

The positive effects of the Wai 4 Y research to date have also extended towards enhancing positive relationships with young people in the community along with increasing their participation in decision making processes. One example of this outside of the current project is interest from local iwi Ngati Rangi to involve youth from Wai 4 Y in their Whanau Ora Whanau Transformation initiative by conducting a survey to identify what stops local youth from applying for local jobs, and what solutions they can offer towards this. This illustrates the building of positive connections between and other stakeholders and points out the likelihood of on-going youth involvement and participation in community development conversations.

Part of the long-term strategy for this project links into the possibility of replicating this research process in the future with another group of young people to report on youth needs in the community and to provide feedback on the implementation of recommendations made in this report. The capability building achieved in the current project offers the potential to include the youths from the Wai 4 Y team to train and support the next group of youth researchers in a similar empowering way. Such developments could further support a youth research flavour in the community coordinated through a youth hub facility with scope to draw in funding through small research contracts. This would help to nurture youth leadership in the community through a tuakana/teina relationship of the older youth supporting the younger youth based on increasing their competencies and capabilities to be involved in community development processes.

While no official evaluation on the effectiveness of the Wai 4 Y Youth Photovoice project has been conducted, the observations of the researcher and the research partner give a sense of

the changes that occurred as a result of the project. Formal evaluation could be undertaken to identify and report on the outcomes achieved as a result of the project to add to the knowledge base of community-based participatory action research methods with young people.

11. Conclusions

The Waimarino Youth Photovoice project provided an opportunity for young people, who might not otherwise have had the chance, to have a say on what happens to them and their community. It enabled a strengths-based approach to working with youth in a way that built their skills, capabilities and capacities through being involved in research. This has showed benefits for community groups in the form of increased awareness and understanding of youth interests and needs in the Waimarino community to inform the development and implementation of relevant youth development strategies and initiatives. The processes of the research were supported through enhanced relationships between stakeholders in the Waimarino community and the young people.

This process has shown young people are capable and competent at providing important insights in aspects of our communities that affect them, that we as adults might not otherwise see. The main output and outcomes achieved by the Waimarino Youth Photovoice project clearly demonstrate these aspects and highlight the notion that young people understand their needs well and, when surrounded by supportive and positive relationships, we can trust them to articulate these needs. It also points to the value of collaborations among youth, community workers and academic researchers to promote change from the ground-up.

The current project also highlights the contribution of the Photovoice method for empowering youth to be active in understanding their own needs in a way that supports them to be agents of change. Furthermore this process proved to be consistent with the principles in the YDSA (2002), as it enabled us to support youth to (1) show us their perspectives on the bigger picture, (2) establish and maintain positive connections between young people and with adults, (3) use a capability and capacity building approach to empower the youths, (4) support the establishment and maintenance of relationships between stakeholders and youths, (5) provide youth's with a voice in their community, and (6) involve them in effective research to establish and share information on youth needs in Waimarino (Ministry of Youth Development 2008).

The research design, implementation and outcomes achieved to date validate these principles and highlight their effectiveness for engaging and working with youth in community action processes. They also point to the potential of Photovoice as a tool for engaging youth in community development conversations in a way that empowers them to have a voice on their needs and aspirations. Insights and reflections on these processes point to the potential of strengths-based approaches with young people that view them as part of the *solution* rather than the *problem*. They developed skills and experience in qualitative research through collecting, analyzing and reporting on data as a group, and learned to work as part of a wider team including community stakeholders and academic researchers. This was essential to giving them a sense of ownership and control of the research process and to feel connected to their community as the voice of an important stakeholder group. The identified value of this approach highlights the opportunity to develop a sustainable youth research momentum to support on-going community development strategies and decisions. The enthusiasm of the young people was summarized by one youth researcher who, when reflecting on the project, stated, *"I don't want this to stop; I want it to keep going"*. As the title of our report, we believe this captures the energy and fervor of the young people to be part of the transformation process in Waimarino. There is strong potential to extend this approach further afield to other organizations and communities interested in the design, process and findings of community action approaches involving young people.

12. References

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