

Did you hear me? Children and young people's experiences of participation in community services

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WITHOUT
BARRIERS

Overview

1. Acknowledgement of Country
2. The 'why' of the research
3. Research focus
4. Research design
5. Emerging findings and practice considerations
6. Reflections

Research genesis: the **WHY** of the research

Community of Practice

The Community of Practice for Child Safe Specialists (CPCSS) is hosted by Western Sydney University with members from a range of community services organisations. CPCSS began exploring children and young people's experience of participation, as a key aspect of child safe practice.

Co-production

Four partners: WSU, Mission Australia, LWB, Uniting

Research questions

1. How is child participation operationalised by community services practitioners?
2. How do they build a culture of child participation?
3. How is participation experienced by children/young people in community services?

Research methodology and methods

- Qualitative mixed methods study
- Focus groups with 19 young people and 20 staff of community organisations; across 2 programs settings with 3 partner organisations
- Online survey with staff
- Regional and metro settings across 2 states

Emerging findings

1. Children and young people **see** the activities that are key to participation **differently** to staff.

“Then every three months we do a goal setting thing and it’s like I hate goals, but he makes it easier”.

2. Community organisation efforts to engage children and young people in decision making are not always experienced as participation by children and young people.

“I don’t know actually, because they [staff] just made us do the thing and they kept the notes that we made and that was about it”

3. The quality of relationships children and young people have with staff influence how they understand, engage and commit to participation opportunities.

“It’s the way they treat us. It’s very much like, you’re a person, I can hang out with you, and I can support you rather than like, I’m here to do a job”

Practice implications

1. Community organisations may need to **create synergy** between organisational/policy/funding imperatives and being **flexible in responding** to children and young peoples expressed views about participation.
2. Staff and young people have **open and ongoing discussions** about the meaning of, and actions related to 'participation'.

Practice implications

3. Investing in relationships between children and young people and staff is directly related to the promotion of participation within service provision.

Reflections

- Ethical and methodological challenges
- Preparing participants for research – perceptions of research conducted with universities
- Limitations of the study
- Resource development and next steps

Thank You

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