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Inspiring Youth Sustainability Leadership and Creating Sustainable Schools

Explorations of extracurricular programming and university-community partnerships

Charlotte Sarah Blythe

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

The University of Auckland, 2017
Abstract

This research was motivated by concern for the wider ecology of our planet, the necessity for a cultural shift towards sustainability, and curiosity about roles psychologists could play in creating this shift. It was based around two real-world projects within the interlinked fields of inspiring youth sustainability leadership and creating sustainable schools.

The first project involved a university-community partnership between my research team from the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland and a local co-educational secondary school, Western Springs College (WSC). This action research endeavour was focused around achieving WSC’s strategic goal of working towards sustainable practices in all areas of school life. My research team essentially facilitated the project for two years, and supporting the school’s appointed student environmental leaders was a central feature of our approach. The second project was a participatory evaluation of a non-school-based extracurricular student sustainability leadership programme, Make a Difference (MAD), run by Auckland Council’s environmental education team. The evaluation involved myself working collaboratively with MAD coordinators and youth participants to develop an understanding of the programme’s theory of change, its developmental and action-related outcomes for young people, and options for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

In this thesis, I present four papers based on my engagement in these projects. The first two draw on the MAD evaluation. Paper one profiles the participatory methods utilised to develop MAD’s theory of change, and offers an interpretation of how this initiative inspires and supports youth sustainability leadership. Paper two is a case study of the MAD programme’s initial three-day residential retreat, and explores the key elements that may underlie its transformative potential.

The latter two papers focus on the experiences of the core people driving change within the WSC sustainability project. Paper three is a phenomenological, authoethnographic study on my research team’s guiding principles, our experiences
applying these principles within the project, school members’ impressions of our approach, and lessons learned from the reflective process. Paper four focuses on the perceptions, experiences and practices of WSC’s appointed student environmental leaders, and draws attention to the uniqueness of environmental leadership compared to more traditional forms of student leadership (i.e., sporting and cultural).

As a whole, this thesis contributes insights about the transformative potential of non-school-based (MAD) and school-based (WSC) extracurricular programmes for inspiring youth sustainability leadership. It also contributes a novel approach to creating sustainable schools via university-community partnerships. I conclude with a discussion of meta-themes from the papers, implications for practitioners, and an invitation to psychologists to engage in emancipatory forms of research.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the many Auckland youth sustainability change agents out there and the adults who support and mentor them. Kia kaha!
Acknowledgements

There are three people whose help has been invaluable in this research. First, my wonderful supervisor Niki Harré. Your passion and authenticity has positively shaped my journey as a researcher, a sustainability advocate, and a person. Second, my friend Graeme E. Bibby. Your brilliant ideas and technical skills were critical to many aspects of this research. Third, Cate Jessep from Auckland Council. Thanks for inviting me into the MAD community and for your endless support.

There are so many others who have been part of this journey. Thanks to the students and staff at WSC who have contributed to the sustainability project since 2008, especially the G-team, Jarrod, Ivan, and Thea. Thanks Bridget and Nicky for your guidance in all things EfS. Members of my research team – Victoria, Sindra, Amadia, Briar, Emma, Adam and Jenny – you were a pleasure to work with. Thanks also to Sarah, Bronwyn and Hilary from MAD and the students who shared their stories with me. I look forward to following your journeys into the future and flash-mobbing beside you!

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Thanks to my wonderful family. Mum, for our regular walks and talks; Dad, for being my eco-hero; Jess for our morning coffees and Nick for being my WSC sounding board. Thanks to Clare and Brian for many lovely dinners and chats, and Ian and Fran for providing a haven away from the Auckland hustle and bustle.

Finally, my dear partner Daniel. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your patience, rice salads, and hugs. I am so grateful we went through the doctoral ups and downs together!
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Preface

This thesis weaves together threads of three distinctive, but intersecting journeys. The first journey involved an action research project at Western Springs College, a large, co-educational urban secondary school in Auckland, New Zealand. This project involved a range of participants – myself, fellow members of my research team, students, teachers, senior managers and other community partners – working to incorporate more sustainable practices into school life. Tangible outcomes of this venture included a series of short films, new infrastructure for separating solid waste, and a formal system for supporting student sustainability leadership at all year levels.

The second journey was a participatory evaluation of a sustainability leadership programme for secondary students – Make a Difference (MAD) – run by Auckland Council’s environmental education team. This involved working with programme staff, and some youth participants, to facilitate reflection on the programme’s goals, explore its potential impacts on young people, and look at possibilities for monitoring and evaluation. Tangible outcomes of this venture included a ‘theory of change’ model for the programme and a more coordinated system for documenting and supporting participants’ leadership endeavours.

The third journey, stemming from the first and second, has been a largely solo expedition, in which I have undertaken the typical tasks of a PhD student: conducting surveys, interviews, and focus groups, analysing data, reviewing literature, theorising about meanings, and writing and rewriting journal articles. The outcome of the third journey is this thesis.

Navigating these journeys concomitantly has been rewarding, but also challenging. In particular, honing the thesis focus was difficult, and involved several detours and forks in the road. In the spirit of autoethnography (Chang, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 2000) a tradition that informed some aspects of the research, I wish to be open about the journey I have been on, and the changes in direction I took. My hope is that

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1 This metaphor was borrowed from Davis (2003)
this will assist the reader in understanding the somewhat unique style and structure of this document.

The process of research is unquestionably influenced by a researcher’s social background and beliefs about the nature of reality and the world (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kleinman & Copp, 1993). It therefore seems appropriate to begin this tale of journeys by articulating a little of my history. I then explain the evolution of my doctoral study and how I came to be involved with both WSC and MAD.

I am a female, middle-class, fourth generation Pākehā New Zealander. A middle child of three, I was born in 1986, in Whangarei, Northland, where my father was posted for a decade working as an electrical engineer. In 1990, my family moved to Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city, where we have been based since. Environmentalism was certainly not a salient part of my childhood (rather, I was preoccupied with competitive gymnastics and Irish dancing). In hindsight, however, I can see that my parents, particularly my father, modelled many sustainable practices and values. We were a one-car-family until my sister turned nineteen, made possible by dad cycling to work almost every day. We had a compost heap and my father tended a large vegetable garden, often producing huge quantities of silverbeet, rhubarb and parsley. My parents, who identify as progressive Christians, donated a lot to social justice and environmental charities. Indeed, the family home kitchen bench was (and still is) constantly littered with thank you letters from Oxfam, Greenpeace, the Blind Foundation, Christian World Service and other causes. I can recall telling them they should take their children on overseas holidays instead of giving so much money away! (I am obviously more grateful now).

I attended primary school in the same neighbourhood as one of my research sites, Western Springs College (WSC). I considered enrolling there when it came to my secondary education, but ended up joining my sister at a single sex school. However, my brother attended WSC, along with the children of many families I babysat for, and my dancing competitions were frequently held in the school hall.

Following high school, I enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Auckland, double majoring in Film, Television and Media Studies and Psychology. In
my final year I was accepted into a documentary production course, and through this became connected to a network of students who lived and breathed filmmaking. I began spending the occasional weekend helping out on their film shoots, mostly in background acting or art department roles. I loved the camaraderie on these film sets, and the thrill of entering competitions such as *48 Hours*, in which teams make a short film in less than two days.

Following my bachelors, I decided to enrol in a postgraduate Honours degree in Psychology. I had no particular field of interest at that point, and took a wide range of courses spanning Evolutionary, Developmental, Cognitive, Social, and Community Psychology. Alongside these I was required to find a supervisor for a research project. After approaching several staff whose ideas for projects marginally roused my interest, I approached Niki Harré, a Social and Community Psychologist who I remembered from undergraduate courses, and who I had seen jogging around my area. After figuring out that we in fact lived on the same street, Niki explained she was offering places on a real-world research project focused on working towards sustainability at WSC. The idea for the project had emerged from her recent interest in environmental issues and her role as a past trustee on the school’s Board. Intrigued by the prospect of contributing to my local community and my brother’s old school, I signed up without hesitation. My Honours dissertation described the project’s emergence, aspects of our research team’s approach, and some of the key ‘lessons learned’ about school-university collaboration for sustainability.

My PhD began as a Master of Arts project, which I started after completing my Honours degree. The original plan was to develop and pilot a series of workshops for exploring sustainability issues through photography and filmmaking. These were inspired by my personal experiences making films, and literature on e-PAR, a form of participatory action research that seeks to appeal to young people's technological 'fluency' and utilises media production to engage them in health promotion efforts (Flicker et al., 2008; Skinner et al., 1997). I hoped to pilot these workshops with WSC students as part of the broader action research project, which continued under Niki’s leadership in 2009. However, I was also committed to being flexible and responsive to the community’s needs. When the school’s appointed student environmental leaders
put forward an idea for a large-scale waste management project, I adapted my plans to enhance theirs. With input from my research team and friends from university, I coordinated waste-focused psychology and photography workshops with students. I also led the production of three videos: a promotional video to recruit students to participate in the project, a ‘sustainability showreel’ to document its different phases, and a music video to celebrate its ultimate outcomes.

At the end of 2009, one of the most transformative years of my life, I was invited to convert my masters to a doctorate. At this point I was eager to take my film interests further to undertake a ‘Video-Based Futures Planning’ project at WSC. Grounded in intervention research on ‘feedforward’ films (Dowrick, Kim-Rupnow, & Power, 2006; Dowrick, Tallman, & Connor, 2005) the basic premise of video futures is that making and viewing a video that depicts oneself engaged in a desirable future scenario (achieved via clever production techniques) can catalyse action towards creating that future. I hoped to engage willing students in workshops to create a video showing how WSC could look in 2020 as a Utopian sustainable school. Additionally, I intended to explore students’ experiences of the video futures project from start to finish, since I had not done this in my previous film projects.

In the early planning stages, however, I struggled to get the video futures project off the ground. I lacked the budget and resources to properly coordinate it, and the social capital I had gained through my friendships with the 2009 environmental leaders dissipated substantially following their graduation from WSC. In short, the project felt impossible. Niki and I decided the best way forward was to take stock of the data that had already been collected as part of the WSC project, and to shift the thesis focus from the original media angle to the lived experiences of the people driving social change. In line with the trend towards theses-by-publication, we began to conceptualise my work as a series of distinctive but related journal articles. We also devised a plan for collecting supplementary data. As I began pursuing these possibilities, however, the path ahead bifurcated with a serendipitous opportunity to explore youth sustainability leadership from another angle.
The opportunity arose when the coordinators of Make a Difference (MAD) from Auckland Council approached Niki for assistance with evaluating their programme. After four years of running MAD and much anecdotal evidence that it benefitted participants, the staff sought ‘hard data’ and a more ‘robust’ system for assessing its efficacy. They had a small budget for commissioning an evaluation, though it needed to be spent quickly. Niki suggested I could facilitate the evaluation, as the data could be useful for my doctorate. In line with the staff’s needs and budget, the process I facilitated focused around understanding the programme’s typical developmental outcomes (i.e., how MAD shapes students) and action-oriented outcomes (i.e., what actions students take to make a difference). The data gathered provided a basis for the development of more sensitive evaluation tools.

For the purposes of the third journey (producing a thesis), the expansion in focus from examining a sustainability project within the context of one school community (WSC) to exploring another initiative altogether (MAD) was challenging. I almost certainly would have had an easier job sticking with one research setting. However, the MAD project prompted me to dabble in a much broader range of discourse communities than I might have done otherwise, and I am grateful for the learning that emerged from this.

Presenting my work as journal articles and submitting them for peer review also shaped my thesis journey. As an example, one article explores my research team’s guiding principles and experiences of collaborating with members of WSC. Reviewers of a social action focused psychology journal suggested they would publish the manuscript if it had more direct applications to other types of social change (i.e., not only sustainability-related). In line with this, the revised version (which is in this thesis) more explicitly articulates that its purpose is to “shed light on how principles may be used by researchers and community practitioners to guide their practice within collaborative projects”. This is just one example of how the review process nudges the framing of a scholarly piece in a slightly different direction.

When it came to creating the thesis Introduction and General Discussion chapters I was compelled to clarify what my work offered as a whole. It was only at
this stage in the journey that I unequivocally decided my thesis contributed primarily to the field of *inspiring youth sustainability leadership* via explorations into school-based (WSC) and non-school-based (MAD) extracurricular programming. Secondary contributions included adding to the field of *creating sustainable schools* by emphasising a novel approach to doing so via *university-school partnerships*. For this reason, material on youth sustainability leadership is explored in the most depth in the literature review as it relates to both my research settings, while the sustainable schools literature is a secondary focus as it pertains more directly to the WSC project.

While the core articles do not necessarily articulate their connection to these foci, the Introduction makes these more explicit. The General Discussion chapter also weaves together meta-themes from the articles, and reflects on the transformative learning that resulted from navigating my three, intersecting journeys.
Chapter One
Introduction and Literature Review

As explained in the preface, my doctoral study involved two real-world projects - an evaluation of the Make a Difference (MAD) youth sustainability leadership programme and a collaborative sustainability effort at Western Springs College (WSC). This thesis draws on these projects to contribute new insights to the academic literature in two fields in particular: inspiring youth sustainability leadership (via explorations into school-based and non-school-based extracurricular programming), and creating sustainable schools (via explorations into university-community partnerships). In this opening chapter, I introduce these fields of literature while building a rationale for my thesis foci and research questions.

The chapter is divided into seven parts. In the first part I position the research as motivated by concern for the wider ecology of our planet, the necessity for a cultural shift towards sustainability, and curiosity about roles psychologists could play in creating this shift. In the second I introduce the notion that youth are a critical group to engage in sustainability. I describe fields in which youth engagement in sustainability has been studied, the ‘ideal’ attributes of young environmental leaders, and a range of influences that may be foundational to developing such attributes. In part three I introduce an area of literature that pertains to both the MAD and WSC projects – extracurricular youth sustainability programmes. I review a selection of studies on contemporaneous programmes, exploring their structures, pedagogical frameworks and interesting theoretical considerations put forward by researchers. I also describe challenges faced by practitioners, youth and evaluators working in this area.

In the fourth part, I shift gear to introduce key concepts from the area of creating sustainable schools, a field which bears much relevance to the WSC sustainability project. I highlight characteristics of ‘model’ sustainable schools and ‘whole-school’ programme approaches, as well as the unique challenges of restructuring the institution of the secondary school. In part five, I review influences on my overall methodological approach – community psychology, university-community partnerships, participatory evaluation and action research. Sixth, I articulate my
ontological and epistemological approach, and ethical considerations. Finally, I present an overview of the four papers that make up the core of this thesis.

1.0 The concern and the curiosity

At the broadest level, this research endeavour was prompted by concerns about the stress imposed by human activity on the ecology of our planet. While diverse perspectives exist on our relationship to Earth (see Dryzek, 2013; Huckle, 1996), many caution that we are now living in exceptional times (Elgin, 2010; Orr, 2011); indeed, that our increasingly interconnected and technological society is threatened to the point of collapse by a cocktail of environmental problems (Barry & Eckersley, 2005; Diamond, 2005; Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 2013). Indicators used to support such warnings include rising greenhouse gas emissions and global temperatures, an accelerating extinction of plant and animal species, groundwater depletion, land degradation, ocean acidification and eutrophication (dead zones), the spreading of toxic compounds, and more frequent extreme weather events (Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 2013; Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005; Rockström et al., 2009; Stocker et al., 2013). The stress on the planet is unquestionable, even if many details are open to debate (Marshall, Coleman, & Reason, 2011). Alongside this stress, we have global social problems, including rising inequities in living standards, a loss of cultural diversity, financial crises, the devastating impacts of war and HIV/AIDS, and the widespread prevalence of curable diseases (Elbe, 2002; Garibaldi & Turner, 2004; Marshall et al., 2011; Sahn & Stifel, 2003). Like others, I am deeply concerned for the more-than-human world (Abram, 1996), and about whether Earth will remain a ‘safe operating space’ for humans (Rockström et al., 2009).

Many would agree that the challenge at hand is to design a system of social and economic development which can reconcile concerns for short-term economic advancement on one hand with concerns for future generations, social wellbeing, and cultural and biological diversity on the other (Clugston, 2004; WCED, 1987). However, debate emerges when these terms and the balance between them are more precisely articulated (Clugston, 2004). At one end of the spectrum there are those who subscribe to what has been labelled a ‘technocentric’ view (see O’Riordan, 1989). This takes the economic-political status quo of industrialism as a given, and advocates for minor
adjustments via technological advances and individual behaviour changes (e.g., Mol, 1995). This so called ‘weak’ version of sustainability (Huckle & Sterling, 1999) places faith in human ingenuity, science, and market mechanisms to solve all problems and to improve environmental quality (Dryzek, 2013). Within this paradigm, individuals are invited to participate in sustainable practices predominantly at the level of consumption (Uzzell & Räthzel, 2009). There is little invitation to question the freedom of companies to produce what (and how) they wish, or to question the kind of society we would like to live in.

At the other end of the spectrum are those with a more ‘ecocentric’ outlook who tend to call for a profound shift in worldviews and patterns of human activity (Devall, 1980; Elgin, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; Næss, 1989; Sterling, 1996; WWF, 2008). This view is guided by recognition of the intrinsic value of nature (Crompton & Kasser, 2009) and the quest for spiritual meaning (Elgin, 2013; Næss, Drengson, & Devall, 2008). In contrast to technocentrics, proponents of these so called ‘strong’ approaches to sustainability tend to challenge free market ideology, and advocate for curbing economic growth and transforming the production of goods and services from profit-oriented to needs-oriented (Huckle & Sterling, 1999). This paradigm also demands that citizens actively participate in redefining the political processes of societal control, rather than operating merely as consumers within a pre-determined framework (Uzzell & Räthzel, 2009).

Personally, and as implied in the preface, I am inclined to gravitate more towards the ecocentric outlook, and find it constructive to imagine a wholly different kind of society centred on a culture of sustainability (Assadourian, 2010; Riemer, Lynes, & Hickman, 2014). This culture could be guided by the philosophies of deep ecology (see Devall, 1980; Næss, 1989) and voluntary simplicity (see Doherty & Etzioni, 2003; Elgin, 1993) which suggest that human flourishing will almost certainly need to be realigned with non-materialistic values if we are to live in relative harmony on our resource-finite planet. In a culture of sustainability, humans would recognise their interdependency with non-human nature, and this identity expansion would steer them towards making choices on an individual and societal level that cause minimal environmental harm or restore the vibrancy of Earth’s ecological systems.
Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

(Assadourian, 2010; Riemer et al., 2014). People would also acknowledge their interdependency with each other, and would live according to a moral code that allowed them to flourish without compromising the ability of others to do the same (Riemer et al., 2013). Such a mindset would be accompanied by societal (including economic) structures that supported social equity and environmental sustainability, and allowed space for other life forms to thrive (Marshall et al., 2011). As Riemer and colleagues (2013) articulated, whatever method and degree of transformation is required to create a sustainability culture, a crucial ingredient will be an active and engaged citizenry (Barrett, Hart, Nolan, & Sammel, 2014). A broad spectrum of people need to be engaged in shared visioning processes; invited to participate in deep level conversations around our core values (Harré, 2011) and what should be developed and sustained (Parris & Kates, 2003).

The types of processes we need may be encapsulated in the paradigm of emancipatory environmental education (D’Amato & Krasny, 2011; Wals, Geerling-Eijff, Hubeek, van der Kroon, & Vader, 2008). This paradigm is best grasped in contrast to instrumental approaches to environmental education (EE) and Wals et al. (2008) provide an excellent distinction. They explain how instrumental EE aims to influence people’s attitudes and behaviour in a pre-determined direction. This ‘moralistic’ approach (see Jensen, 2000) is based on assumptions that the desired behavioural outcome of an educational activity is known, that there is basic consensus on it, and that it may be brought about by carefully crafted interventions. Instrumental approaches thereby begin by devising specific behavioural goals and seeking to understand the “target group” who must be well understood to ensure the intervention is “received” effectively. The intervention is then pitched to address, for instance, perceived gaps in people’s problem awareness, attitudes, sense of personal control, and so on. Wals and colleagues note that advocates and designers of more instrumental approaches are in continuous pursuit of clearly defined, measurable outcomes and sophisticated indicators, in service of “proving” interventions’ effectiveness.

In contrast, emancipatory approaches to EE start with the assumption that the challenge of transitioning to a more sustainable world cannot be addressed by reducing the world into manageable and solvable problems (Wals et al., 2008). Rather, it requires
modes of thinking and acting that are more systemic and reflexive, coupled with
appreciation that our world is one of perpetual change and uncertainty (see Marshall et
al., 2011). Emancipatory approaches thus seek to engage people in dialogue to create
c oo-owned objectives and shared meanings, and a joint, self-determined action plan to
make changes for sustainability that they themselves feel are worthwhile (Wals et al.,
2008). The hope is that these changes will ultimately lead to a more sustainable society
(Wals & Jickling, 2002). In emancipatory approaches, specific objectives are not
determined in advance, aside from rallying people to get involved and allowing
multiple voices to be heard, including those of marginalised groups. Vehicles suited to
this approach include participatory methods that emphasise “capacity building,
agency, and creating space and structures that allow for the emergence of social
learning” (Wals et al., 2008, p. 57). These methods may cycle through spirals of
diagnosing (i.e., what is?), designing (i.e., what could be?), doing (i.e., what can be?)
and developing (i.e., what next?) (see Dyball, Brown, & Keen, 2007).

Wals and colleagues suggest that from a policy perspective, the two extreme
approaches serve to highlight the other’s significance. That is, while the instrumental
approach emphasises specific knowledge and awareness of ecological problems, the
emancipatory approach aims at facilitating enduring changes in terms of public
engagement and involvement. From an educational perspective, however, they may be
contradictory, because of their divergent epistemological assumptions. That is, the
instrumental approach emphasises the dissemination of “explicit, relatively
uncontested, often science-based knowledge” for the purpose of behaviour change
while the emancipatory approach is concerned with human development and
“facilitating the exchange of implicit or tacit knowledge, the co-creation of new
knowledge, and finally, on joint meaning making” (Wals et al., 2008, p. 64). In this
sense the instrumental approach implies that scientists and scientific thinking is
paramount, while the emancipatory approach implies that all people can create
knowledge for sustainability.
1.1 The role of psychologists

There is an appealing neatness to instrumental approaches to EE. The task at hand is to decide on the right environmentally significant behaviours to promote, ascertain the barriers people face, address these through interventions, and measure their effectiveness. The role of psychologists in this paradigm is fairly clear: to theorise about the antecedents, mediators and moderators of pro-environmental behaviour (see Garling, Biel, & Gustafsson, 2003; Kaplan & Kaplan, 2009; Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Stern, 2000) and the ‘dragons of inaction’ or barriers preventing behaviour change (see Gifford, 2014), and to explore the links between different intervention techniques and desired psychological and behavioural responses (e.g., Abrahamse, Steg, Vlek, & Rothengatter, 2007; Bamberg, 2002; Gifford & Comeau, 2011; Rabinovich, Morton, & Birney, 2012; Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007). The field of environmental psychology, while encompassing a range of interests and theoretical approaches (see Gifford, 2007; Gifford, 2014) has tended to favour positivist, quantitative methods in pursuit of these aims. While undoubtedly valuable to policymakers (see Vlek, 2000), the field has been critiqued for its tendency to focus on the drivers of consumption behaviour in ways that imply people “live in a social, cultural and political vacuum” (Uzzell & Räthzel, 2009, p. 341). On a related note, Tom Crompton, a change strategist from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF, 2008) has lamented that many behaviour change interventions informed by psychological knowledge appear to treat concerns about financial and social status as a given, rather than interrogating these assumptions and aspiring towards a more transformative method of change. By employing orthodox marketing techniques like market segmentation and economic incentives, such interventions may reinforce the technocentric view that sustainability can be achieved through simple, painless, individual steps (WWF, 2008).

Over the course of my doctoral study, I have come to see the instrumental and emancipatory dichotomy as a useful framework for thinking about different positions that psychologists and other social scientists can perform in a sustainability effort. As will become apparent, my two projects involved my own research team, and others, aspiring toward more emancipatory approaches within the broad areas of inspiring
youth sustainability leadership and creating sustainable secondary schools. Yet at times, many of us felt inclined to think about our work in more instrumental ways. For example, as described in the preface to this thesis, the MAD project emerged because the programme coordinators from Auckland Council were under pressure to produce ‘hard data’ about their programme’s efficacy. This necessitated facilitating discussion around MAD in more instrumental terms. As I discuss in the final chapter of this thesis, this was challenging, since the programme’s philosophy fits more comfortably within an emancipatory EE paradigm.

In the next part of this chapter, I introduce the literature on inspiring youth sustainability leadership, beginning with the assumption that young people are an important group to engage in sustainability.

2.0 Inspiring youth sustainability leadership

Several scholars have highlighted the desirability of engaging youth in environmental issues (de Vreede, Warner, & Pitter, 2014; Johnson-Pynn & Johnson, 2005; Johnson, Johnson-Pynn, Lugumya, Kityo, & Drescher, 2013; Johnson, Johnson-Pynn, Sweeney, & Williams, 2009; Riemer et al., 2014; Roberts, 2009; Schusler, Krasny, Peters, & Decker, 2009). Note that definitions of youth vary, but generally refer to the period between ages 13 and 25. In the studies conducted in this thesis, youth participants were high school students between 15 and 18 years of age or recent high school graduates (18 – 22).

As suggested by Roberts (2009), few would deny that working with children and youth is one way to facilitate a societal shift. Riemer and colleagues (2013) similarly argued that young people are an attractive group to engage in the development of a culture of sustainability. To begin with, adolescence is characterised by an evolving realisation of self through a process of integrating past experiences and current ideals (Erikson, 1968). In this critical stage of development, young people form identities and habits that may endure for the rest of their lives (Arnold, Cohen, & Warner, 2009; Blakemore, 2008; Hurrelmann & Raithel, 2005; Marcia, 1980; Moreno et al., 2008). As Youniss, McLellan and Yates (1997) articulated, the period of youth may
be a critical “era” for constructing a sense of agency and active participation in community and society.

Riemer and colleagues further suggested that youth and young adults may be ideally positioned to lead a cultural shift towards sustainability. Youth have historically played important roles in justice and social change movements (Ginwright & James, 2002; Johnson, Johnson-Pynn, & Pynn, 2007; Quiroz-Martinez, Wu, & Zimmerman, 2005; Roberts, 2009; Youniss et al., 2002), are effective messengers to their peers (Nabavi & Lund, 2010) as well as other groups (Ballantyne, Connell, & Fien, 1998; Quiroz-Martinez et al., 2005), and may be more conscious and up to date with issues because of their exposure to educational programmes and modern technologies (Mohamed & Wheeler, 2001). On a related note, researchers have noted that the rapid pace of change in our ecological contexts, while concerning, also presents opportunities for youth to develop innovative platforms for connection and social action (Johnson et al., 2009). From a pragmatic perspective, adolescents are typically less constrained by work and familial commitments than older adults (Quiroz-Martinez et al., 2005), and thus their livelihoods are less likely to be directly threatened if they engage in political forms of action. Finally, youth are key stakeholders; they have an obvious investment in future quality of life and may approach issues with a fresh and optimistic perspective (de Vreede et al., 2014).

2.1 Research on youth environmental engagement and leadership

Youth engagement in environmental and sustainability issues has been explored within several disciplines, mostly notably in the field of environmental education, but also within ecopsychology and adolescent psychology. Environmental education (EE) sprung out of the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Bolstad, 2003; Gough, 2006; Tilbury, Stevenson, Fien, & Schreuder, 2002) and was traditionally aimed at “producing a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution” (Stapp et al., 1969, p. 34). The field has shifted from its original focus on environmental and conservation issues to embrace an interdisciplinary educational approach which acknowledges social,
political and economic dimensions of sustainability (Bolstad, 2003; Tilbury, 1995; Tilbury et al., 2002). Notably, EE conceptualises education broadly, and scholarship focuses not only on the formal sector, but also non-formal types of education (e.g., extracurricular and community programmes) and informal modes (i.e., what people absorb from mass media and discussions with others).

The field of ecopsychology emphasises the intimate connection between humans and the natural environment, and as such scholarship has focused on relationships between wellbeing and ecological sustainability (Kasser, 2009), people’s sense of place (Harper, Carpenter, & Segal, 2011; Rogers & Bragg, 2012) and eco-therapy (Chalquist, 2009; Ulrich, 1993), amongst other topics. Adolescent psychology is concerned with young people’s personal and social development, including their sense of purpose and willingness to contribute to the betterment of themselves and society (Damon, Menon, & Cotton Bronk, 2003; Lerner, Brentano, Dowling, & Anderson, 2002; Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000; Limber & Kaufman, 2002).

Within these fields, researchers have examined youth engagement in sustainability within many different theoretical frameworks. For example, following a tradition of ‘significant life experience’ research on adult environmentalists (see Chawla, 1998; Palmer, 1993; Peters-Grant, 1986; Tanner, 1980), some EE scholars have sought out youth environmental leaders (selected according to particular criteria), and have asked them to reflect on their development (see Almers, 2013; Arnold et al., 2009). These studies have conceptualised transformational influences and ‘ingredients on the pathway’ to leadership. Other EE researchers have sought to elicit the stories of adults whose vocations involve facilitating youth environmental action projects within formal (i.e., curricular) and non-formal settings (Schusler, 2007; Schusler & Krasny, 2010; Schusler et al., 2009). These narrative studies attempt to distil experiential knowledge from educators who “confront in messy detail” (Forester, 2006, p. 574) what it is to work with youth to create positive environmental and social change. A related, growing body of work published within EE, ecopsychology and adolescent psychology journals explores the pedagogical frameworks, and experiences youth have, of particular programmes or clusters of programmes (D’Amato & Krasny, 2011; de Vreede et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2009; Roberts, 2009).
Taken together, this literature offers insights into what might be deemed the “ideal” attributes of a youth sustainability leader, the influences that seem to be foundational to developing such attributes, and approaches to programming that show promise. The literature also sheds light on the challenges faced by young people and the adult practitioners that work with them, and by researchers seeking to evaluate programmes. In the following sections, I review this literature. The terms environmental leader and sustainability leader; and environmental action and sustainability action, are used interchangeably.

2.2 Ideal attributes of youth environmental leaders

One of the most useful concepts for describing the attributes of an environmental leader is ‘action competence’. Coined by Danish health and EE researchers Jensen and Schnack (1997), action competence is an educational ideal that involves the “capability – based on critical thinking and incomplete knowledge – to involve yourself as a person with other persons in responsible actions and counter-actions for a more humane world” (Schnack, in Simovska, 2000, p. 30). Importantly, actions are distinct from environmental behaviours (e.g., recycling; turning off lights) because they are undertaken with conscious reasoning, rather than being potentially habitual or a result of others’ persuasions (Arnold et al., 2009; Jensen & Schnack, 1997). Actions also attempt to address the root causes of environmental problems. The intentionality of action separates it from “phenomena one might erroneously label ‘action’ but which are actually non-participatory, prescribed, or indoctrinating” (Schusler et al., 2009, p. 112). Examples of actions, then, may include restoring natural habitats; educating a community about an issue through festivals, information fairs or other media; growing organic food for a local community kitchen; organising a bike tour to promote sustainable living; initiating letter-writing campaigns; and presenting recommendations to school authorities (Arnold et al., 2009; de Vreede et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2007; Schusler et al., 2009).

Schnack (2000) suggested that the nature of action competence is such that it cannot easily be operationalised into observable phenomena. However, the following characteristics are thought to be important: commitment, courage, and willingness to
take action; knowledge about root causes and the ramifications of problems; knowledge about and the capacity to formulate visions for solutions to problems; and knowledge about how to impact and change conditions (Breiting, Hedegaard, Mogensen, Nielsen, & Schnack, 1999; Breiting & Mogensen, 1999; Jensen & Schnack, 1997). Moreover, action competence involves taking a critical and reflective approach to examining root causes and formulating visions, solutions, and actions (Almers, 2013).

The selection processes used in studies of environmental leaders’ key influences offer further insights into how leadership in this area has been conceptualised. For instance, Arnold and colleagues (2009) searched for Canadian youth between age 16 and 19 who met four criteria. These were: “a positive attitude toward the environment, positive environmental behaviour, initiative or leadership activity, and involvement in multiple spheres” (p. 29).

Almers (2013) narrowed down her sample of environmentally action competent Swedish youth in their mid-twenties using four criteria. First, they needed “a willingness to act on sustainability issues in private daily life as well as on a societal level, both individually and collectively” (p. 119). The second criterion was that they were involved in each of five types of actions discussed by Short (2009): environmental activism, non-activist political behaviors, consumer behaviors (and non-consumer behaviors), ecosystem behavior, and other behaviors specific to expertise or workplace. Third, they needed to actively search for knowledge about effects, consequences, root causes and strategies for change, and to hold a critical perspective towards these. Finally, they needed to have a commitment that had spanned several years and incorporated concern for global issues and future generations (as opposed to concern that was limited to their own neighbourhood).

In summary, while criteria in these studies vary, it is generally agreed that action competence in the sustainability domain is demonstrated by action in multiple spheres, action with other people, and sustained commitment.
2.3 Key influences on youth environmental leaders

How does one become an environmental leader? In this section, I introduce transformational influences and ingredients on the pathway towards action competence and environmental leadership, as proposed by researchers who have studied exemplary young leaders. First, I foreground influential experiences, and then move onto influential people. I then cover other influences not easily clustered under these two categories.

2.3.1 Influential experiences

Positive experiences in the natural environment appear to be foundational (Arnold et al., 2009; Sivek, 2002). For example, in Arnold and colleagues’ study of nine Canadian young leaders, all participants cited time in nature as a key influence. This tended to fall into two types of experiences: unstructured, regular play in nature from early childhood and immersive excursions in the natural world (e.g., through camp programmes) in later childhood. For some leaders, feeling ‘moved’ by the natural environment was part of the development of passion that turned into action (see also D’Amato & Krasny, 2011).

Specific school experiences have been emphasised as formative. In Arnold and colleagues’ study, being elected as president of his school’s student council was influential for one leader, while involvement in an ‘envirothon’ team was emphasised by another. A third leader highlighted a year-long alternative outdoor education programme that connected her to a ‘life-changing’ summer internship opportunity. Interestingly, the authors explained that extracurricular aspects of school appeared to be the most influential, and noted that some participants criticised the school system and described it as stifling.

Youth gatherings and conferences with environmental themes have featured on many leaders’ pathways (Arnold et al., 2009). Participants in Arnold and colleagues’ study reported that such events “increase awareness of issues, provide information, develop skills, empower, inspire, and bring people together to form networks and connections” (p. 33). These ‘high density’ experiences (Rose-Krasnor, 2009) have been
described as life-changing by some youth (Arnold et al., 2009; Pancer, Rose-Krasnor, & Loiselle, 2002) and may teach participants how to subsequently organise a powerful experience for others (Arnold et al., 2009; Harrison, Lekies, & Arnold, 2013).

2.3.2 Influential people

Several types of people have been described as formative, with some named as role models (Almers, 2013; Arnold et al., 2009; Sivek, 2002). Parents have been found to be influential by sharing environmental interests, encouraging time outdoors and a sense of wonder, exemplifying sustainable living (albeit not always necessarily for environmental reasons), acting to protect vulnerable people, being open-minded and trusting, and teaching critical thinking skills (Almers, 2013; Arnold et al., 2009). Teachers have helped by raising awareness about issues, modelling sustainable living and environmental activism inside and outside the classroom, and encouraging and mentoring students to take action (Almers, 2013; Arnold et al., 2009). Leaders of environmental or camp programmes are often cited as role models, and close relationships with these mentors may make participation in environmental action more appealing and attainable (Arnold et al., 2009).

Almers’s (2013) study of three action competent Swedish young adults drew attention to how emotionally significant adults shaped participants’ worldviews and values. Rather than being strict, parents allowed their children freedom based on personal responsibility. They also encouraged their children to reflect on the rightness or wrongness of particular actions, rather than uncritically accepting societal norms. In addition, parents and certain teachers introduced the worldview that human actions, on an individual and collective level, have a major influence on the conditions of life and can have far reaching consequences. This worldview contributed to a core of values developing in the young person that included “people’s equal rights to satisfy their fundamental needs” combined with a “conviction that individuals are responsible for their own actions and their consequences for other people and for the natural world” (Almers, 2013, p. 121).

Other influential people include friends and peers, who commonly introduce leaders to environmental clubs and projects, and provide company, affirmation and
meaningfulness through shared experiences (Arnold et al., 2009; de Vreede et al., 2014). Friends may challenge thinking in subtle and more direct ways. For instance, in Arnold and colleagues’ study, one leader recalled the influence of friends’ original songs, which included themes of global citizenship, respect for animals, and the environment. Another leader recalled a pivotal moment when a friend snapped him out of thinking he was powerless and challenged him to take action.

An interesting dynamic was described by Almers (2013) about her Swedish participants’ relationships with their peers. She noted that they reported fleeting and sometimes more stable feelings of ‘outsidership’ in relation to peers at school (partly self-chosen and partly imposed by others) paralleled with a deep sense of belonging from being involved in the youth organisation Nature and Youth Sweden. Feeling part of a group of people with common goals was reported as strengthening her subjects’ willingness to take action, and was especially pertinent when action taking was associated with resistance from mainstream youth.

### 2.3.3 Other influences

Provocative emotions may be integral on the pathway to action competence. Negative experiences as a result of viewing pollution or destruction were cited as formative by some of Arnold and colleagues’ leaders, and Almers’s (2013) study emphasised five emotions that tended to recur in participants’ narratives as part of the process of awakening commitment. These were 1) empathy, which was triggered by the suffering of vulnerable humans and animals; 2) frustration, for unnecessary suffering; 3) sorrow, for losses of species and human livelihoods; 4) indignation, about people taking advantage of others; and 5) hopefulness, from inspiring role models and ‘a language of possibility’. In addition, Almers’s participants expressed how they sometimes experienced “contradictory vibrations” from other people’s perspectives on the world, and felt obliged to take a stand. Speaking up was often emotionally painful, but typically followed with relief.

Feeling a sense of confidence and competence with what one can contribute is another proposed ingredient (Almers, 2013). Almers described how experiencing oneself as insightful and knowledgeable strengthened her participants’ sense of being
right, which prompted a desire for action. Teachers, parents, and other adults in early life helped initially to develop participants’ sense of competence, and it was later cemented by rich opportunities provided by the environmental youth movement.

2.3.4 Summary and relevance to the current research

To summarise this section, it seems that a wide range of experiences, emotions, settings, people, and relationships are part of the development of action competence and sustainability leadership in young people. The diversity of influences is promising, as it suggests multiple possible pathways. As Almers (2013) discussed, it also raises important questions about what roles educational institutions and other organisations could or should play in supporting young people on a sustainability leadership path.

I did not commence my research with formative influences or ‘ingredients on the pathway’ theoretical framework. However, the process of analysing my research findings led me to draw on this literature, particularly in the case of the MAD programme that forms the core of the first part of my thesis. As will be detailed later in this chapter, I present two studies on MAD, one of which explores the programme’s initial hui (social gathering) as an example of a powerful gathering for high-school students. In the study, I use the formative influences literature to aid my interpretation of the elements that make the gathering powerful. In the case of the WSC sustainability project the formative influences material is not so central. However, as will be explained, this project involved my research team working closely with senior students who were in environmental leadership positions. While certain school experiences have been identified as influential to youth environmental leadership development (see Arnold et al., 2009), being an appointed environmental leader within one’s school has not been one of these experiences. (On a related note, environmental forms of leadership have barely been mentioned in mainstream educational literature on student leadership). One of my studies on the WSC sustainability project, then, examines the largely unexplored terrain of what it is like to be an appointed student environmental leader, and includes consideration of the transformative potential of such a role.

In the next part of this chapter, I introduce some programmes that have been developed specifically to engage young people in sustainability action, or that appear
to create conditions conducive to environmental care. I focus here on programmes that are run by organisations outside secondary schools, although some encourage youth participants to take action within their schools. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, such programmes are contemporaneous to the non-school-based (MAD) and school-based (WSC) extracurricular programmes explored in this thesis. Notably, the term “non-formal” is often used to classify these types of educational experiences within the EE literature. I prefer “extracurricular” as it resonates with how such programmes would be classified by youth participants.

3.0 Extracurricular youth sustainability programmes

Extracurricular youth sustainability programmes exist in a variety of forms. These include eco clubs (de Vreede et al., 2014; Johnson-Pynn & Johnson, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007; Roberts, 2009) community gardening and food systems programmes (Schusler & Krasny, 2010), outdoor adventure programmes (D’Amato & Krasny, 2011), residential field programmes (Emmons, 1997; Johnson et al., 2013), local youth conferences (Harrison et al., 2013) and global summits for young leaders from different nations (Johnson et al., 2009). In this section, I draw attention to a few key examples of programmes, describing their pedagogical frameworks, aims, and operating structures as well as interesting theoretical considerations highlighted by researchers. I then cover challenges surrounding these programmes, as experienced by adult programme facilitators and youth participants, and by evaluators.

3.1 Examples of programmes and theoretical considerations

One programme of interest is Roots and Shoots, established by world-renowned chimpanzee researcher and activist Jane Goodall in the 1990s (Johnson-Pynn & Johnson, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007). The programme’s overarching aim is “to foster respect and compassion for all things, to promote understanding of all cultures and beliefs, and to inspire each individual to take action to make the world a better place for humans, animals and the environment” (Jane Goodall Institute, 2003, in Johnson et al., 2007, p. 360). Roots and Shoots groups exist all over the world, and typically operate as extracurricular clubs within schools and universities with guidance from teachers and regional coordinators. Clubs are encouraged to devise and carry out at least three
projects per year – one to benefit animals, one to benefit the human community, and one to the benefit the environment.

As explained by Johnson and colleagues (2007), Roots and Shoots is grounded in two core pedagogical frameworks; positive youth development and service learning. The basic goal of positive youth development is to offer experiences to young people that nurture personal and social development while inviting youth to contribute to efforts to improve their communities and advance civic society (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2002; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2003). Service learning, rooted in the educational philosophy of John Dewey (Dewey, 1938), is a pedagogy that integrates reflection and evaluation components into community service projects. These components are intended to help students consolidate lessons learned from their project successes as well as hardships (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Johnson et al., 2007; Zeldin & Tardov, 1997). Roots and Shoots creators posit that knowledge, compassion and action are critical components for fostering sustainable values, behaviours and practices, and that these components are developed reciprocally through positive youth development activities and service learning projects.

Johnson and Johnson-Pynn have led mixed methods studies of Roots and Shoots in East Africa (Johnson-Pynn & Johnson, 2005) and China (Johnson et al., 2007), and have focused on describing group characteristics and programme activities, measuring how Roots and Shoots influences participants’ knowledge and personal and social development, and exploring programme successes and challenges. Perhaps most interestingly, these studies highlight the flexibility of the programme’s model and its local-global emphasis. On one hand, Roots and Shoots encourages collaborations with local community members to enhance the socio-cultural and environmental pertinence of projects. On the other hand, its international reach means that individual clubs can be connected with others to promote social justice and intercultural understanding on regional, national and global levels (Johnson et al., 2007).

Another programme centred on an extracurricular student club – though local in scale – is MindShift, studied by Catherine de Vreede and colleagues (de Vreede, 2011;
de Vreede et al., 2014). This initiative was created by a youth-led team at a municipal recreation centre in Nova Scotia, Canada, and aims “to develop knowledge of sustainability and positive environmental attitudes and behaviours among high school students” (MindShift Development Team, 2009, in de Vreede et al., 2014, p. 40). 

*MindShift* is framed around a model of peer education, which emphasises the significant power wielded by peer-to-peer relationships, and is focused on young people learning from others with similar characteristics. De Vreede and colleagues emphasised how the approach has been employed as a behaviour change strategy in the fields of substance abuse and sexual health (see Melanby, Rees, & Tripp, 2000; Milburn, 1995), but is largely unexplored as a means to stimulate collective youth action for sustainability.

*MindShift* begins with training days for self-selected Grade 10-12 students (‘peer educators’) at the recreation centre whence it was created. Each school group learns the same dramatic performance piece about the state of the planet and the need for a “mind shift”, and they continue to rehearse the piece in their own time until they are ready to perform it to science classes. For the remainder of the year peer educators are encouraged to operate as a school-based club that meets approximately weekly, and periodically organises environmentally themed school-wide events with assistance from a teacher.

De Vreede and colleagues’ (2014) predominantly qualitative study of *MindShift* explored how taking on a peer educator role affected students and facilitated them to take sustainability actions. Based on findings from observations, interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires, the authors highlighted that everyday domestic pro-environmental behaviours and positive interpersonal relationships were significant areas of participant growth. They suggested that these components interact with other oft-cited antecedents to sustainability action also nurtured by the programme – environmental knowledge and values, action skills and a sense of empowerment (Emmons, 1997; Jensen & Schnack, 1997; Stern, 2000). According to de Vreede and colleagues, the benefits of the peer education approach lay in youth experiencing mutual support, making a meaningful contribution, taking a teaching/leadership role, and feeling a sense of ownership over the programme. The authors also examined the
dynamics of three MindShift teams, and through this underscored potential challenges with peer education (I cover these in the next section).

*Roots and Shoots* and *MindShift* are both examples of programmes that engage young people over an extended period (i.e., over the course of a school year). There are others that have a much shorter duration, but are typically more concentrated in nature. Youth gatherings such as conferences and summits fit into this category, as do outdoor adventure programmes.

An example of a youth gathering was the *Jane Goodall Global Youth Summit*, which brought together young leaders from 28 countries to Orlando, Florida for six days of environmental and humanitarian programming (Johnson et al., 2009). The summit was envisioned as a means “to create a global network of youth leaders capable of promoting cross-cultural understanding and effecting positive changes in their communities” (Jane Goodall Institute, 2008, in Johnson et al., 2009, p. 76). Programme activities included workshops on wildlife preservation, poverty, and intercultural tensions, tree planting, fireside chats with Jane Goodall, and action planning sessions. Johnson and colleagues (2009) evaluated the summit through various means, including pre-post measures of participants’ community service self-efficacy, leadership, diversity attitudes, and environmental identity.

While conferences and summits often explicitly focus on enhancing youth’s effectiveness as change agents, outdoor adventure education programmes have traditionally focused on accelerating personal growth through physically challenging experiences in the wilderness that demand cooperation, determination, and self-reliance (see Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997). However, scholars are beginning to explore the mechanisms through which such programmes might incite both personal development and a commitment to environmental care. Lauren D’Amato and Marianne Krasny, for instance, used transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000; O’Sullivan, 2002) as a lens to interpret the experiences of university students who had recently participated in outdoor adventure programmes such as *Outward Bound* (D’Amato & Krasny, 2011). Transformative learning is thought to take place when we face ‘disorienting dilemmas’ in which we can no longer interpret our current
experience through our old assumptions (Mezirow, 2000). Such dilemmas prompt a reorganisation of our cognitive system in search of new constructs that help to make sense of novel and perplexing perceptions (O’Sullivan, 2002).

Drawing on interviews with 23 students, D’Amato and Krasny (2011) emphasised ways in which *Outward Bound* and similar programmes invoked personal transformations through disorienting dilemmas and self-reflection, both on course and subsequently as participants returned to normal life. Living in pristine nature was part of these processes, with several participants citing how the wilderness had stimulated feelings of awe and inspiration and had improved their mental and emotional wellbeing. The authors surmised, based on D’Amato’s self-observations and the study’s findings, that nature’s role in facilitating such concentrated personal growth might lead to a sense of devotion or ‘debt to nature’ which could stimulate pro-conservation behaviour and action.

As can be seen in this brief review, extracurricular programmes with relevance to youth sustainability leadership vary along many dimensions, including pedagogical frameworks, structure and duration. Some involve intense immersion in the natural environment or concentrated up-skilling, while others focus on project-based learning over extended periods. The ways in which programmes appear to scaffold youth environmental action is an interesting feature, with some having a guiding framework for action projects (i.e., *Roots and Shoots*), and others appearing less or not at all directive (i.e., *Global Youth Summit; Outward Bound*). Most conspicuously, whether programmes are framed as positive youth development, service learning, peer education, or outdoor adventure education, their creators appear to have strong intentions to nurture young people’s development via contact with nature or environmental actions.

Several researchers have written about the reciprocal links between youth development, environmental action, and sustainable communities (de Vreede et al., 2014; Emmons, 1997; Schusler et al., 2009). In one example, Tania Schusler and colleagues studied adult facilitators of youth environmental action programmes (Schusler et al., 2009). The authors explained how two overarching themes emerged out
of narrative interviews with 33 practitioners: 1) that these educators sought to realise multiple aims, and 2) that youth development was the principal aim (Schusler et al., 2009). More specifically, while the tangible outcomes of environmental action projects (i.e., the restored stream, community garden or educational festival) were undoubtedly valued, from an educational perspective they were seen as secondary in importance to the processes by which young people participated in co-creating those outcomes.

Building on these findings, Schusler et al. (2009) theorised a positive feedback loop between youth environmental action and the development of democratic citizens and sustainable communities. That is, the process of envisioning and bringing about environmental and community change in the short-term facilitates the development of youth’s understanding of democracy and citizenship, thereby empowering young people to participate in community transformation processes over the long-term (see also Hopkins & McKeown, 1999). As the authors noted, this process is akin to the role of participation in participatory democracy. The qualities necessary for participation are developed through the act of participation; that is, when individuals participate, they strengthen their ability to do so (Pateman, 1970).

3.2 Challenges and tensions within extracurricular programmes

The literature on extracurricular programmes underscores several challenges and tensions experienced by youth and adults working in this space. Some challenges relate to programme structure and content. For instance, in shorter-duration programmes (e.g., conferences and summits) there can be a tendency to tightly fill the schedule, leading some youth participants to desire more informal interaction time for developing personal connections and sharing ideas (Johnson et al., 2009). Gatherings that bring leaders together from many different parts of the world almost inevitably face challenges relating to language, culture, and the relevance of workshop content to all participants (Johnson et al., 2009).

In programmes that engage youth over longer periods, challenges relate to resourcing (Roberts, 2009), socio-political constraints (Johnson et al., 2007), the frequency of club meetings (Roberts, 2009; de Vreede et al., 2014) and youth-youth / youth-adult relationship dynamics (de Vreede et al., 2014; Schusler & Krasny, 2010;
Schusler et al., 2009). Resourcing challenges may include youth not being able to complete projects due to a lack of funds, programme materials not being delivered from a supervising agency, and the need for more training for support staff (Roberts, 2009). In developing countries in particular, staff may be unexpectedly relocated to other villages, disrupting the continuity of clubs and related projects, and making these adults less inclined to start up new clubs (Johnson-Pynn & Johnson, 2005).

Socio-political constraints include the fact that many programmes are run by non-governmental organisations and these may not have the support of community members and government institutions (Johnson et al., 2007). For instance, in the study of Roots and Shoots clubs operating in China, an example was given about youth attempting to educate a community group about recycling, but not being able to answer the community’s questions about what the government would do with the recovered materials. This led to a participant expressing frustration about the “gap between the government and the people” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 376).

There are also challenges related to student club dynamics. These were explored in some depth in de Vreede and colleagues’ (2014) study of the MindShift programme. By comparing and contrasting MindShift teams from three different schools, the authors were able to surmise about what contributed to effective team functioning or disintegration. One club in particular struggled with scheduling conflicts and members dropping out, and prematurely disbanded in the second term of the school year. In individual interviews, those who dropped out relayed feelings of regret and guilt for being too busy to uphold their commitment, however de Vreede and colleagues speculated a lack of team cohesion may have been a more likely cause. Team captains from the disbanding club were younger than some of the other members, which was not the case in the well-functioning teams, leading the authors to surmise that the respect bestowed on senior students in the secondary school may affect the viability of the peer education model. Younger MindShift team captains also tended to struggle with handling team dynamics, and one disclosed that it was awkward asking for teacher support in relation to this. Strong relationships between support teachers and team captains were thus cited as critical to the programme’s success.
Schusler and Krasny’s (2010) study of adult practitioners discussed tensions experienced by educators in working with youth on environmental actions and attempting to integrate the aims of EE and positive youth development. Such tensions include stepping away to allow youth to lead and stepping in to ensure a project stays on track, balancing youth freedom with adult scaffolding, communicating openly and transparently, and finding synergies between youth goals and organisational goals (Schusler, 2007). As the authors noted, it is complex managing these tensions because youth are limited in what they can accomplish without adult guidance. When young people have full control of a project, their work may become stalled or disorganised, and this can affect their motivation and jeopardise project outcomes (Camino, 2005; Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005; Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010). The paradox faced by educators is that controlling a project constrains youth participation, but ceding control to youth may undermine a project’s execution and environmental benefits (Schusler & Krasny, 2010). Anticipating such tensions and finding a balance between a directive and laissez-faire approach appears to be essential (Douglas, 2006; Larson, Hansen, et al., 2005).

### 3.3 Challenges for evaluators

The studies discussed previously that are framed as evaluations (i.e., Roberts, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2013), in conjunction with other literature on evaluating environmental education initiatives (Bourke, 2011; Carleton-Hug & Hug, 2010; Riemer et al., 2014; Wiltz, 2005) highlight several challenges in relation to evaluating extracurricular programmes. For instance, Johnson, Johnson-Pynn and associates – whose work often features programmes in developing countries – highlight concerns around the selection of culturally appropriate and sensitive measurement tools, and the unsuitability of imposing highly structured research designs on programme communities (Johnson et al. 2009; Johnson et al., 2013). They note how establishing trust between researchers, youth and programme leaders must take priority over attempts for experimental control (Johnson et al., 2013).

A broad set of concerns relates to unique attributes of extracurricular/non-formal programmes and the implications of these for an evaluator. To begin with,
many such programmes are staffed by multiple, diverse stakeholders who possess differing understandings of their programme’s purpose and have had little exposure to evaluation (Wiltz, 2005). On a related note, many programmes seek to achieve goals that are problematic for turning into measurable outcomes (see Fien, Neil, & Bentley, 2008; Riemer et al., 2014; Wiltz, 2005). These goals may be poorly articulated; they may be affective in nature; often they are expansive and could take decades to complete (Carleton-Hug & Hug, 2010; Wiltz, 2005). As Wiltz (2005) explained, for these reasons and others, evaluations in this area typically require particular activities to ready stakeholders and the programme itself for an evaluation and for application of its findings (see also Bourke, 2011). In this pre-evaluation stage, evaluators may find themselves performing multiple roles, such as facilitator (i.e., helping the staff come to a common understanding of their initiative, logic modelling, developing programme theory), content expert and educator (i.e., sharing with staff emerging literature on best practices), and internal adviser (i.e., seeking to understand the programme in its organisational context and illuminating issues that affect its delivery) (Wiltz, 2005). As a result of these multiple roles, and for various other reasons, relationships between evaluators and extracurricular programme stakeholders are often more personal than in traditional evaluator-client configurations, requiring attentiveness to role boundaries (Wiltz, 2005).

3.4 Summary and relevance to the current research

This section highlighted a range of considerations around extracurricular youth sustainability leadership programmes. In particular, I introduced a number of programme configurations and theoretical considerations, along with material about challenges faced by youth, adults, and evaluators. This material informed my research projects in several ways.

First, it is relevant to the non-school-based MAD programme that features in the first two studies within my thesis. In particular, the material on programme configurations and theoretical considerations provoked a number of questions about this non-school-based programme, such as how it is structured, what kinds of pedagogical frameworks staff subscribe to and the extent to which it scaffolds
particular types of environmental action. As will be explored in the chapters that follow, MAD comprises elements of several programmes mentioned above, and contributes a novel configuration to the body of youth environmental leadership programmes profiled in the literature.

Second, it is also relevant to the school-based WSC project that features in the third and fourth studies. While some programmes reviewed above operate as school clubs (e.g., MindShift, Roots and Shoots) they are overseen by external agencies. In contrast, there appears to be little research on programmes provided by schools. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, educational literature on student leadership programmes (e.g., Archard, 2012, 2013; Hine, 2012, 2013) scarcely mentions environmental leadership. Since WSC happened to have a recently introduced environmental portfolio within its student leadership programme, I was able to explore this type of extracurricular school-based experience and to shed light on the challenges of this role compared to other student leadership positions. Importantly, as detailed in the preface, a tangible outcome of the WSC sustainability project was the expansion of this portfolio to enable students of all year levels to apply for sustainability leadership roles.

Third, the literature on challenges and tensions felt by adults working with youth on sustainability, such as balancing youth ownership and adult scaffolding, communicating transparently, and reconciling youth’s goals with our own visions of sustainability was something I was interested in exploring within the WSC project. In one of the core studies, these tensions, and others, are explored in some depth. Finally, the material on challenges for evaluators informed my experiences of working with Auckland Council to evaluate MAD. While not explicit in the studies on MAD, in the final chapter of this thesis I reflect on particular challenges I faced in relation to my role and the blurring of boundaries.

In the next part of this chapter, I shift gear to introduce literature on creating sustainable schools. As will be explained, this material provides important background to the WSC sustainability project.
4.0 Creating sustainable schools

The evolution of thinking around sustainability has expanded the scope of EE in schools and redefined their role in society (Gough, 2005; Henderson & Tilbury, 2004; Sterling, 2001, 2004). If we really want to transition to a sustainable society, an expansive interpretation of EE is required – one which sees the school not only as a place where students learn about sustainability and develop skills for participation in a democracy (Hopkins & McKeown, 1999) but also a site for showcasing sustainable practices to the wider community (Hart, 2007; Henderson & Tilbury, 2004; Mardon, 2007). On a related note, Stephen Sterling (2004) argues that sustainability invites a reconfiguration of all aspects of school life:

Sustainability does not simply require an ‘add-on’ to existing structures and curricula, but implies a change of fundamental epistemology in our culture and hence also in our educational thinking and practice. Seen in this light, sustainability is not just another issue to be added to an overcrowded curriculum, but a gateway to a different view of curriculum, of pedagogy, of organisational change, of policy and particularly of ethos (Sterling, 2004, p. 50).

In line with these sentiments, the sustainable schools practitioner and scholarly community tends to champion ‘whole-school’ approaches to developing and promoting sustainability (Henderson & Tilbury, 2004; Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Kadji-Beltran, Zachariou, & Stevenson, 2013; Schelly, Cross, Franzen, Hall, & Reeve, 2012). A growing body of literature explores what these approaches might look like in practice, along with the barriers and enabling factors associated with their implementation (Brignall-Theyer, Allen, & Taylor, 2009; Eames et al., 2006; Evans, Whitehouse, & Gooch, 2012; Henderson & Tilbury, 2004; Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Kadji-Beltran et al., 2013; Schelly et al., 2012; Williams, 2012). A common observation is that secondary schools tend to face more challenges than primary schools (Brignall-Theyer et al., 2009; Henderson & Tilbury, 2004).

Below, I review this literature, beginning with some key concepts around how schools can model (i.e., demonstrate) sustainability drawn from case studies of innovative institutions (Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Schelly et al., 2012). I then describe
common components of whole-school sustainability programmes, drawing on international reviews of such programmes (Henderson & Tilbury, 2004). Finally, I cover challenges involved in realising such approaches in schools in general, and more specifically in secondary institutions.

4.1 How schools model sustainability

In case studies of innovative schools (Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Schelly et al., 2012), modelling has been referred to both in the traditional sense – of human role models demonstrating desired behaviours to their fellows – and in terms of institutional models “whereby the setup of a system or facility reflects the values of its creators” (Higgs & McMillan, 2006, p. 40). In one such study, Higgs and McMillan (2006) sought out schools in North America that appeared innovative in their implementation of sustainability education. The researchers narrowed down their sample of eighteen institutions to four that exuded the strongest sustainability focus in both curricular and non-curricular areas. Each site was examined in depth via interviews with staff and students, observations of school life, and reviews of relevant documents. Through an iterative analytic process, Higgs and McMillan suggested that modelling was expressed via four means – individual role models, facilities and operations, governance, and culture. Below I introduce these modelling means, weaving examples from Higgs and McMillan’s case schools with other pertinent studies and theoretical considerations.

4.1.1 Individual role modelling

Modelling by individuals is one means by which schools promote sustainability (Higgs & McMillan, 2006). When teachers use active transport modes like walking and cycling, recycle and compost waste, wear second hand clothing, and eat organic, locally grown food, students are more likely to engage in such behaviours (Higgs & McMillan, 2006). Of course the process is not unidirectional; staff and students may serve as role models for their respective peer groups (Arnold et al., 2009; de Vreede et al., 2014; Long, Harré, & Atkinson, 2014; Schelly et al., 2012) and students may inspire their teachers to act more sustainably (Higgs & McMillan, 2006). Notably, nurturance and perceived similarity are posited to facilitate successful modelling (Bandura & Huston,
1961; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). In line with this, Higgs and McMillan explained how students and staff at most of their study schools had particularly warm and affectionate relationships with one another. Such close faculty-student relationships appeared to enable a sharing of passion and deep-level conversations about sustainable lifestyles, which the researchers suggested enhanced the outcome of behavioural role modelling.

Other case studies have contributed to the notion of individual role modelling. For example, in Chelsea Schelly and colleagues’ (2012) study of an exemplary energy saving school in Colorado, interview participants identified three types of role models within their institution. First, students from the environmental science club were described as role models for their peers. Second, the environmental science teacher was described as the “lead jammer” who had modelled environmentally responsible behaviour for years and who inspired both staff and students to make a positive difference. Indeed, one interviewee explained how when mulling over whether to shut down their computer, he or she would think “what would [the environmental studies teacher] do?” (Schelly et al., 2012, p. 150). Third, the principal was described as a “charismatic leader” whose conspicuous championing of energy saving inspired not only the rest of the school but also district-level personnel. These authors surmised that charismatic leadership traits may be especially powerful within individual role modelling.

4.1.2 Modelling through facilities and operations

A second means by which schools can model sustainability is through thoughtful facilities construction, maintenance and operation (Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Schelly et al., 2012). Environmentalist David Orr (Orr, 1994, 2006, 2011) has written extensive about “architecture as pedagogy” – the notion that buildings have their own embedded curriculum that instructs as effectively as any course taught within it. He advocates for buildings that “promote ecological competence and mindfulness … teach students that our problems are solvable and that we are connected to the larger community of life” (2011, p. 181). In conjunction with thoughtful architecture, measures to green school facilities may include the following: installing solar panels and hot water heaters, installing wind generators, encouraging passive cooling of buildings,
collecting rainwater from roofs, composting and recycling waste, planting gardens and growing food, and taking action to reduce water, waste, and energy (Dyment, 2005; Henderson & Tilbury, 2004; Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Schelly et al., 2012). As Higgs and McMillan (2006) observed, regular student and staff involvement in school operations may greatly enhance the value of the facilities as teaching tools, providing tangible opportunities for students to interact with sustainable practices (see also Mardon, 2007). Moreover, making the ecological, social, and economic impacts of such efforts transparent to students (though physical displays and assignments) may partially lift the educator’s burden by promoting learning through ‘osmosis’ (Higgs & McMillan, 2006).

4.1.3 Modelling through governance

A key goal of sustainability education is that students develop skills for participation in a democratic society (Hopkins & McKeown, 1999; Schusler et al., 2009). In line with this notion, a number of studies have highlighted the benefits of student participation in school leadership and governance (Archard, 2009, 2011, 2012; Gough, 2005; Hine, 2013; Levin, 1998; Neumann, Dempster, & Skinner, 2009). In this context, participatory governance may include giving students opportunities to contribute to school board and staff meetings, to run clubs, to bring in guest speakers, and to have a say in curriculum content (Higgs & McMillan, 2006).

Schelly and colleagues’ study (2012) emphasised how participatory governance played a part in empowering not only students from the environmental club but also custodian staff. After the principal invited custodians to meetings and gave them decision-making responsibilities, these staff members were inspired to develop new routines and to educate teachers on energy saving tips (Schelly et al., 2012). In its fullest expression, this form of modelling may extend to non-hierarchical school governance and consensus-based decision-making systems, though these are only likely to be realistic in small schools as discovered by Higgs and McMillan (2006). These researchers observed that equitable governance structures may still be possible in more traditional hierarchical schools, so long as there is a degree of transparency in how decisions are made and effective procedures for staff and students to have a say.
4.1.4 Modelling through culture

Culture has been identified as one of the most potent ways in which to encourage and model sustainability within schools (Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Schelly et al., 2012). Defined as a set of shared values, beliefs, assumptions and behaviours that is sanctioned by a group and taught to new members (Schein, 1985), culture is evident through school traditions, extracurricular activities, buildings, teaching methods and programmes (Higgs & McMillan, 2006). Creating a culture supportive of sustainability may involve rituals that promote inclusivity and non-materialism (Higgs & McMillan, 2006), the spreading of slogans and mottos that articulate pro-conservation behavioural expectations (Schelly et al., 2012), and explicitly challenging the conflicting messages students are exposed to in wider society, for instance, by actively discouraging overconsumption (Brignall-Theyer et al., 2009; Higgs & McMillan, 2006). If schools can create cultural norms that align with sustainability, young people’s natural desire to feel accepted by their peers (Newman & Newman, 2001) may serve to perpetuate these. Once established, culture is hard to shift (Schein, 1985).

These four means of modelling go some way to helping envision what a sustainable school might look like. However, they focus mostly on the efforts of personnel internal to schools (i.e., staff, students, custodians), rather than efforts involving collaboration with external parties. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are seen by many as critical to education for sustainability (Henderson & Tilbury, 2004; Kadjibeltran et al., 2013) and many government and/or privately funded programmes have been developed to assist schools in coordinating a sustainability effort. Next I briefly describe key characteristics of such programmes, as identified in Henderson and Tilbury’s (2004) international review. Notably, this review included New Zealand’s Enviroschools programme, a grassroots initiative established by teachers, local and regional government and other EE groups in the Waikato region in the early 1990s (Eames, Cowie, & Bolstad, 2008). It also included programmes from China, Sweden, the United Kingdom and South Africa.
4.2 Characteristics of whole school sustainability programmes

Henderson and Tilbury’s (2004) review outlined eleven common ‘implementation characteristics’ of whole-school sustainability programmes. The first was tackling school governance. Programmes typically requested the formation of a committee or working group that included members of senior management, staff, students, and other stakeholders, and was charged with steering actions and monitoring progress. The second characteristic was creating a school policy to underscore the school’s commitment to sustainability. Thirdly, visioning/mission statements were key to programmes and often involved visual mapping processes. Fourth was environmental audits, which were often utilised as an initial action to help schools to gain a ‘snapshot’ of their current practices and to develop a framework for monitoring progress. The fifth characteristic was action plans, which involved schools ascertaining how they might achieve improvements and assigning roles and responsibilities to do so. Six was pedagogy and professional development. Skilled educators are clearly critical to sustainability education, and as such programmes offered professional development opportunities for staff, school management, and partners to upskill in student-centred and co-operative learning pedagogies as well as practitioner research.

The role of the curriculum was the seventh characteristic, with programmes typically emphasising that sustainability content should be integrated across all learning areas. This was often essential to schools meeting the criteria for awards that were built into the programme’s structure. The eighth characteristic was school reporting, involving considered efforts to reflect on actions and review progress, often followed by the assignment of awards. As Henderson and Tilbury (2004) explained, monitoring, reflection and evaluation procedures mean the school is “not just the centre of learning but is also a ‘learning organisation’ itself” (p. 44). The ninth characteristic was school networks. Many programmes were designed so that clusters of schools could interact, and students and staff could learn from work being undertaken by other institutions. Tenth was community links and partnerships. Whole-school programmes encouraged schools to connect with the local community by, for instance, having students participate in field trips, having community and industry personnel
visit the school, and having students actively participate in projects beyond the school gates. Finally, accreditation and certification was a process common to all programmes. This was essential for recognising and rewarding schools’ efforts and achievements.

4.3 Challenges in developing sustainable schools

Creating sustainable schools is no easy feat. There is often a mismatch between school leaders’ acknowledgement of the importance of sustainability and what they actually do (Bottery, 2011; Jackson, 2007; Kadji-Beltran et al., 2013). Several commentaries, reviews and empirical studies have discussed the many barriers to holistic sustainability implementation (e.g., Brignall-Theyer et al., 2009; N. Evans et al., 2012; Henderson & Tilbury, 2004).

Based on a literature review and case studies of two Australian schools, Evans, Whitehouse and Gooch (2012) suggested there are three types of barriers. **Grassroots** barriers are those that vex teachers on a daily basis, such as a lack of time to dedicate to sustainability, an overcrowded curriculum, and an aversion to exploring controversial issues with pupils for fear of jeopardising relationships with student families and other staff. **Administrative** barriers relate to resourcing and the broader education sector. They include a dearth of programme funding for sustainability innovation and a political agenda that tends to favour quantitative literacy and numeracy testing and effectively prevents sustainability from gaining traction as a central focus for curriculum planning. **Conceptual** barriers relate to conflict between sustainability education theory — which implies transformation of the education system — and school personnel. These include limits to some teachers’ understanding due to a dearth of professional development as well as an enduring negative ‘greenie’ discourse that positions those passionate about sustainability as radical. As Whitehouse (2000) explained: “the rationale for environmental sustainability [may be] reasonable and understandable, but the process of change relies on stubborn individuals who are willing to persistently negotiate social opposition” (p. 75). Evans and colleagues explained how overcoming these barriers is challenging because each is “embedded in different contexts, and layers of understandings and priorities” (p. 135). In Evans and colleagues’ (2012) two case study schools, active principal leadership and high levels of trust amongst staff were critical.
to overcoming such barriers and allowing sustainability innovators to flourish (see also Kadji-Beltran et al., 2013).

4.3.1 Particular challenges for secondary schools

In general, secondary schools appear to face additional barriers to primary institutions. As Eames and colleagues (2008) noted in a review of EE practice in New Zealand schools, primary school teachers are generalists who typically deliver the whole curriculum to one class, while secondary teachers tend to be specialists who teach one subject to many classes, making cross-curricular linking more challenging. Brignall-Theyer, Allen, and Taylor’s (2009) scoping study of education for sustainability in New Zealand secondary schools similarly suggested that the dominance of timetables and assessment at this level of education impeded the growth of sustainability in the curriculum. The discourse of EE as an ‘add on’ to an already overcrowded curriculum may still be prevalent in New Zealand secondary schools (Brignall-Theyer et al., 2009; Eames et al., 2008) and this conceptual barrier has likely been perpetuated by the non-compulsory status of the country’s formal guidelines for environmental education (Ministry of Education, 1999). A related issue is that when sustainability courses are offered to students, often only a few apply, meaning the classes are not prioritised in timetabling processes (Brignall-Theyer et al., 2009).

From a different angle, Lousley (1999) offered some interesting observations about secondary school staff’s de-politicisation of passionate students’ efforts. In her critical ethnographic study of student environmental clubs within four Canadian secondary schools, she observed that when student club members shifted the target of their efforts away from student apathy and towards official institutional channels and power structures they were “quickly silenced and redirected into less political forums, overtly and implicitly reminded to avoid conflict and controversy” (p. 297). As a result, students subsequently felt unable to raise controversial issues and were later observed to censor certain project proposals to avoid trouble (Lousley, 1999). This study draws attention, as few have, to challenges students may face when they attempt to push a sustainability agenda at their school.
Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

4.4 Summary and relevance to the current research

In this section, I introduced a range of literature relevant to the sustainability project at WSC. The modelling framework offered by Higgs and McMillan (2006) resonates strongly with the approach my research team and WSC community members took to creating a sustainable school. As will become apparent in the ensuing studies, many of us focused on promoting sustainability through our own individual modelling while also attempting to influence school culture, facilities and operations.

The whole-school programme characteristics summarised by Henderson and Tilbury (2004) broadly influenced the form of the sustainability project. For instance, it began with the board of trustees setting of a strategic goal (policy) and the formation of a ‘sustainability panel’ (governance). It also involved audits, action planning, engaging with other schools (networks), supporting sustainability in the curriculum, reporting, and applying for awards (accreditation and certification). Perhaps the most unique characteristic of the WSC project was its approach to partnerships. The entire sustainability effort was framed around a university-school partnership, and was largely facilitated by a university research team for approximately three years, after which school managers took much greater ownership. In line with this, my thesis explores a novel approach to creating sustainable schools (via university-community partnerships) and examines in some depth researchers’ experiences of contributing to such an effort.

The material on challenges facing secondary schools broadly frames some of the reasons why our project was initiated in the first place: sustainability is not central to the missions of secondary schools within New Zealand and elsewhere, and internal staff sustainability champions face a myriad of barriers. Lousley’s (1999) observations about student environmental clubs shaped my exploration into the experiences of WSC’s appointed environmental leaders. Indeed, as will be detailed in one of the core studies of this thesis, I argue that environmental student leadership is likely to involve challenging assumptions that underlie school life, and thus, pupils in such positions are bound to experience tensions while fulfilling their role’s demands.
5.0 Methodological influences

In this section, I introduce influences that informed my overall methodological approaches within the MAD and WSC projects: community psychology, university-community partnerships, participatory evaluation, and action research. I then summarise how each project drew on these influences.

5.1 Community psychology

Community psychology is an applied social science concerned with the relationships between individuals, communities, and society (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001). Levine, Perkins and Levine (1997) explain its features by comparing and contrasting it with related disciplines. To begin, they claim it is similar to public health in its focus on encouraging healthy lifestyles and environments, viewing problems at multiple levels (i.e., not only individual), and having a preventive orientation, yet it diverges from public health with its broader emphasis on social and mental health (in addition to physical health) and concern with quality of life. The authors suggest it resonates with social work, except it is characterised by a strong research orientation. Indeed, they argue that community psychologists believe “nothing is more practical than rigorous, well-conceived research directed at social problems” (p. 10).

Levine and colleagues go on to claim that community psychology overlaps with social psychology and sociology in its group or systems orientation towards human behaviour, but is unashamedly more applied than those fields, seeking to use psychological knowledge to resolve social problems. Like clinical psychology, it has an action orientation, however the intervention point of the professional is different in terms of timing and location. Notably, community psychology emerged largely in response to discontent with clinicians’ predilection to locate mental health problems within individuals. Community psychologists are more inclined to view such problems as a product of particular social environments, or a lack of fit between a person and an environment. Community psychologists also tend to focus on health rather than pathology and to build upon the strengths and capacities of individuals, groups, organisations and communities (Levine et al., 1997).
Empowerment is a critical phenomenon within community psychology. According to Rappaport (1987), it is “the process by which people, organisations and communities gain mastery over their lives” (p. 3). While recognizing that it is not possible to directly empower another (see Patton, 1997), community psychologists attempt to create an empowering atmosphere for the people they work with, by helping them to discover resources and tools within their reach, and assisting them to develop a critical awareness of, and sense of how to influence, the socio-political environment (Saleebey, 1996; Zimmerman, 1995).

5.2 University-community partnerships

According to Buys and Bursnall (2007), university-community partnerships are embedded in a university’s broader goal of engagement, which involves “strenuous, thoughtful, argumentative interaction with the non-university world” (Watson, 2003, p. 25). Suarez-Balcazar and colleagues define such a partnership as “an explicit written or verbal agreement between a community setting … and an academic unit to engage in a common project or common goal, which is mutually beneficial for an extended period” (Suarez-Balcazar, Harper, & Lewis, 2005, p. 85). The nature of partnerships can range from offering general advice to active participation (Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Harper & Salina, 2000; Ostrom, Lerner, & Freel, 1995).

Importantly, partnerships are central to many universities’ commitments to sustainability. Indeed, a key theme in higher education sustainability declarations is that staff and students will engage in outreach by forming local and global partnerships for research and action towards sustainable futures (Clugston, 2004; Universitas 21, 2009; Wright, 2004). The rationale is that partnerships will tangibly assist individuals and communities outside the campus, and simultaneously bolster the culture of sustainability within the university (Universitas 21, 2009).

The potential benefits of university-community partnerships are well documented. As Brown and colleagues (2007) explained, successful partnerships can yield an iterative, transformative engagement process, characterised by both partners progressively deepening their understanding of a problem and their commitment to the collaboration. Partnerships may also produce increased funding opportunities for
researchers and community organisations, documentation and improvement of community organisations’ efforts, more informed community practice, capacity and skills building, and career enhancement for the individuals involved (Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Greenberg, Howard, & Desmond, 2003; Jackson & Reddick, 1999; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005).

Partnerships are also associated with numerous challenges. As Ahmed and colleagues’ (2004) discussed, academics can be reluctant to initiate them because they perceive collaborative research to be less rigorous, and lack professional mentors in such approaches. Community members can be equally cautious and may view academics as paternalistic and secretive, existing in an ivory tower and conducting research that is not relevant to their needs (Ahmed et al., 2004; Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Green et al., 1995). Even once well established, collaborations may be threatened by issues of power and control, resource inequality, conflicts of interest, time commitments, and budget cuts or end of funding (Harper & Salina, 2000; Riger, 2001; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005; Sullivan et al., 2001). Developing trust and respect, establishing adequate communication and developing a shared action agenda are critical components of setting up and sustaining a fruitful collaboration (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005).

5.3 Participatory evaluation

Cousins (2003) defines participatory evaluation as an approach in which people trained in evaluation methods and logic work in collaboration with programme stakeholders not so trained to conduct evaluation activities. A quintessential feature of participatory evaluation is the requirement that “members of both the evaluation community and other stakeholder groups are directly involved in the production of evaluation knowledge” (Cousins, 2003, p. 245). Evaluators often contribute practical knowledge of evaluation logic and methods, whereas programme practitioners and participants tend to share their knowledge of the programme, its operating context, and its desired and unintended effects. Together, these strengths inform programme evaluation decision-making and execution. The approach is well-suited to
improvement-oriented or formative evaluations, as opposed to summative evaluations (Cousins, 2003).

Two distinct strands of participatory evaluation have been emphasised in the literature: practical and transformative (Cousins, 2003; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998; Pursely, 1996). The practical form is chiefly concerned with generating knowledge that is useful for programme and organisational decision-making (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998), whereas the transformative version is conceived as a developmental process whereby individual participants and power dynamics within the socio-cultural milieu are changed as a result of less powerful stakeholders being deeply involved in investigation, knowledge creation, reflection, negotiation and decision-making (Pursley, 1996). As Cousins (2003) expresses, the two approaches are similar in that they aim to involve stakeholders in all phases of the evaluation, including technical ones (Cousins, 2003). However, in practical participatory evaluation, the selection of stakeholders tends to be confined to those closely associated with programme management. In transformative participatory evaluation the selection process is more inclusive, especially concerning intended programme beneficiaries (i.e., participants).

Case examples of participatory evaluations in the literature have claimed to foster positive effects on the production of evaluation knowledge, the use of evaluation findings, and process use (e.g., Lau & LeMahieu, 1997; Lee, 1999; Torres et al., 2000). Authors of such studies emphasise how programme staff and participants are typically in a better position than evaluators to pinpoint and conceptualise programme needs, resulting in more valid evaluation knowledge (Brandon, 1998; Lau & LeMahieu, 1997). On a related note, when practitioners are given opportunities to deepen their understanding, confidence, and conviction about their programme, it increases the likelihood of empowerment, and enacting change based on evaluation findings (Torres et al., 2000). Process use is a common outcome of participatory evaluation activities (Cousins, 2003). This manifests in non-evaluator participants learning research skills that can be applied to other roles and projects (Gaventa, Creed, & Morrissey, 1998), in embedding evaluation activities into their organisation’s culture, and in perceiving that evaluation aids rather than inhibits knowledge construction and supports demands for external accountability (Lau & LeMahieu, 1997; Lee, 1999).
5.4 Action research

According to Bradbury and Reason (2006) action research is an orientation toward inquiry that aspires to cultivate engagement, curiosity, and questioning by gathering evidence and experimenting with practices. As these authors note, action research is chiefly concerned with developing knowledge that is useful to people in their day-to-day lives. However, a broader aspiration is to contribute through this knowledge to the holistic wellbeing of people and communities, and to a fairer, more sustainable relationship with Earth’s wider ecology (Bradbury & Reason, 2006). The action research process departs significantly from that of traditional academic research, reflecting its different purposes.

Marshall, Coleman and Reason (2011) conceptualised action research as a series of dimensions. First, research attends to worthwhile purposes. Action researchers typically focus on issues they are deeply concerned about, and thus action research projects are unapologetically value-laden. Second, it addresses practical challenges. Action researchers grapple with complex and messy human problems through practical action. Third, action research emphasises participation and democracy. Energy is directed toward setting up spaces for mutual exploration of issues, and involving those affected by the issues as research partners, as opposed to research subjects.

Fourth, action research appreciates many ways of knowing. The dominant mode of inquiry in Western science elevates rational thought and empirical evidence. In doing so, other ways of knowing – including the experiential, the aesthetic, the relational, the embodied and the emotional – are overlooked. While acknowledging that all forms have limitations, action research seeks to expand the range of measures used to generate valid knowledge (Bradbury & Reason, 2006; Reason, 2006). Spirals or cycles of action and reflection, conducted individually and collectively, are quintessential features (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Finally, action research has an emergent form. Action researchers know roughly where their research comes from and where it is headed, but the process cannot be precisely designed in advance (Davis, 2007). Inquiries occur in the messiness of everyday life, and evolve over time as participants
build relationships, learn about target issues, trial novel practices, and build confidence in this process (Marshall et al., 2011).

5.5 **Summary and relevance to the current research**

In this section I introduced four influences on my overall research approach – community psychology, university-community partnerships, participatory evaluation and action research. Importantly, both of my research projects were underpinned by values that resonate with community psychology’s emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles, environments and quality of life, seeking strengths and encouraging empowerment (Levine et al., 2005), and action research’s aspiration to create knowledge that contributes to the wellbeing of people and communities, and a more sustainable relationship with Earth (Bradbury & Reason, 2006). Each project also involved a university-community partnership. Below, I briefly demarcate how each partnership emerged and link each project to relevant methodological influences.

5.6.1 **The MAD evaluation project**

In the case of MAD, the partnership came about when staff from Auckland Council sought advice on how to demonstrate their existing initiative’s effectiveness, and contacted my academic supervisor Niki. We jointly negotiated a plan to evaluate MAD in a formative sense, by exploring a) what MAD’s outcomes are for youth participants, b) how MAD is structured and purports to achieve these outcomes, c) what elements of MAD are working well and which could be improved. The agreement included that I could use the data from the evaluation exercise in my research into what inspires youth sustainability leadership development. In this setting, then, the community initially approached the university, a configuration that often facilitates the building of trust and mutual respect and generates high levels of community commitment (Evans et al., 2001; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005).

The MAD project could be classified as a participatory evaluation (Cousins, 2005; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998), in that it involved members of the evaluation community (i.e., university researchers) and other stakeholder groups (i.e., core MAD programme staff and youth participants) working together to produce evaluation
knowledge. The practical form of participatory evaluation was most appropriate, since the staff had approached us for assistance and the aim was to produce knowledge that would be useful for programme and organisational decision-making (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). In this sense, the MAD project also resonated with Patton’s (1996) utilisation-focused evaluation, since it was done for, and with, specific intended primary users, based on their needs, wants and logistical realities (Patton, 1996; Powell, Stern, & Ardoin, 2006).

Although participatory evaluation emphasises that technical tasks are shared by all stakeholders (Cousins, 2003), both parties agreed that it was more logistically feasible for myself and a research assistant to undertake most of these in the time-frame assigned to the partnership. However, I kept in close contact with MAD’s primary coordinator throughout the analytic phases, seeking her thoughts on preliminary findings and clarifying aspects of the programme structure I was not familiar with. Towards the end of the project she was trained in technical tasks when we integrated a monitoring system into the programme’s structure. MAD’s intended beneficiaries (i.e., youth participants) were engaged at various points in the evaluation process, most notably through participatory logic modelling workshops, in which we had them sharing stories about their experiences of MAD and collectively brainstorming their ideas about MAD’s outcomes. Importantly, a few key youth also had input into the design of a follow up survey and the ongoing monitoring and evaluation system. In this sense, the evaluation verged, at times, on a more transformative participatory approach, though I would be cautious to claim it changed power relations in the social milieu.

5.6.2 The WSC sustainability project

In the case of WSC, the university-community partnership was established after a series of interactions between my supervisor and the secondary school’s governing board. Initially, Niki proposed that the school could include a sustainability objective in their strategic plan in her capacity as a concerned parent and former board member. A year after this proposition, the board set a strategic goal – “to work towards environmental sustainability in all areas of school life” – and invited Niki to chair a
committee (the ‘sustainability panel’) to oversee its implementation. Upon accepting this post, she invited the school to participate in a collaborative action research project to simultaneously a) implement the strategic sustainability goal and b) generate knowledge about how to create a sustainable secondary school. As part of the negotiation process, Niki suggested community psychology graduate students (including myself) could come into the school to help drive and document the school’s progress as part of their individual academic pursuits. In this research setting, then, the community invited one of their own (a parent) to facilitate an internal committee, and she responded by proposing a significant applied research endeavour. Compared to the MAD evaluation, the community’s commitment to the partnership built up slowly, as is often the case when the academic partner puts forward the idea for the collaborative project (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005).

The WSC project was conceived as action research. The aims of the project were to understand the school’s ‘status’ with regards to environmental sustainability values and practices, and to work with interested staff and students on initiatives to advance sustainability in various areas of school life – such as curriculum, culture, facilities and operations. The project resonated with the dimensions expressed by Marshall and colleagues (2011), especially in that it had an emergent form which could not be determined in advance, attended to worthwhile purposes and addressed practical challenges (e.g., exploring how to reorient all areas of school life to advance sustainability).

The participation and democracy dimension, which emphasises working with those affected by issues as research partners rather than subjects, was certainly an aspiration of the research team. However, the size of the institution (i.e., over a thousand pupils), the composition of the sustainability panel (i.e., limited to staff and student representatives), and the academic pressures the university research team felt (e.g., dissertation deadlines) each influenced the viability of school members’ deep participation in the project. What essentially emerged was a collaborative project in which university team members worked with student and staff representatives from the sustainability panel on practical initiatives, alongside conducting a series of related studies (to fulfil postgraduate degree requirements). The practical initiatives
incorporated what might be deemed ‘spirals’ of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1998), however, the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data per se typically remained in the realm of the research team rather than being undertaken in collaboration with school members.

All in all, our research team’s approach resonated with an action research orientation, but we grappled considerably with reconciling our own perceptions of rigorous research – built up by years of training in conventional (i.e., positivistic) psychology – with the inevitably messy, iterative nature of collaborative research. Indeed, as is explored in the final chapter of this thesis, the multiple ways of knowing dimension of action research was something I only came to fully appreciate after I disentangled myself from the fieldwork and conducted a reflective self-study on our research team’s approach.

6.0 Ontology, epistemology and ethics

Within the social sciences, ontology is concerned with the nature of social reality, while epistemology is concerned with how we come to what we know (Grix, 2010; Lewis, 2002). Explicit reflection on such issues can clarify the nature of one’s theoretical positions and arguments (Lewis, 2002). In this section, I briefly outline the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin the core studies in this thesis. I then briefly describe ethical procedures and concerns in relation to the research process.

6.1 Ontology

At the broadest level, these studies take an interpretivist ontological approach. According to Grix (2010, p. 84), the interpretivist paradigm includes the following core premises:

1. The world does not exist independently from our knowledge of it;
2. Individuals socially construct the world through social interactions;
3. Social phenomena are not separate from our interpretations of them; and
4. Researchers are inextricably part of the social reality they study, not separate from it.
In line with these premises, my approach assumes that:

1. Sustainability programmes and projects – such as those featured in this thesis – are not separate from community members’ and researchers’ interpretations of them; and
2. Community members and researchers construct sustainability programmes and projects through social interactions.

Put another way, sustainability programmes and projects gain their reality from how social actors experience them, can converse about them and reflect on them.

6.2 Epistemology

My epistemological approach relates to my ontological beliefs and the practical orientation of this research. As Grix (2010) notes, the interpretivist paradigm emphasises understanding (over explanation), and eschews the idea that observation alone can lead us to understand social phenomena. This paradigm sees the social world as needing to be studied from within people’s minds, using different methods to the natural sciences.

In the studies in this thesis, my approach to generating knowledge was to understand the perspectives, meanings and experiences of adult and youth participants within my two settings, including my own research team. I sought to understand what the MAD programme meant to those that run it and participate in it, and to understand how the university research team and student environmental leaders at WSC experienced the sustainability project.

I aimed to produce knowledge with one or more or the following functions:

1. Sustains relationships between co-participants and university-community partnerships;
2. Further develops sustainability programmes and projects;
3. Catalyses similar research within academic circles;
4. Informs practitioners elsewhere.

In other words, I sought to generate practical, useful knowledge from people’s reflections and interpretations of sustainability programmes and projects, with a view
towards sustaining and enhancing these, as well as inspiring others who may wish to be part of similar endeavours elsewhere.

In line with these aims and assumptions, the primary methods of data collection were qualitative, and included workshops (involving individual storytelling and group discussions), semi-structured interviews, and surveys. Notably, other forms of data were collected as part of the WSC project, but are not reported on in this thesis in depth. For example, a mostly quantitative whole-school questionnaire was conducted in the first year of the sustainability project, but is discussed in relation to the research team’s experiences rather than its findings.

6.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained for the MAD evaluation and WSC sustainability project from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. Appendix C contains copies of information sheets and consent forms for the MAD programme representative, programme staff, student participants, and parents of student participants under 16 years of age. Appendix E contains copies of similar forms for the WSC project participants: the principal, school staff, students, and parents.

The main ethical concerns within my core studies were ensuring community members did not feel pressured to participate and that their confidentiality was respected. As seen in the information sheets and consent forms, we had measures in place to safeguard against these concerns. Before each workshop, interview, or survey, participants were informed about the voluntary nature of the research, their rights to withdraw their participation at any time, and how to do so. Within the WSC project, we also had a procedure in place whereby after individual interviews had been transcribed, we would send each participant a copy of the transcript and they would have a time period in which to ask us to take out anything they did not want used, clarify things we may have got wrong or add in extra information. This was necessary because of the long-term nature of the collaborative project and primary importance of sustaining relationships. In all transcripts from both research sites, names were changed to preserve anonymity.
Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

Importantly, the research team from the WSC project were the key participants in one of the core studies. Although my university did not require ethical approval for the researchers to participate in this survey, in future projects like this I would design an information sheet to give more clarity around working with academic colleagues. I encountered challenges as I conducted this study, both in relation to collecting data (some team members took a significant time to respond), and in relation to the confronting nature of self-study, which reveals much about researchers’ paradigms and biases (Chang, 2008). It was important when I wrote up this particular study to be aware of my biases, and to work with my supervisor to construct a collective narrative that allowed for other graduate students’ perspectives to come through, even if it ultimately favoured our views as the lead authors. In my final chapter, I reflect on the transformative learning process surrounding this particular paper and the limitations of conducting a collective self-study within a doctoral project.

7.0 Overview of the studies and thesis format

The core studies in this thesis shed light on different aspects of my two real-world projects, and as a whole contribute new insights to the interlinked fields of inspiring youth sustainability leadership and creating sustainable secondary schools. Each study is described below in relation to its purpose, research questions, and methodological approach.

7.1 Paper one

The purpose of this paper was to profile MAD as a non-school-based extracurricular youth sustainability leadership programme and to share the participatory, utilisation-focused methods we used to evaluate it. The study thereby offers an interpretation of how this programme inspires and supports youth sustainability leaders and summarises the types of outcomes associated with it. The specific research questions for this paper are as follows: What outcomes are associated with the MAD programme? How does the MAD programme’s structure influence such outcomes? What are the benefits and limitations of a participatory, utilisation-focused, theory of change approach to evaluation in a youth sustainability leadership context?
The MAD evaluation included participatory logic model workshops, an online survey, and progressive refinement of MAD’s theory of change. As is described in the paper, the workshops were facilitated by myself and a research assistant, and drew on a semi-structured interview protocol for constructing logic models (see Gugiu & Roderiguez) and a storytelling exercise (see Harré, Bullen, & Tepavac, 2010). Workshops were audio recorded, recordings were transcribed, and transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). The online survey, designed by myself, MAD’s primary coordinator, and sent out to MAD participants from four years of programming, contained both rating scales and open-ended questions to assess consensus on workshop themes and to explore participants’ sustainability actions. Descriptive statistics were used to assess consensus, and a process of independent parallel coding (Thomas, 2006) was used by myself and a research assistant to develop a catalogue of actions associated with MAD and to categorise statements about MAD’s overall impact. The workshop and survey data informed the development and refinement of MAD’s theory of change and tools for ongoing monitoring and evaluation purposes.

7.2 Paper two

Paper two emerged for two reasons. First, data collected in the logic model workshops and online survey suggested that the programme’s initial hui (Māori term for a social gathering) component was particularly powerful. Second, our WSC sustainability project experiences (detailed in paper three) led us to be curious about how the hui was run, particularly in relation to its location, facilities, operations and the atmosphere evoked by coordinators and student leaders. Indeed, we were especially interested in learning more about how the three day camp “walked the talk”. As such, the purpose of the study was to understand the hui in more depth and theorise about the aspects that may contribute to its transformative potential. The research questions this study sought to answer were: What are the key powerful elements of the MAD hui? What is the value of transformative experiences in inspiring social action towards a more sustainable world?
This study drew on a range of data sources. These included transcripts from the logic model workshops and open-ended responses from the online survey, observations of the MAD hui in 2011 and 2012, and evaluation forms filled out by participants at the end of these hui. The paper begins with a narrative titled “Journey through a MAD Hui” which was constructed based on observations of the camp. The remainder of the paper presents the results of a thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) of the data sources conducted in conjunction with a review of literature on formative influences on environmentalists, powerful aspects of camp programmes, and other pertinent material on sustainability leadership.

7.3 Paper three

The third study is focused on my research team’s approach to the WSC sustainability project. Thus, its purpose was to explore the university-community partnership approach and to reflect on our experiences of helping to create a sustainable school. The premise of the paper is that our team was successful in helping inspire WSC to take ownership of sustainability, and that our guiding principles were part of this process. These principles mostly had roots in the community psychology, university-community partnerships, and action research literature, although one was inspired by environmental psychology studies. The paper provides an overview of each principle and a description of the project in 2008 and 2009, followed by an analysis of our experiences of the principles and the potential clashes between them. The overarching research question for this study was: How can principles be utilised by a research team in assisting with creating a sustainable secondary school? Key questions explored in the study are as follows: How did we experience our guiding principles? What can we learn from the school’s experience of our practice? In what ways did our principles complement and conflict with each other?

Paper three drew on the traditions of phenomenological inquiry (Brown & Duke, 2005) and autoethnography (Chang, 2008). Phenomenological inquiry involves collecting data from people who have experienced a particular phenomenon, and then attempting to uncover the essence of their experience (Brown & Duke, 2005). Autoethnography involves researchers using their own experience to investigate the
phenomenon under study, sometimes in combination with data from others (Chang, 2008). While most often conducted by single researchers, collective autoethnographic approaches are becoming more common (see Belgrave, Celaya, Gurses, Boutwell, & Fernandez, 2012; Phillips, Harris, & Larson, 2009). Since the phenomenon was our research team’s guiding principles, the primary data for this study was a self-reflective survey filled out by members of our 2008 and 2009 research team. Interviews with four staff and three students from WSC were also conducted to obtain these community members’ perspectives on our approach. Data analysis was guided by the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen reductive method as utilised in Brown and Duke’s collaborative phenomenological self-study (see Brown and Duke, 2005).

7.4 Paper four

Paper four focuses on the experiences of youth in appointed student environmental leadership roles. This paper emerged for a number of reasons. First, while working alongside WSC’s environmental leaders, I noticed that they frequently commented on the uniqueness of their portfolio compared to the more traditional leadership positions in the school (i.e., house, sports, and cultural leaders). Thus, I was motivated to explore this uniqueness more systematically and to examine how the broader context of the school and leadership programme shaped the leaders’ perspectives and experiences. Second, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, mainstream student leadership literature scarcely mentions environmental forms of leadership, indicating that this is an area ripe for exploration. Third, during the MAD evaluation – though not discussed in papers one and two – I noticed a number of anecdotes about MAD youth participants struggling to engage their peers and clashing with senior managers over their desired level of participation in school decision-making (similar to the findings of Lousley, 1999). This prompted me to consider, amongst other things, the relationships between WSC’s environmental leaders and other members of the school community. The specific research questions for paper four are: What are young people’s experiences of holding an environmental leader position in a secondary school? How do school contextual factors shape student environmental leaders’ perspectives, experiences and practices?
Paper four employed case study methodology (Stake, 1995, 2000; Yin, 1981). Yin (1981) noted that a case study aims to explore “a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 59). In the case of this study, the phenomenon was positional student environmental leadership within one particular Auckland secondary school lacking a strong sustainability culture, but beginning to acknowledge the importance of sustainability. The study drew on a range of data sources collected during the action research project, including three sets of interviews with the environmental leaders, documents, and my research journal. I used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to construct a series of themes to convey the leaders’ experiences during their tenure.

7.5 Thesis format

As noted, the core chapters of this thesis have been written up for publication. Each chapter appears as a complete manuscript, except that the reference list is integrated into one combined list at the end of the thesis and figure numbers have been adjusted to avoid repetition. Preceding each paper is a context statement to remind the reader of the study’s research questions and its connection to the other papers. When the studies refer to each other, in-text citations are used rather than chapter numbers.

Paper one (Chapter two) is a revision of a paper that was reviewed by the *Journal of Environmental Education*. Paper two (Chapter three) was published in a special issue of *Ecopsychology*, called *Ecopsychology in the Antipodes: Perspectives from Australia and New Zealand* as: Blythe, C. & Harré, N. (2012). Inspiring youth sustainability leadership: Six elements of a transformative youth eco-retreat. *Ecopsychology, 4*(4), 336-344. Paper three (Chapter four) has been published as: Blythe, C., Harré, N., Sharma, S., Dillon, V., Douglas, B., & Didsbury, A. (2013). Guiding principles for community engagement: Reflections on a school-based sustainability project. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology, 5*(3), 44-69. Paper four (Chapter five) is being prepared for submission to an educational leadership journal. Copyright permission to include published material in this thesis is available in Appendix A.
Chapter Two
Participatory, Utilisation-focused Evaluation of a Youth Sustainability Leadership Programme

Context Statement

This co-authored manuscript is the first of two papers about the MAD youth sustainability leadership programme. It focuses on the following questions: What outcomes are associated with the MAD programme? How does the MAD programme’s structure influence such outcomes? What are the benefits and limitations of a participatory, utilisation-focused, theory of change approach to evaluation in a youth sustainability leadership context?

The core of the paper is a description of the participatory and utilisation-focused evaluation process we facilitated to explore MAD and to construct a theory of change for the programme. This process included logic modelling workshops with core programme staff and youth participants and a follow up web-based survey. The piece includes a one-page visual summary of the rationale behind programme activities, potential developmental outcomes for youth, and what actions participants subsequently take to ‘make a difference’ in their households, schools and communities. In the final chapter of this thesis, MAD’s programme configuration and theory of change are more explicitly compared to contemporaneous programmes and prior literature.
Abstract

The Make a Difference programme (MAD) supports New Zealand secondary students to take action for sustainability. This study documents a participatory, utilisation-focused evaluation of MAD, based on a theory of change approach. We ran workshops with programme coordinators and nine youth participants to develop a preliminary theory of change model. We then conducted a survey of 31 previous participants to further refine it. Findings informed the development of tools that can be used for ongoing evaluation of MAD. We discuss the benefits and limitations of our approach and offer recommendations for others who may wish to adapt it.

Key words: youth, sustainability, environmental action, leadership, evaluation, theory of change
Chapter Two: Participatory, Utilisation-focused Evaluation

Introduction

Youth leadership programmes offer a promising avenue for engaging young people in action for a sustainable future. They currently exist in a variety of forms, such as conferences, forums and summits (see Johnson et al., 2009), professional development and skill building seminars (see Sweeney, 2013), peer education programmes (see de Vreede et al., 2014), community service project clubs (see Johnson et al., 2007) and summer programmes (see Riemer, Dittmer, & Klein, 2009). However, we know relatively little about how they work, and there is considerable uncertainty as to how to evaluate their effectiveness. Several researchers have lamented the lack of quality evaluations in Environmental Education (EE) in general (Bourke, 2011; Carleton-Hug & Hug, 2010; Fien, Scott, & Tilbury, 2001; Keene & Blumstein, 2010; Thomson, Hoffman, & Staniforth, 2010). This problem may be particularly pronounced with programmes that are outside the formal school setting (Butterworth, 1999; Flowers, Guevara, & Whelan, 2009).

One issue faced by evaluators is that inspiring young people to become change agents does not necessarily produce easily measured, short-term outcomes. As with many programmes in the broad area of EE, the underlying goal may be long-term change, but it is still important to demonstrate progress in the interim (see Fien et al., 2001). Deciding on the most useful and genuine indicators of progress is complex. For example, “intention” to undertake pro-environmental behaviours is a common interim measure (Espinosa & Jacobson, 2011; Flowers, 2010; Zint, Kraemer, Northway, & Lim, 2002), but we know there are many factors that can undermine such intentions (Hines, Hungerford, & Tomera, 1986-1987; Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). A related issue is the need for more fine-grained analysis of how programmes bring about change so that these interim steps can be identified.

In response to these issues, the present article profiles the evaluation of a New Zealand youth sustainability action and leadership programme, Make a Difference (MAD). In particular we attempted to identify appropriate outcomes and tools for their ongoing measurement, while also articulating the key programme elements that may
facilitate those outcomes. We offer it as a structure for evaluating youth leadership programmes, given the challenges outlined earlier.

Our evaluation drew on a range of theories and techniques described in the academic literature. First, it was utilisation-focused; done for and with specific intended primary users, based on their needs, wants and logistical realities (Patton, 1996; Powell et al., 2006). Second, it was participatory; we sought to involve programme staff in each stage of the evaluation’s development and implementation (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Powell et al., 2006). Third, it was based on the principles of logic modelling and a theory of change approach as will be described in more detail later (Gugiu & Rodríguez-Campos, 2007). That is, we aimed to discover what the programme aimed to achieve, the mechanisms by which it attempted to do so, and to produce a model that showed these links. This became the basis for the programme’s theory of change and for an ongoing evaluation tool.

In the next section we describe the structure of the MAD programme. Following this we describe the evaluation process. We conclude by considering the benefits and limitations of our approach and offer recommendations for others who may wish to adapt our methods.

The MAD programme

Make a Difference (MAD) operates in Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city of approximately 1.5 million and is run by the city council. The design incorporated input from local youth who were among the first intake of participants in 2007. MAD aims to educate, inspire, empower, and equip students to take action for a sustainable Auckland (Jessep, 2009). At the core of the programme is a three-day residential hui (social gathering) held during the school holidays in Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, 45km from the CBD. Each day includes a wide range of activities, facilitated by adult MAD coordinators, MAD alumni, student leaders and other sustainability experts (see Blythe & Harré, 2012, for a comprehensive account of the hui). MAD takes an emancipatory approach to environmental education (Wals et al., 2008) meaning that participants are encouraged to come up with ideas for making a difference around issues that they themselves feel passionate about, rather than being told what to focus
on. An action planning session at the hui helps them to develop their ideas into concrete plans.

Participants are provided with follow-up support for approximately two years after the hui. This generally involves MAD coordinators keeping track of sustainability-related opportunities they hear about and forwarding the information through a MAD mailing list, creating a MAD Facebook group for hui participants to connect, and mentoring students to help them obtain funding or expert advice for their projects. In addition, the programme’s primary coordinator organises follow-up sessions every three months for students to come together and reflect on their successes and challenges. Depending on students’ requests, these typically include volunteering activities (e.g., tree planting) and/or leadership development workshops. As MAD is one of several leadership development programmes that Auckland Council supports, participants are encouraged to apply to the other programmes afterwards. These include the MAD Marine programme, modelled on MAD Sustainability but primarily focused on marine issues and run in partnership with the Department of Conservation, and the Sir Peter Blake Youth EnviroLeaders’ Forum, a five day conference which brings together 50 young leaders from around New Zealand to discuss topical environmental issues and develop strategies to address them.

MAD caters to thirty new students each year. Invitations are sent to all Auckland high schools encouraging teachers to identify potential leaders or articulate young people eager to get involved in environmental action. Two or three are usually accepted from each school that applies. In addition, six previous participants are selected to return as student leaders.

**Evaluation Overview**

In May 2010, we were approached to conduct an evaluation of MAD and set up a system for ongoing measurement of the programme. Thus our evaluation needed to be useful and result in a measurement tool that could be implemented by the programme coordinators. In order to ensure these objectives were met we proposed logic modelling. Logic models can help stakeholders establish a shared understanding of services and goals, identify suitable indicators for assessing programme performance
and communicate performance to funders and decision-makers (Gugiu & Rodriguez-Campos, 2007; McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999). Essentially the process produces a diagram or model that shows a programme’s theory of change; in other words what it aims to achieve and how. The traditional approach requires rigorous linking of programme resources, outputs and outcomes (see Gutiérrez & Tasse, 2007, for further discussion of types of logic models). As became apparent early in our research, this traditional approach was not suitable for MAD, given the “pick and mix” nature of the programme and the holistic transformation coordinators were hoping to achieve. Nevertheless, the modelling process still resulted in a more fully articulated programme theory than previously identified and set the framework for ongoing evaluation. The next three sections describe each stage of our research in some depth. Ethical approval was granted by The University of Auckland Human Participant Ethics Committee.

Stage One: Preliminary development of MAD’s theory of change

The first stage involved two workshops. One was with programme coordinators and the second with young people who had recently participated in MAD. An outline of each workshop is described below, followed by the findings from both workshops.

Workshop with Coordinators

In September 2010, author one and a research assistant facilitated a two hour workshop with four Auckland Council coordinators who had various roles in MAD. One participant was the programme’s founder and leader of Auckland Council’s education for sustainability team, one was the primary coordinator of MAD Sustainability, and the remaining two were hui staff. The workshop was audio-recorded. Topics included programme development and structure, participant recruitment, current methods for documenting students’ actions, the proportion of students taking action, and the types of actions they take. Then drawing on Gugiu and Roderiguez-Campos’ (2007) semi-structured interview protocol for constructing logic models and the Innovation Network’s (2010) logic model workbook, we asked coordinators about what changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours participants typically undergo as a result of being part of MAD. After this, we asked
them to brainstorm ideas about why they run MAD the way they do; essentially to articulate their theories and assumptions about how changes occur in a youth population, and how their programme is designed to facilitate this change.

The remainder of the workshop focused on the programme’s desired outcomes over time. We began by asking coordinators to recall and list a) the activities provided to participants at the hui and b) the activities offered to participants in the follow-up support period. Then we instructed them to come up with a series of statements that represented the desired short-term (immediately post-hui), intermediate (two years post-hui) and long-term (ten years post-hui) outcomes of MAD on participants.

These lists were collated onto a large piece of paper, with activities on the far left, followed by each stage of outcomes. We asked the coordinators to draw lines between the programme activities and the outcomes they were expected to create, and to indicate how the outcomes linked together over time. While they found it relatively straightforward to link the activities with short-term outcomes (e.g. “team building games” linked logically with “[students are] forming relationships with people”), they found it much more difficult to link the short-term outcomes with the more distal outcomes. In fact, it became apparent that coordinators hoped to produce a psychological shift in participants with multiple components, which together evolved into new perspectives and actions. This was one reason why we decided against producing a model that showed a linear relationship between specific activities and outcomes, and between outcomes at different time points, as seen in Figure 1.

**Workshop with Youth Participants**

A second two-hour workshop was held with a group of MAD Sustainability youth participants (“students”) in December 2010, also facilitated by author one and the research assistant. Six female and three male students attended, representing eight schools. The students were self-selected, as the workshop was incorporated into an optional follow-up group session in the school holidays. Several of the participants had been student leaders at a hui before, and the rest were intending to apply to be a leader in 2011.
After explaining the research process and obtaining consent to audio-record the workshop, we split the students into two groups to complete a storytelling activity. A week prior to the workshop we had sent them a worksheet in preparation for this. It encouraged them to write down ideas around four topics: (1) Thoughts, feelings, or images that come to mind when you think of MAD, (2) Your experiences of the MAD hui and how it affected or changed you, (3) What you are like now (with regards to sustainability issues, action and leadership), and (4) How you think you will be ten years into the future (in terms of lifestyle choices, career path, etc.). The structure of the exercise was based on the principles of the story/dialogue method developed by Ron Labonte and his colleagues (Labonte, Feather, & Hills, 1999) and adapted by Harré (2011). In brief, every person has a turn telling their story, while all other group members listen with full attention. After a speaker has finished, each group member is given the opportunity to comment briefly on ways in which the speaker’s story is like, or unlike, their own experiences, ensuring their comments are respectful. Once all stories have been told, the group discusses insights they have gained and then shares these with the wider workshop. Author one and the research assistant led one group each and took notes, paying special attention to commonalities in stories and the insights generated.

After the exercise, we asked each group to come up with a list of statements under headings that corresponded with the outcome stages used in the coordinators workshop: How the hui changed us (short-term), How we are now (intermediate), and How we will be in the future (long-term). After the groups finished brainstorming each respective list, we showed them the coordinators’ corresponding list for that stage, and asked them to agree with, disagree with, or amend each idea. Finally, we facilitated a discussion around the best aspects of MAD and what could be improved.

Findings from Stage One

Data from the workshops included transcriptions of all discussions, as well as diagrams and lists generated by participants and notes kept by the researchers. The aim was to construct a preliminary theory of change for MAD that combined the perspectives of coordinators and students. The first step was to describe the
programme’s activities and the rationale for these. This used data from the coordinators workshop alone as the students were not asked to comment on this aspect of the theory. For this step, author one scrutinised the coordinators’ workshop transcript and highlighted information related to MAD’s structure or why elements of that structure would bring about positive outcomes. This information was extracted, organised into different stages of the programme and sent back to the primary coordinator for review. After discussions about the level of detail desired, the authors reduced the material to a series of bullet points, and again checked with the primary coordinator who approved the wording. This information is presented in the upper half of Figure 1.

The key points in the left hand box “programme activities” have been outlined earlier in the section describing the MAD programme, so will not be repeated here. The right hand box summarises the coordinators’ rationale for these activities. As can be seen MAD’s recruitment process is based on an assumption that only motivated, “self-selected” students will apply to attend a leadership camp in the school holidays. The hui includes student leadership positions so that new participants can be inspired by observing similar-age role models in action, and the leaders can consolidate their skills through helping to organise the camp. According to coordinators, the hui is based on the Outward Bound philosophy of taking young people out into remote nature settings, impelling them into experiences and “expanding their horizons”. Action planning is a particularly important activity, as participants gain a lot from “bouncing ideas off each other [...] which they wouldn’t get if they were just working in isolation”. Follow-up support and opportunities are offered after the hui because of coordinators’ knowledge that “one-off experiences [...] don’t cut the mustard”. Student input is sought when organising follow-up sessions, as a means of giving participants some responsibility for identifying what skills they need to become more effective change agents.

To summarise workshop participants’ perspectives on MAD outcomes the authors first examined the lists of short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes generated by the coordinators and students, as well as the students’ comments on the outcomes generated by coordinators. It is of note that the lists for each stage were
similar. For example, knowledge was assumed to be a short-term outcome of the hui, as well as an intermediate outcome of the post-hui opportunities and it was also hoped that in the long-term MAD graduates would be seeking and gaining relevant knowledge. So rather than dividing outcomes on time dimensions, it was apparent that they could be more meaningfully divided into the developmental outcomes and types of actions that MAD nurtures. This is reflected in the layout of the bottom half of Figure 1.

Notably too, the coordinators and students produced very similar lists of outcomes and the students generally agreed with the adults’ ideas, albeit with a few alterations to wording and annotations such as “☺ but still a lot to improve on in this aspect”. In regard to the developmental outcomes, similar concepts from the lists were grouped together and given a label that seemed to best represent the essence of the underlying category. We then sent the lists of outcomes and category labels to the coordinators who agreed that these labels captured the key intended outcomes of MAD.

In order to further verify and understand these outcome categories in more depth, author one went through the transcripts and notes from the workshops, coding data relevant to the categories. Author two then read through the transcripts and notes to verify author one’s analyses. This was essentially a deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). That is, while we were open to discovering new outcome categories, we were primarily seeking to understand in greater depth the ones we had identified in the previous exercise. While no new psychological outcome categories per se emerged from this process, two additional themes were identified that provided insight into the impact of MAD. This included the theme alluded to earlier that coordinators saw the process as producing a shift in participants, an overarching outcome theme we labelled as “transformative”.

A similar process was used for the action-related outcomes, although it was much more straightforward, given their practical nature. Below, we first describe each developmental outcome category, using concepts from the original lists and quotations
from the workshops. We then describe the two additional themes and the action outcomes. The small differences between coordinators and students are outlined.

**Developmental Outcomes of MAD**

**Knowledge.** Immediately post-hui, coordinators hoped that participants would experience an ‘increase in knowledge and understanding’. Student groups said that the hui had ‘raised our awareness of sustainability’, ‘deepened our understanding of sustainability and society’ and ‘opened our eyes to opportunities for change in the world’. In the medium to long-term, coordinators hoped participants would continue ‘deepening knowledge and understanding’ and become ‘critical thinkers and questioners’. Students described themselves currently as ‘continuing to take outside opportunities to increase knowledge’. The theme of MAD nurturing knowledge was salient in all participants’ individual stories. For example: “MAD taught me a lot about sustainability [...] it made me understand the problems behind environmental issues I had previously dismissed as irrelevant, and deepened my knowledge significantly of the issues I had a good understanding of”.

**Inspiration.** Coordinators hoped participants would be ‘inspired’ after the hui and have a ‘willingness to take action and get involved in community’. Students said the hui gave them ‘motivation to bring ideas back to school’. They described themselves currently as ‘inspired and motivated to continue / start with new activities’, and as ‘being, and aspiring to be, the change we want to see in the world’. The theme of MAD nurturing inspiration was present in several participants’ stories, most notably in relation to the hui. For example: “The camp was a source of inspiration and motivation to me to begin new projects and a reminder of why it is so important to be involved in environmental groups”.

**Self-Confidence.** Coordinators hoped that immediately post-hui participants would have a ‘belief in themselves that they can make a difference’. Students said the hui ‘boosted confidence’, ‘gave us a better idea of who we are and who we want to be’. The theme of MAD nurturing self-confidence was salient in many stories. For example: “You have all these ideas at the beginning of the year and you’re like ‘oh I don’t know if they’ll work’ but [...] [MAD] really, I don’t know, gives you more confidence that people will be interested in what you’re saying”.
Figure 1. MAD’s theory of change after Stage two. The programme’s initial hui and follow up support are postulated to nurture a range of developmental outcomes related to sustainability leadership: increased knowledge, inspiration, self-confidence, social connection, connection to nature and resources and skills. This combination may prompt a transformation in youth that results in them initiating action and taking up further leadership development opportunities. Actions and leadership opportunities further enhance the developmental outcomes and ultimately participants’ action competence. Actions may also contribute to positive impacts for Auckland households, schools and communities.
Social Connection. Coordinators hoped that participants would ‘feel the power of being part of a group’ as a result of the hui and be ‘forming relationships with people’. Student groups said that they experienced a ‘feeling of like-mindedness’, ‘made new friendships’ and ‘strengthened relationships with the person/people we went with’. In the medium to long-term coordinators hoped that participants would ‘feel supported and connected to achieve their desired outcomes’, while students said that they were currently ‘still in touch with MADsters – building friendships’, and that ‘our energy together is more than the sum of our individual energies’. In their stories, the theme of social connection was salient. For example: “It’s a real supportive environment. It’s got amazing people that you can connect in with [...] you don’t feel like you’re just one person, you feel like you’re part of a growing movement”.

Connection to Nature. Coordinators hoped that as a result of holding the hui in a pristine nature setting participants would be ‘forming relationships with the environment’. Students generally endorsed this idea, but many said they already had a connection to nature prior to MAD. Notably, they did not come up with a similar outcome themselves. However, a few students made positive references to the hui’s setting in their stories. For example: “The atmosphere in the native bush with such good people made it a good place to be planning ideas and actions”.

Resources and Skills. While coordinators did not indicate this outcome developing in the short-term, students said that the hui ‘built our leadership skills’, ‘gave us the ability to influence people in our communities’, ‘made us understand how important a positive approach is’ and ‘opened our ideas to different career ideas’. Coordinators hoped that in the medium to long-term students would be ‘developing tools to allow them to achieve desired actions/outcomes and overcome barriers’, ‘celebrating and having successes along the way’ and importantly, ‘action competent – able to implement meaningful action’. Students said they currently ‘find it easier to organise projects’ and ‘don’t let obstacles stand in our way, find solutions to problems’. The notion of MAD contributing to participants’ resources and skills was present in several stories. For example:

The contacts you gain [...] are extremely valuable [...] the best thing for me was the significant help I received for the Environmental Initiatives Fund application
Chapter Two: Participatory, Utilisation-focused Evaluation

I was filling out at the time; having links and networks outside of school makes my role within the school more effective.

Additional Themes

*MAD as transformative.* This emergent theme was deduced from a range of comments about MAD provoking significant shifts or discoveries in participants. Some of these were related to finding a supportive community. For instance, coordinators explained that some students can feel isolated in their schools, and when they come to the hui they are thrilled to discover that “*there are people out there like me!*” Youth participants corroborated this, with one describing his reaction to MAD as “*Oh my God, these people exist!*”. Other comments related to students’ knowledge and self-confidence. For example, coordinators explained that certain workshops at the hui elicited significant realisations such as “*I actually have power over what I buy*” and “*I can make a change, I don’t have to wait until my friend starts something and help him, I can actually be an instigator*”. Importantly, participants in the youth workshop reflected that MAD had impelled them to take action. One storytelling group concluded: “*Even though we’ve all come from such different places and had different journeys, we all agreed that MAD was the starting point [...] it kick-started us into doing things*”. Taken as a whole, these comments led us to propose that the developmental areas nurtured by MAD may combine to produce a shift or “transformation” in participants, which may prompt them into action.

*Diversity within participants’ characteristics and contexts.* An additional emergent theme from the coordinators’ workshop was that MAD participants are a diverse group, and each student’s response to the programme will be influenced by their individual characteristics and factors within their social context. Related to this, coordinators were explicit about not wanting to make unwarranted claims about MAD. For example, one said:

A lot of these students arrive with beginnings ... and we just sort of nurture it ... I would ... loathe to be claiming that, you know, that this experience creates all
this because I don’t think it does. It does channel it, well it may [create it] for some, but it channels it.

In Figure 1, the notion of transformation is represented in a cycle that connects the developmental and action-related outcomes. Although mentioned under resources and skills, the notion of ‘action competence’ is also part of this cycle as it represents what MAD coordinators hope youth participants will ultimately develop – the ability to implement meaningful action. Diversity within participants’ characteristics and contexts are represented in the diagram as moderators of the cycle.

*Actions prompted by MAD.* From both workshops we gleaned that MAD appears to nurture action in multiple domains, and that further leadership development is a particular category of action. Actions take place in participants’ personal lives and households, within their schools, in their local communities, and occasionally on a national or international level. This was apparent in the storytelling exercise when students described lifestyle changes and projects they had been involved in, and through anecdotes in the coordinators’ workshop about various projects they had heard about since MAD’s inception. Further, in their lists of ideas, coordinators hoped that in future MAD participants would be ‘walking the talk in their personal lives’, ‘engaged and active in community and politically’, and ‘taking leadership opportunities in whatever field they choose’, while students imagined they would be ‘integrating sustainability into our lifestyles, careers, home’, ‘encouraging more environmentally friendly practices in the work place’ and ‘still connecting with our communities’.

**Stage Two: Assessing Consensus and Refining the Theory**

To investigate if the proposed developmental outcomes of MAD were endorsed by a wider group of MAD graduates, and to explore the actions they took in more detail, author one worked with MAD’s primary coordinator to develop an online survey for the young people who had participated in the programme prior to 2011. After piloting it with two youth from the workshops in Stage One, author one sent the link to each prospective participant in a personalised email invitation which also offered them the chance to win a “fair trade eco hamper” after completion. Reminder
emails were sent out two and six weeks after the initial invitation. In total, thirty-one young people out of a possible 108 responded (29%). Notably, some of the email addresses on file may have been out of date, perhaps contributing to the low response rate. To protect participants’ anonymity, the only potentially identifying information collected was the year/s in which they attended a MAD hui, and whether they had been a student leader or not. The survey contained 12 sections in total, although here we focus on those specifically relevant to this article.

Assessing consensus

To assess consensus on the outcomes proposed to be nurtured by MAD, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. We constructed these statements from categories identified in Stage One, and drew on the language of the workshop participants where possible. For practical purposes, respondents were asked about themselves in the same three stages as the youth workshop – how the hui had changed them, how they experience themselves currently, and how they think they will be in the future. Table 1 depicts the statements used, and indicates which outcome category they relate to. As can also be seen on this table, mean ratings ranged from 5.00 – 6.50, suggesting that respondents tended to endorse the outcomes identified in the workshops.

Exploring post-hui actions

To investigate students’ post-hui actions in more detail, we included a series of open-ended questions with examples as prompts. For example: Since the MAD hui, have you taken any actions in your school to promote sustainability? (E.g. taken on a role as an environment leader, set up or joined your school’s envirogroup, helped build a worm farm, promoted recycling at assembly, led a food garden project). If so, please try and give as much detail as possible about your involvement. The same format was used for other domains identified in the workshops – households/personal lives, local community, and national/international level. In a multiple-choice question we asked them to indicate all the MAD/Council-organised activities they had participated in since attending the
hui. In another open-ended question we asked if there was anything they had done to continue learning about sustainability since the hui, and if so, to describe.

To analyse the data from the open-ended questions, author one and a research assistant worked through a process of independent parallel coding (Thomas, 2006). This involved each researcher independently examining the responses and coming up with a set of categories for coding the data. The two sets were then compared for consistency and merged to form a more robust set of categories. During this process we decided to combine participants’ responses to the local and national/international questions into a community actions category because some actions appeared to be a blend of both. We also noticed that respondents occasionally described actions they had been engaged in before the hui and were still engaged in afterwards (e.g., household recycling efforts). Because we did not have a measure of their actions prior to the hui, we could not meaningfully explore pre-post hui changes in this analysis. To simplify things we treated actions that began pre-hui and continued post-hui in the same way as new actions. Each response was coded into the revised categories by the two researchers and any discrepancies were subsequently checked, discussed, and resolved. Table 2 depicts the categories generated, the percentage of participants that contributed to each category, and sample quotations. Data from the question about MAD/Council-organised activities is included under the “leadership development” domain. As can be seen, the most common actions reported were related to household waste reduction and management, personal transport choices, taking up relevant leadership positions at school, being active in an existing student environmental group, running waste-related projects or campaigns at school, joining relevant groups or networks in the community, and participating in community initiatives such as meetings, expos, festivals and restoration projects. Some respondents provided precise information about their personal contribution to school and community initiatives, while others were less clear. The majority of respondents indicated that they had attended MAD follow-up group sessions, about half had been a leader at a MAD hui and half had attended related programmes. Slightly less than half reported learning more about sustainability, in a variety of modes.
### Table 1. Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Survey Items Representing MAD’s Developmental Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The MAD hui...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised my awareness of sustainability (K)</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deepened my knowledge about sustainability (K)</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opened my eyes to opportunities for change in the world (K)</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated me to get involved in environmental change in my school/community (I)</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspired me (I)</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me the sense that I could make a difference (C)</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me more confidence (C)</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me a better idea of who I am and who I want to be (C)</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me the opportunity to form new relationships with people (S)</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduced me to like-minded people (S)</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthened my relationship with the person or people I went with (S)</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me a powerful feeling of being part of a group (S)</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked me to experts and resources (R)</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built my leadership skills (R)</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opened my eyes up to different career ideas (R)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made me feel more connected to nature (N)</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How I am now</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am putting into practice the information given to me at the MAD hui (A)</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am deepening my knowledge about sustainability (K)</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am learning how to implement meaningful sustainability projects (A)</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am developing networks which connect me to helpful people and resources (R)</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look for solutions to problems (R)</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t let obstacles stand in my way (R)</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am engaging with my community (A)</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am successful in executing my action plans (A)</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I celebrate my achievements (R)</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am still in touch with other MAD graduates (S)</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by the MAD community to achieve my sustainability goals (S)</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take opportunities that are put before me (A)</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek opportunities to learn more (K)</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the future I see myself...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a critical thinker and questioner (K)</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing to deepen my knowledge about sustainability (K)</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking leadership opportunities in my field (A)</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging environmentally friendly practices in my workplace (A)</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a sustainable role model in my personal life (A)</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching or inspiring others to take care of the environment (A)</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being active in community and political issues (A)</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging with sustainability issues in my career (A)</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Types of MAD Student Actions, Leadership Development, and Learning Modes (with the Percentage of Survey Respondents that Contributed to Each Category)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Category (Quotations italicised)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal life</strong></td>
<td>Waste (e.g., refusing, reducing, reusing, recycling, composting, worm farming)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport (e.g., taking public transport, walking, cycling, reduced car use)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Energy (e.g., choosing energy efficient products, reducing energy use)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growing food</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conscious consumerism (e.g., buying local, organic, second-hand, eating more vegetarian food, boycotting palm oil)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Water (e.g., taking short showers, installing rainwater tank)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educating others (e.g., about recycling, energy use)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joining / being active in student environmental group</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking up a relevant leadership position at school</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Founding student environmental group “I started the environmental club at my school. Now it’s the biggest club there and it is still going strong”</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waste management improvements (e.g., setting up recycling, compost/worm farm)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waste awareness campaigns (e.g. discouraging litter, promoting recycling) “We ran a “stop the drop” anti-litter campaign (find it on YouTube) which changed the culture of our school”</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other awareness campaigns (e.g., environmental film screenings, mural painting, palm oil audit, consumerism awareness) “We currently have Sarah [from MAD] running conscious consumerism workshops for the entire year 9 student body”</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planting projects on school grounds (e.g., growing fruit/vegetables, native trees)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restoration projects (e.g. stream/creek/beach clean ups, riparian planting)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport (e.g., arranging better bus services, promoting walking)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td>Joining groups or networks (e.g., Greenpeace, 350, Greens on Campus)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participating in community initiatives (e.g., meetings, festivals, restoration projects)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organising community initiatives (e.g., restoration projects, festivals, fundraising, newsletters, workshops, helping local schools) “I went down to Bayswater primary to help the students make a carbon footprint for their school (with the rest of my committee) and to help a teacher with a curriculum to teach the students what a carbon footprint was/meant (by myself)”</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking political action (e.g., writing to politicians, signing petitions, working for Green Party)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>Attending MAD follow-up group sessions*</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being a student leader at a MAD hui*</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attending related Auckland Council programmes*</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attending other conferences, gatherings or forums “[At COP16] I directly questioned an intergovernmental negotiations panel on whether they truly believe that the climate crisis can be solved by economic/market mechanisms”</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership development</strong></td>
<td>Reading (e.g., books, magazines, journal articles)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attending events, conferences, gatherings, or forums</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal education (e.g., classes in geography, psychology, bioscience, ecology, conservation, environmental economics, politics)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Membership in groups</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Taking a general interest</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media (e.g., documentaries, YouTube videos)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking to other MAD students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Frequency data from multiple-choice question.
Exploring the overall effect of MAD

At the end of the survey participants were asked to summarise the overall effect of MAD on them in one sentence. This question was designed as a further check for the developmental outcomes identified in Stage One and was analysed using the same independent parallel coding process described earlier. Apart from Connection to Nature, which was noticeably absent, each outcome category was identified in at least 5 responses, and several responses were coded with multiple categories. Notably, the theme of MAD as transformative was identified in 10 (32%) responses. For example, one participant described the effect MAD had as “Life altering – MAD gave shape/an opening to a niche (lifestyle, people, knowledge, skills) I had been looking for” while another wrote “Complete and utter revolution. It has connected me to a wide network of people and enabled me to gain the skills and ability to become an ambassador of change in the world”.

Refining MAD’s Theory of Change

The survey results indicated general support for the outcomes identified in the workshops and informed further development of the model. In consultation with coordinators, we added detail on the action and leadership nurtured by MAD, shown in the central bottom part of Figure 1. The survey results also provided strong support for the key position of “transformation” within the model, and the ultimate outcome of developing “action competence”.

Furthermore, the rich detail provided by the survey participants on their actions prompted us to add the final boxes in the lower half of Figure 1 that capture the potential social impact of MAD. Retrospectively, we realised that this broader theme of social impact was present in the initial workshop with coordinators, and in our many discussions with them, but we had overlooked it with the initial focus on outcomes for MAD participants rather than for society in general.

Stage Three: Building Feedback into MAD’s Structure

As noted, one of the goals of our evaluation was to assist MAD coordinators with creating a system to efficiently collect ongoing data on participants’ and
graduates’ actions. To achieve this, author one worked with the primary coordinator and a MAD graduate to develop a targeted survey based on the information we had gathered in the theory-building process. The survey is designed to be sent to participants via SurveyMonkey towards the end of each school term. It provides participants with a list of the action categories identified in Stage Two and asks them to indicate if they have undertaken actions in each category and to describe this action. This format is expected to facilitate recall and may prompt respondents to reflect on other things they could do. Moreover, when the data is downloaded, the primary coordinator can instantly see the frequencies of actions within each category as well as descriptions from individual students; a suitable level of detail for writing accountability reports to her managers. The survey also includes multiple choice questions on recent local events, campaigns and leadership development opportunities and allows respondents to select those they have participated in. It also asks students about their Challenges and Support and Future Actions. Responses to these questions can be used to arrange more tailored support for each participant.

In summary, this system is easy to use, and based the programme’s theory of change as identified by coordinators and participants. It is also sustainable as it allows the responsibility for implementation, maintenance and analysis to sit within the programme structure (see Powell et al., 2006, for more on sustainable evaluation frameworks), for more on sustainable evaluation frameworks). In addition, we are working with the coordinators on a pre/post-test that will allow them to measure the developmental outcomes nurtured by MAD, as well as identify environmental actions participants are engaging in before the programme so they can more effectively demonstrate change.

**Discussion**

In this research, we developed and refined a theory of change model for the Make A Difference programme using an approach derived from logic modelling. As noted in the introduction, we were utilisation-focused, that is we aimed for the evaluation to be of value to the primary users of MAD, in this case the coordinators that develop and run it. We also took a participatory approach, consulting frequently
with coordinators and to a lesser extent with MAD participants and graduates through each stage of the research.

The utility of our evaluation has been demonstrated in a number of ways. First, it has led to the development of a simple new tool that can be used by the programme coordinators for ongoing measurement of MAD’s impact. Second, the coordinators have used the theory of change to market the programme. For example they commissioned a short animated film focusing on the key elements that was posted on Auckland Council’s website (see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2roPuQ1JV4). Third, the primary coordinator presented data from the evaluation at a council seminar which was extremely positively received, resulted in several offers of assistance and appeared to help secure the future of the programme (Cate Jessep, personal communication).

While the simple but comprehensive theory of change approach itself almost certainly prompted these uses of the evaluation, it is also plausible that our participatory method helped. In a recent review of EE programme evaluations, Zint (2013) noted that the relatively few studies that reported involving stakeholders also demonstrated how evaluation results and recommendations were utilised to improve the programmes. In contrast, studies that did not report strong stakeholder participation also tended not to mention the use of findings. While there is clearly a place for building up general theories of programme mechanisms, we agree with Zint that evaluators should put thought into how their methods can promote educator ownership and empowerment. In addition to informing programme development, participatory approaches can also help people to learn to “think evaluatively”, an impact that may far outlive the use of specific findings (Patton, 2002).

By including the youth participants at all stages of the process, we also potentially increased the credibility and in turn the utility of our findings. MAD and many other environmental education initiatives are focused on youth empowerment so evaluations that give youth genuine voice are likely to be more readily embraced by the programme culture.
The evaluation process we have described here may be especially useful for programmes that have been developed informally without clear articulations of their programme’s goals (Wiltz, 2005). While traditional logic modelling may be inappropriate in that it requires identifying specific causal relationships that may not apply, the more fluid process we followed allows programme developers and evaluators to reach agreement on the core activities of the programme, the desired outcomes and the likely moderators of these outcomes.

Articulating such factors is critical for making informed decisions about the best use of evaluation resources and offers opportunities to consider improvements (P. J. Rogers, 2002). For example, we identified that “connection to nature” was considered a key psychological outcome by the programme coordinators but was given much less weighting by MAD students. This led to discussions with coordinators about whether this component is not adequately provided, is less necessary than assumed, or was overlooked by participants.

There were a number of limitations within our process. One issue is that it involved self-selected students who may well have had a more “successful” journey through MAD than some others. It is also possible the workshop atmosphere generated a positive focus and it was difficult for students to be critical, although it was made clear that they should be honest and that the coordinators would never know what individual participants contributed. Related to this, we did not explore in any depth what enabled or constrained participants’ ongoing activism. The literature points to several possible initiating and sustaining factors, such as family, school and community factors (Harré, 2007; Riemer et al., 2014). To more fully understand MAD it would be useful to conduct comprehensive case studies of participants to generate nuanced information about what individual and contextual factors are associated with positive outcomes.

It is also important to acknowledge that any diagram such as our theory of change model oversimplifies reality. For example, as already discussed programme models can obscure non-linear causal relationships (Rogers, 2002). Our model went through several iterations that are not discussed here. At each stage there were
numerous choices about how to best represent what we were discovering. This was exacerbated by MAD offering a variety of opportunities to students so there is no standard experience. We suggest however, that it would be unwise to attempt to standardise a programme for the sake of evaluation! So a programme model must always be understood as partial, and not necessarily the only or even necessarily the best way of representing the programme. Nevertheless, if the focus is on utility and participation, as ours was, even less than the best will do.

As a final point, we agree with Gutiérrez and Tasse (2007) who stress that evaluators using a theory of change approach should remain flexible. Environmental leadership is a complex phenomenon and both programme developers and evaluators need to remain open to new evidence. It is certainly possible that the future evaluation of MAD may require new iterations of the current model.

Conclusion

Leadership programmes like MAD are likely to be an important part of inspiring change towards a sustainable future, but they are challenging to evaluate. Their goals may be open-ended and the transformations they trigger difficult to measure. Nevertheless, as with MAD, it is still useful to articulate a programme’s theory of change. This can aid in both continued development of the programme and in satisfying funders and other external stakeholders that the programme is worth supporting. It is our hope that the participatory methods presented in this article may provide a useful starting point for practitioners and evaluators working on youth leadership for a sustainable future.
Chapter Three

Inspiring Youth Sustainability Leadership: Six Elements of a Transformative Youth Eco-Retreat

Context Statement

This co-authored article is the second about MAD, and was published in the journal *Ecopsychology*. The study followed up on the finding of the broader MAD evaluation – detailed in Chapter Two – that the hui component of the programme was particularly powerful. As such, it explores the hui in some depth and theorises about aspects that contribute to its transformative potential. The research questions this study sought to answer were: *What makes the MAD hui powerful? What is the value of transformative experiences in inspiring social action towards a more sustainable world?*

The paper begins with a narrative titled “Journey through a MAD Hui”, inspired in part by Pancer, Rose-Krasnor, and Loiselle’s (2002) composite account of a young person’s experience of their first conference. I constructed this narrative based on my observations of the camp in 2011 and 2012, and evaluation forms filled out by participants at the end of these hui. The remainder of the paper presents a thematic analysis of a range of data sources conducted as part of the broader evaluation, in conjunction with a review of relevant literature.
Chapter Three: Six Elements of a Transformative Youth Eco Retreat

Abstract

We suggest that the transformations which inspire true eco-leadership are nourished by being immersed in the values and practices of a more sustainable way of living. We explore this using a case study of a New Zealand youth sustainability leadership programme called Make A Difference (MAD). Run by Auckland Council, the programme is centred on a three day hui (social gathering) for selected high school students. We observed the hui in 2011 and 2012, ran workshops with the coordinators and participants from previous years, conducted an online survey with MAD graduates and interviewed two participants during the 2012 hui. Six key elements were identified as underlying the hui’s power: it is residential, it is held in a nature setting, it brings together inspiring role models, it models eco-friendly living, it helps participants develop their own ideas for action, and it endorses a positive approach to sustainability. We explore each of these in turn. In combination, we suggest these elements immerse participants in an alternative world that is psychologically transformative and helps them feel hopeful about the sustainability movement. We recommend these elements are considered when planning eco-retreats designed to promote sustainability leadership, particularly those for young people.

Key words: adolescence, activism, sustainability, identity, connection to nature
Chapter Three: Six Elements of a Transformative Youth Eco Retreat

Introduction

Sustainability is about a societal shift. While some believe that the only way out of the ecological crisis is to go further into industrial development (e.g. Mol, 1995) we suggest it will require new ways of managing ourselves (Harré, 2011) and identity transformations such as those advocated by deep ecology (Devall, 1980; Næss, 1989) and voluntary simplicity (Doherty & Etzioni, 2003; Elgin, 1993). These movements suggest, and we agree, that human flourishing will almost certainly need to be realigned with non-materialistic values if we are to live together in relative harmony on our resource-finite planet.

Young people are critical to this shift. Not only are youth in a period of consolidating habits and behavioural patterns (Hurrelmann & Raithel, 2005; Moreno et al., 2008), they are also undergoing psychological changes that affect their identity and interpersonal relationships (Blakemore, 2008; Marcia, 1980). Transforming young people into active citizens with values better suited to a sustainable future is a potential mechanism for shaping a new culture (de Vreede, 2011; Fien et al., 2008). With their openness to change and long history of taking leadership in social movements (Ginwright & James, 2002), young people have the potential to be catalysts of environmental change in their communities (Ballantyne et al., 1998; Jensen, Kofoed, Uhrenholdt, & Vognsen, 1995).

While identities for social change can be organised against something, as Teivainen (2002) notes “being anti-something can be politically useful, but only up to a point” (p. 626). Too often the environmental movement can overwhelm people with doom and gloom messages that are focused on what you can’t do rather than positive visions of an alternative future (Mazur, 2010). However, it is positive visions that engage and inspire happiness-hungry humans (see Harré, 2011). Likewise, environmentalists often demand that we change, but are not always good at providing opportunities for people to deeply imagine or experience this change. In fact, there is often a separation of rhetoric and practice that may lead to contradictions between the two. For example, sustainability concepts taught in schools are sometimes not
consistent with school facilities, governance structures and everyday consumption practices modelled to students (Higgs & McMillan, 2006).

Moreover, mainstream environmentalists’ efforts to shift public consciousness have often focused on “green consumerism”, an approach which Hamilton (2010) suggested “threatens to entrench the very attitudes and behaviours that are antithetical to sustainability” (p. 573). On the one hand, shallow-reaching campaigns characterised by small and painless steps or appeals to materialistic values may be realistic in bringing about some change quickly (WWF, 2008). On the other hand, they expose a contradiction within the environmental movement that may be viewed as hypocritical. Hypocrisy generally has negative implications; it undermines trust, tarnishes the values and goals portrayed by a leader, and encourages cynicism in others (Finnemore, 2009; Glaser, 2006). But worse than that, hypocrisy diminishes opportunities for learning and emulation (Bandura, 1986).

We suggest that true eco-leadership, education and psychological transformation are nourished by holistic experiences that allow people to be immersed in values and different ways of living. In this article we explore these ideas in the context of a youth sustainability leadership programme called Make a Difference (MAD). Developed in 2007, MAD is offered to high school students (aged 13–18 years) in Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city. It starts with a three-day residential hui (a Māori term for social gathering) with a focus on practicing a sustainable way of living while learning about sustainability and developing action plans to make a difference. The camp is followed by a follow-up support period in which MAD coordinators mentor students, support their leadership endeavours and connect them with additional opportunities for action and skill-building. MAD caters to 30 new students each year. Invitations are sent to high schools in Auckland, asking teachers to identify potential participants. Interested students apply by writing an essay about why they want to attend, why sustainability is important to them, and what ideas they have for making a difference in their school or community. Coordinators strive to involve as many schools as possible, while ensuring that each participant has adequate peer
support when they return. Thus, two or three students from each school is optimal. In
addition, six graduates from the previous year return to the hui as student leaders.

We suggest that the MAD hui is a transformative experience for participants,
brought about by a complete immersion in the values being promoted. The best way to
comprehend this is to get a feel for what happens at the camp. Thus, we begin by
presenting a chronological narrative of the three days, based on our observations of it
in action in 2011 and 2012. We have written this from the assumed perspective of a
participant. Next, we outline the methods that we used to explore how MAD operates
and its impact on young people. Third, we present an analysis of six key concepts that
we suggest contribute to the transformative potential of the hui, incorporating evidence
from the literature and the perspectives of coordinators and participants.

Journey Through a MAD Hui

If you get accepted into MAD, your journey will begin on a mid-autumn
morning at Auckland Council. You’ll join 36 slightly nervous looking students on a
bus bound for Huia, a quiet settlement in the Waitakere Ranges, 45km from Auckland’s
CBD. There won’t be any network coverage; gone will be texting, Facebook, Twitter
and Tumblr. When you arrive, you’ll stow your gear in the lodge dormitories, meet the
park ranger and hear about the region’s history. Then, MAD staff will explain
guidelines and health and safety issues. Importantly, they’ll stress that the purpose of
the hui is to learn about sustainability, and that while doing so, the group is going to
try and live as sustainably as possible. For starters, all waste will be sorted. Food
scraps will go to pigs on a neighbouring property. Glass, cans, paper, and plastic
labelled 1-7 will be recycled. The only thing destined for landfill will be non-recyclable
packaging, and there won’t be much of this. There will also be a game called Caught
Being Green. If you witness somebody doing something particularly eco-friendly, you
can write their name and action on a post-it note and stick it on the dining hall’s notice
board.

After eating your packed lunch from home (and cringing at how much landfill
waste you generated) the afternoon will begin with a series of team building activities.
You’ll then be allocated into a group of six students from your region, led by one who has been on the camp before. This group will be like your family; you’ll share chores, reflect on your learning together, and look out for one another. The first group activity will involve piecing together a puzzle from a series of pictures that represent four pillars of sustainability: environment, society, culture, and economy. The key point is that sustainability is a complex issue and we need to consider all pillars when devising solutions to problems. The environment forms the puzzle’s border, signifying that society, culture, and the economy are dependent on it.

Next you’ll be given a recycled paper notepad and pen in preparation for the afternoon’s speakers. The first, a marine biologist, will tell you about the state of Auckland’s air, land, freshwater and marine resources, the pressure human activity has put on them, and what Auckland Council is doing to reduce this. He’ll also inform you about local conservation projects you can get involved in, and ways you can minimise your impact on the environment.

After an afternoon tea of locally grown fruit and homemade biscuits, you’ll hear from a MAD graduate who is now at university. He’ll talk about various projects he’s been involved in, and the lessons he’s learnt about teamwork, being brave, staying positive, and pursuing what inspires you. At dinner time, you’ll find someone you don’t know, discover his or her favourite pizza toppings, and make a pizza slice for that person while he or she makes one for you. After a blessing, everyone will eat and chat about the day’s happenings.

The final session of the day will be facilitated by a MAD graduate just a few years older than you. She’ll show a film called Carving the Future about inspiring youth leaders from around New Zealand. Then she’ll talk about ways you can turn your inspiration into positive change. These include mass mobilisation (e.g., organising flashmobs), creative arts (e.g., writing raps), social networking (e.g., using social media), community (e.g., devising local solutions), and policy (e.g., writing policy submissions). In groups you’ll select an environmental issue (e.g., fracking) and plan a campaign using one of these strategies.
Finally, you’ll head back to your dormitory. Your mind will be racing with new ideas, and it’ll take a little while to wind down. The chatter of your roommates will stop eventually, and you’ll snuggle up in your sleeping bag and fall asleep to the sound of a morepork outside.

On day two you’ll be up at 6am for yoga followed by a breakfast of cereal, toast, fruit, homemade yoghurt and tea or coffee. Then you’ll move straight into the first workshop, run by an experienced facilitator. He’ll take the group through a series of exercises allowing you to envision the kind of future you want, accept where we currently are in society, and highlight the choice you have to bring us closer to your vision. He’ll show videos about poverty, social justice, and environmental degradation, and you’ll realise how morally complex sustainability is.

Next, you’ll head outside for a brisk walk in the Waitakere Ranges. Along the track, park rangers will tell you Māori legends about the area and point out native puriri moths and kauri snails. The next workshop will be hands-on. You’ll head to a stream to meet people from Waicare, a water quality monitoring group. They’ll collect samples from the stream, and set up stations with water-testing equipment. You’ll learn how to test the water’s pH, temperature, oxygen content, and clarity, and what the presence of certain invertebrates says about stream health. Waicare will facilitate discussion about the differences between the pristine water in the bush and the streams in the city, and what you can do to improve urban streams.

After a lunch of pita pockets, you’ll head back indoors for a particularly novel sensory experience. A park ranger who has a permit to keep 50 lizards will bring along his collection and let them crawl all over everyone while he talks about native reptiles and the impact human activity is having on their habitats. The experience of holding a tiny gecko in your hands will give you a sense of just how fragile these creatures are.

Next a MAD coordinator will facilitate a conscious consumerism workshop. You’ll watch a film called Story of Stuff, discuss shopping experiences, and deconstruct the social, cultural, and environmental implications of consumer goods like cotton, coffee, bananas, and chocolate. You’ll learn about New Zealand’s consumption
patterns, and how to consume more ethically by buying second-hand, supporting fair trade, and choosing products with low environmental impacts. By the end you might also start noticing fair trade and eco-friendly products being used around the camp.

After dinner, the student leaders will present speeches to the group about why they’ve come back as leaders, what they’ve achieved since last year and what advice they can offer about school sustainability projects. It’s a fitting precursor to the final activity of the day. In this session, you’ll sit with students from your school and brainstorm ideas for projects you could create to make a positive difference. You’ll select your favourite idea and plan out the steps needed to bring it to fruition, while MAD coordinators give you suggestions for helpful resources and experts you might want to approach. Finally, everyone will get into a circle and each school will share their action plan and receive a round of applause.

On day three you’ll pack up your belongings, have breakfast, and do your share of the cleaning duties. Before boarding the bus, MAD staff will facilitate a waste audit. They’ll set up bins for different kinds of waste, and tip the contents of any landfill rubbish bags onto a tarpaulin. The group will then sort the items into the bins and properly deal with any recycling or food scraps. You might be quite surprised at the small quantity produced, and notice that it mainly seems to be from the packed lunches on the first day.

On the way home, you’ll visit Earthsong, an innovative eco-neighbourhood. You’ll learn about the history of the village and its sustainable systems, which include solar panels, rainwater collection, storm-water and grey-water management, composting toilets, permaculture gardening and a consensus decision-making system. After a tour and shared lunch with residents, the group will take part in an outdoor clean-up involving weeding, tree planting and cleaning the swales which collect and retain rainwater. Before leaving, you’ll complete an evaluation form about the hui. It will ask you to describe learning highlights, your new ideas for making a difference, what you want your sustainability legacy to be, how the hui has helped you make a plan to achieve this, and how Auckland Council can assist young people in creating a
more sustainable Auckland. You’ll also rate your satisfaction of the camp and make recommendations for improving it.

Once the evaluations have been collected, each participant will be given a fair trade, organic cotton MAD T-shirt to acknowledge their membership in the MAD community. After final group photos, you’ll hop aboard the bus home. Student leaders will read out the Caught Being Green post-it notes and the nominees will be congratulated. When you pull up at Auckland Council, it’ll be hard to believe you only went away for two nights, because so much will have happened. You’ll grab your bags, hug your new friends, find your caregiver, and head home to rest.

**Methods Used to Explore MAD’s Operation and Impact**

In 2010, Auckland Council’s MAD coordinators approached us to ask if we were interested in helping them evaluate their programme. They had previously heard about our work on a sustainability-themed action research project at a local high school (see Blythe et al., 2013) and knew of author two’s research on activists (see Harré, Tepavac, & Bullen, 2009). Primarily, they wanted us to explore the impacts of the programme on participants, and to improve their systems for collecting evidence that participants were taking sustainability-related actions. However, our past experiences from the action research project – in particular, our attempts to always demonstrate the sustainability values and behaviour we were helping promote at the school – led us to be very interested in how the hui component of MAD was run. We were curious about the camp’s location, operations, activities, and the general atmosphere created by the facilitators and participants. Thus, our research involved collecting detailed information about, and later observing, the hui, alongside the broader evaluation. We received approval for our research from the University of Auckland’s Human Participants Ethics Committee.

The first phase of our research involved facilitating two workshops; one with four programme coordinators and another with nine students who had been involved in MAD as participants or student leaders in 2009 and/or 2010. The coordinators’ workshop included discussions around programme development, participant
recruitment, and systems for documenting students’ actions. We also asked coordinators to describe changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours students typically undergo as a result of participation, and what they perceived to be the key ingredients of the hui and follow-up support. In the students’ workshop, we facilitated a storytelling exercise (see Harré, Bullen, & Olson, 2006; Labonte et al., 1999) allowing each participant to share their journey through MAD and how it had affected them. In both these workshops we asked participants to brainstorm in groups their ideas for MAD outcomes in three stages: short term (immediately post-hui), intermediate (2 years post-hui) and long-term (10 years post-hui).

For the purposes of the larger evaluation, we used this data to construct a preliminary theory of change model for MAD that summarised programme activities and coordinators’ theories of why these are effective, as well as coordinators’ and students’ ideas for MAD outcomes. The second phase of the research involved creating an online survey for previous MAD participants. We invited all attendees from 2007 – 2010 to take part; thus they took the survey between one and four years after attending a hui. Out of a possible 108, thirty-one participants responded. The survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements representing the key themes from the workshops. We also included open-ended questions which asked respondents to describe: actions they had been taking to make a difference in their personal lives, schools, and communities since the hui; if and how they had been continuing to learn about sustainability; and any suggestions they had for improving the programme. Finally they wrote a sentence that summarised the overall effect of the MAD programme on them.

The results of the survey led to further development of our theory of change. To summarise the findings from this phase of the research we found that MAD appears to nurture a number of developmental outcomes: knowledge, inspiration, self-confidence, social connection, resources and skills, and connection to nature. The MAD experience also appears to nurture action and leadership in multiple life domains. In the survey, the vast majority of respondents reported on actions they had taken on a lifestyle level to make their daily habits more environmentally responsible. These included being less
wasteful, setting up compost bins or worm farms, using public transport, walking or cycling more frequently, growing food in the garden, being a conscious consumer, and conserving water and energy. Almost all participants reported on actions that they had taken in their schools. These included joining or leading student environmental groups, improving school waste management systems, campaigning to raise awareness of issues such as consumerism, poverty, or palm oil, and organising tree planting or local stream restoration projects. Several participants reported they were engaged in actions on a community level. These included participating in or helping organise local sustainability-related events or festivals, joining other advocacy groups such as 350 and Greenpeace, and political actions such as signing petitions and writing letters to politicians. A number of participants had gone on to represent Auckland at national level youth environmental forums, and a few had represented New Zealand at international climate change conferences and other global youth gatherings.

While these are outcomes of MAD as a whole, one cross-cutting theme that came through prominently in participants’ and coordinators’ reflections was the transformative nature of the three day hui. Hence, the purpose of the current article is to tease out what makes the hui so powerful, and to reflect on the value of transformative experiences in inspiring social action towards a sustainable world.

As described earlier, we observed the hui in action in 2011 and 2012. Author one attended the camps as an extra helper, and both authors facilitated a workshop at the 2012 hui. In addition to documenting the day’s activities and her thoughts and feelings in a journal each night, author one conducted a semi-structured paired interview with two female participants at the 2012 hui. One of these was a 15 year old MAD student leader, the other was a 19 year old university student who had previously been a MAD student leader and had facilitated the advocacy workshop in 2011 and 2012. The purpose of the interview was to see whether the interviewees were explicitly aware of deliberate attempts by the coordinators to model sustainable living at the hui, and if so, what they felt was modelled or promoted. Thus, interview questions focused on how the camp affects participants, whether the hui’s focus on living sustainably while learning about sustainability was done well, and how it was
done. Although we, the authors, were not core facilitators of the hui, it is important to acknowledge that in participants’ minds we may have been associated with the camp staff. Thus, we cannot discount that this may have affected their evaluation of the hui experience and reduced their ability to critique it.

The data for our inquiry into what makes the hui transformative included our observations of the hui, author one’s journal and the paired interview transcript. We also reanalysed the transcripts from the storytelling workshop and open-ended survey responses described earlier as part of the larger evaluation. In addition, we analysed evaluation forms completed by participants at the end of the 2011 and 2012 huis and MAD planning documents.

To analyse this data we used thematic analysis, using procedures suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved an iterative process of familiarising ourselves with the data by reading it multiple times, identifying patterns within the data and labelling them with our initial ideas for themes, collating the data extracts associated with each theme, and then checking whether the themes appeared to work in relation to the extracts and the full data set. Alongside this process we were reading literature on organised camps and transformative influences on environmentalists. Thus, as our knowledge of existing research increased, our search for themes became more deductive as we sought to explore similarities between our data and prior studies. In the final stages of refining and naming the themes, we sent MAD coordinators our analyses and asked for their comments.

The analytic process led us to identify six key elements as critical to the hui’s transformative potential. These are: 1) that it is residential; 2) that it is held in a nature setting; 3) that it brings together inspiring role models; 4) that it models eco-friendly living; 5) that it helps participants develop their own ideas for action; and 6) that it endorses a positive approach to sustainability. Below each element is discussed in turn, alongside the literature we explored in tandem with the data analysis. We then show how they reinforce each other, as it is ultimately the “whole” experience which is so powerful.
Key Elements of the MAD Hui

It is Residential

Thurber and colleagues (2007) described organised camps as having an “essential trinity”: 1) community living; 2) away from home; 3) in an outdoor, recreational setting (p. 242). The residential nature of MAD provides an essential backdrop for deep level learning. This was recognised by one of the programme’s designers in the coordinators’ workshop:

I was sent to Outward Bound as a 15 year old, you know it’s seen to impel young people into experiences and I’m a very very strong believer in that … immerse them, bang, into them, although that sort of goes against the grain of giving them choice but you know, you’ve got to get them in there for them to see some of the possibilities.

Bersch and Lund (2002) explained how remote camp settings enable participants to better focus on their learning because of the physical separation from the demands of everyday life, including the intrusion of technology. A few participants echoed this in their evaluation forms, for example:

I have found this hui really beneficial in the way of inspiration. Day to day life is really busy and it’s hard to get inspired to make plans, but by immersing myself in this experience I’ve been able to formulate heaps of ideas and plans of action.

The immersion of residential experiences can also quickly foster trust between participants and a sense community (Bersch & Lund, 2002). Several students commented on how easy it was to connect with the other participants. For example: “Everyone was really friendly, you got on instantly, like you could just talk to anyone even though you’d never met them before”. The coordinators also explained that they benefit from the hui being residential because it is long enough for them to get to know participants and explore their strengths and weaknesses.
Chapter Three: Six Elements of a Transformative Youth Eco Retreat

It is Held in a Nature Setting

In a qualitative study on the formative influences of Canadian youth environmental leaders, all 12 participants mentioned time spent in the outdoors, either as unstructured nature play in early childhood, or through “an intense immersion experience in the natural world or outdoor camp programme” (Arnold et al., 2009, p. 32). This resonates with a body of research on sources of environmental sensitivity (see Chawla, 1998 for a review). The MAD hui’s setting in the Waitakere Ranges is perceived by coordinators as important for encouraging a sense of personal connection to nature. For example:

Living in the city like we do … a lot of the children don’t have that relationship [with nature]… [the hui is] the safe way for them to actually get a bit dirty and get in the water and touch a lizard and be amongst a big forest and all that sort of stuff so I think the actual location of the hui is really powerful in itself because it’s in the natural environment.

Discussions in the students’ workshop revealed that most participants felt they already had a connection to nature prior to MAD, but that the hui had enabled them to see nature in a new way. Although it did not feature prominently in their stories, a few made references to the hui’s pleasant setting. For example: “The atmosphere in the native bush with such good people made it a good place to be planning ideas”. The biophilia hypothesis (Kellert & Wilson, 1993; Wilson, 1984) suggests that humans have a genetically-based predilection to affiliate with the natural world. Natural landscapes can have a restorative effect on people’s emotional and physiological states and help to reduce stressful or troublesome thoughts (Ulrich, 1993). Thus, the hui’s retreat-like setting may allow students to benefit from its calming effects, even if they do not consciously experience a shift in their connection to nature. As can be seen in our description of the three days, the natural setting also allows participants to live in the world as it could be if flourishing ecosystems was a core collective value. This allows them to gain a deep and authentic knowledge of the benefits of nature based on experience.
It Brings Together Inspiring Role Models

The combination of people present at the hui enables inspiring leadership and role modelling. To begin with, the students who apply to go on the camp are of high calibre. One youth participant shared an anecdote that exemplified this:

I remember on the first day of the camp Cate came up and said we need a few people to volunteer to help bring some cutlery and stuff down from nearby ... and everybody volunteered and I was just like this doesn’t happen with teenagers!

Another indicated astonishment and relief that there were other young people out there like him: “Oh my God these people exist”. Second, the hui involves a strong student leadership component, which gives six returning participants a chance to build their facilitation skills and share their wisdom with new participants. The student leaders and ex-MAD guest speakers also indicate to new participants what they could be like in a couple of years. As one leader said: “I think the fact that a lot of the stuff is student-run or student-lead makes a big difference because it’s just like another signifier that people can kind of look to, imitate”. Although relatively understudied, a growing body of literature highlights the value of peer education and peer modelling as strategies for stimulating youth to behave more responsibly toward the environment and get involved in sustainability action (Chawla & Cushing, 2007; de Vreede, 2011). Slightly older youth leaders in camp programmes can be important transformational influences for environmental leaders (Arnold et al., 2009). Finally, the hui involves many inspiring adult role models. The guest speakers who share their sustainability expertise (and lizards) and the core coordinators who run the hui are passionate and dedicated people. This came through strongly from the students in our evaluation. For example: “The people are just so genuine ... you can’t fault them ... you can just see that it’s not just a job, that they are actually inspired by what they do and really believe in what they’re doing”. Several studies have shown that adult role models in the form of teachers, parents, and other family members are important influences on environmental leaders’ activism and environmental sensitivity (Arnold et al., 2009; Palmer, 1993; Peters-Grant, 1986; Tanner, 1980).
It Models Eco-Friendly Living

MAD coordinators meticulously plan out the systems, practices and products they want to provide at the hui to complement the learning that takes place. For example:

We try really hard - but it is difficult - to walk the talk ... we use environmentally friendly cleaning products and we talk about water consumption and energy consumption and waste production ... the meals are made from scratch and all the students actually participate in that and we talk ... about the lack of packaging if you make things from scratch.

The staff also said that students had “aha” moments when they noticed products were fair trade after having learnt about the concept in the conscious consumerism workshop. In their study of sustainability role modelling in schools, Higgs and McMillan (2006) explained that school operations and facilities can serve as implicit teaching tools, reducing the need for teachers to proselytise. In addition, green facilities and student involvement in school operations (e.g. in waste management or cleaning) were described as catalytic for student discussions about sustainability. It was apparent in our evaluation that students were impressed with the extent of the effort to live sustainably: “The fact that 48 people made half a bag of rubbish in three days was amazingly inspiring”. Many said they wanted to replicate practices at home, such as making yoghurt from scratch, setting up composting, or auditing their family’s rubbish in order to reduce it. The visit to Earthsong was a highlight for several participants, who were inspired to see a real life eco-village. Although not salient in the evaluation, the Caught Being Green game that runs throughout the hui exemplifies a clever psychological strategy for promoting environmentally responsible behaviour. Because participants are able to nominate each other as well as be caught, there is a blend of peer reinforcement and healthy rivalry, and ultimately, huge opportunity for learning and emulation (Bandura, 1986).
Chapter Three: Six Elements of a Transformative Youth Eco Retreat

**It Helps Participants Develop Their Own Ideas for Action**

Although many of the workshop facilitators and guest speakers do make suggestions for types of domestic behaviours participants can change or consumer principles they might want to adopt, the MAD hui is foremost about developing students’ own ideas. This means MAD could be described as taking an emancipatory approach to environmental education (Wals et al., 2008). Rather than attempting to change pre-determined behaviours, emancipatory approaches seek to engage participants in an active dialogue to cultivate their own objectives and plans for action (D’Amato & Krasny, 2011). As a MAD coordinator articulated:

“They’re scaffolded quite nicely at the hui to come up with some ideas, they don’t leave the hui thinking ‘right, what are we going to do?’ They’ve already done some thinking, they’ve already networked with their peers and they’ve got ideas, and we try and help them do an action plan at the hui so they’re going out with something.

Many students described how their imaginations were expanded by interacting with each other. For example: “Like when you all come together you get lots more ideas than you would on your own, even you come up with ideas that you didn’t think you could get on your own”. Approaches that enable people to think for themselves may be much more motivating than those which highlight simple “things you can do” (WWF, 2008). The MAD hui’s focus on developing personal visions and plans was summed up in a student’s evaluation form:

The staff, along with the students, assisted me to make my own vision, plan, and ideas so now I know what goals I should aim for and want to achieve so I can do my bit and make a difference.

**It Endorses a Positive Approach to Sustainability**

Both Harré (2011) and Carter (2011) lament that advocates for environmentally responsible behaviour often use communication methods that produce negative emotions like fear, anger, shame, and guilt. Unfortunately, these emotions narrow our
attention to the short term, diminishing our capacity to see the bigger picture. In contrast, positive emotions can broaden people’s awareness of their connection to Earth’s living systems, help them make links between personal wellbeing and environmental health, and expand their ability to innovatively address environmental problems (Carter, 2011; Harré, 2011). Positive emotions can facilitate creativity (Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987), and are associated with cooperation (Losada & Heaphy, 2004) and openness to change (Reed & Aspinwall, 1998), all of which are vital for moving towards a more sustainable future (Harré, 2011). The MAD hui makes great use of a positive approach. While not discrediting the seriousness of social justice and environmental issues covered, the coordinators strive to keep the focus on opportunities and possibilities for action, and having fun while doing so. In their evaluations, several youth participants referred to how much fun the hui was. For example: “I really enjoyed this camp. I feel so inspired to go out there and make a huge difference and really stand up for what I believe in. I had so much fun and learnt so much”. Others were excited about trying to replicate the positivity and synergy they had experienced at the camp in their schools: “It made me realise how important a positive approach is”.

Conclusion: The Whole Experience

In this study we identified key elements of a youth sustainability leadership camp that we suggest interact to form a holistic, nourishing and motivating experience for participants. Through being transported away from home to a remote natural setting, interacting with inspiring like-minded students and sustainability advocates, living harmoniously with nature for three days, and collectively planning ideas for positive action, participants are temporarily immersed in an alternative world (see Figure 2 below).
One of the strengths of the hui is the exemplary consistency between the values it espouses and the values it lives. As described earlier, learning about sustainability is not only facilitated by explicit teaching, but through immersion in the camp’s systems and operations, and through visiting a sophisticated eco-neighbourhood. Similarly, the camp’s emphasis on taking a positive approach to sustainability advocacy is consistent with its atmosphere of positivity and celebration. Even more salient, the hui is all about youth leadership, and many of its activities are student-led or run by slightly older MAD graduates. We believe that the congruence of the hui’s rhetoric and practice removes the possibility of participants perceiving hypocrisy, and consequently
feeling cynical. Instead they are likely to be inspired and impressed by the depth of planning that has gone into the camp and what this signals about the integrity of the staff. For these reasons, they should feel hopeful about the sustainability movement. As suggested by Vaillant (2008), hope signals our capacity to envisage a realistic positive future. It also enables us to identify and cultivate the strategies needed to make this vision a reality (Carter, 2009).

The camp’s residential quality and remote location can serve to amplify this effect because coordinators can control so much of what participants are exposed to. When students finish their packed lunch on the first day and discard their wrappers into the landfill bin, it is almost like a symbolic shedding of their urban skin. From then on, they are not physically able to produce any more landfill waste, because there are no shops nearby, and the remainder of the camp meals have been designed to be waste-free. Additionally, the lack of network coverage cuts all students’ communication with the city, compelling them to engage more deeply with the hui community. Because it is full of inspiring people, practices and positivity, they immediately get a sense of a very possible, alternative, sustainable future.

We do not claim to have identified all the ingredients of a transformative sustainability-related experience, and there will be alternative ways of framing the key concepts. Nevertheless, we suggest these elements are kept in mind when planning eco-retreats and other social gatherings, particularly those for young people.

We began this article by talking about identity shifts, so it seems appropriate to finish with some examples of how MAD participants perceive themselves in their social world. Throughout the evaluation we heard students describe themselves and other MAD participants as agents of change. For example, one said “we’re being, or aspiring to be, the change that we want to see in the world”. This same student summed up the overall effect of MAD on him as: “Complete and utter revolution. It has connected me to a wide network of people and enabled me to gain the skills and ability to become an ambassador of change in the world”. Another student made a very compelling statement about the period of youth: “We’re too young to know it’s impossible so we’re making a difference while
we still know it all”. Harnessing the sheer enthusiasm and absence of cynicism in young people seems a critical strategy for shaping a more sustainable world for all.
Chapter Four

Guiding Principles for Community Engagement: Reflections on a School-Based Sustainability Project

Context Statement

This co-authored article is the first of two about the WSC sustainability project and has been published in the Journal of Social Action in Counselling and Psychology. It focuses on the broad question of how researchers can contribute to creating sustainable schools within a university-community partnership approach. In particular, this piece examines the five principles my research team selected as a framework to guide our actions in our many visits to WSC. These principles were derived from several relevant scholarly fields: university-community partnerships, youth-adult partnerships, action research, community psychology and environmental psychology.

The study provides an overview of each principle and a description of the project in 2008 and 2009, followed by an analysis of each principle and the potential compatibility and conflict between them. Specific questions explored are as follows: How did we experience our guiding principles? What can we learn from the school’s experience of our practice? In what ways did our principles complement and conflict with each other? The study is grounded in the traditions of autoethnography and phenomenology.
Abstract

This article describes an action research project in which community psychologists worked with a school community to promote environmentally sustainable practices. Our research team had five guiding principles: strengths-based, empowerment, role modelling, communication, and measurement and feedback. Here we describe a phenomenological study of how we experienced our principles and how our professional practice was perceived by key participants from the school. Each research team member completed a self-reflective survey and key staff and students from the school were interviewed. Amongst other benefits, the principles were valuable in promoting coherence within the research team, guiding decision-making and providing a framework for critical reflection. Recommendations are given for researchers and community practitioners interested in initiating sustainability projects with local organisations or using a similar principles-based approach in other collaborative endeavours.

Key words: school-based; principles; sustainability; action research; environmental; youth; phenomenology; autoethnography
Introduction

In this article we reflect on a collaborative project in which we, as university-based community psychologists, worked with members of a local school to establish environmentally sustainable practices at the school. Our research team essentially ran the project for two years, after which it gained momentum at the school and we took a much lesser role. We therefore offer our experience as a success, not so much in making direct change, as by helping inspire the organisation we were working with to take ownership of this key issue. From the beginning, we used five principles as our guiding structure. We chose principles with strong empirical and theoretical backing, and constantly attempted to align our actions with these. We suggest that these principles acted as an essential guide in motivating us to persist and in the project being taken over by the school. In this paper we describe the rationale for these principles, reflect on our experiences of applying them in the project, and inquire into how our principles were perceived by key participants from the school. Ultimately, we hope to shed light on how principles may be used by researchers and community practitioners to guide their engagement with organisations.

We begin by describing the context for the project. We then introduce our research approach and guiding principles. After outlining how the project operated in 2008 and 2009 we provide analysis and reflection of our principles in action. We conclude with recommendations for the use of a principles approach in sustainability projects and other collaborative endeavours.

Project Context

The project took place at Western Springs College (WSC), a co-educational state high school from a medium-high socio-economic area in Auckland, New Zealand’s biggest city of 1.5 million people. It began in 2008 when the second author (a previous member of the school’s governing board and current parent) suggested that WSC incorporate a sustainability policy into their strategic plan. The board agreed, and endorsed a goal “to work towards environmentally sustainable practices in all areas of
school life” (Havill, 2008, p. 19). To implement the goal, they set up a sustainability panel, comprised of the Deputy Principal, two senior students who had been elected as 2008 environmental leaders by staff, a parent representative from the board, and representatives from three city council agencies with expertise in sustainable schools. The second author was invited to be the coordinator of the panel. The school agreed that under her supervision, graduate community psychology students would be brought into WSC to help drive and measure progress towards the sustainability goal. The entire project was approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants’ Ethics Committee.

The project used an action research approach (Bradbury & Reason, 2007; Lewin, 1946). Fittingly, action research aims to start where people are, and continually evolves as participants study, reframe and reconstruct social practices together (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). As noted by Davis (2007), this makes it particularly appropriate for messy, real world problems like promoting environmental sustainability. We drew especially on the philosophy of participatory action research (PAR) which emphasises the central role of community members in setting the project goals and directing the research agenda (Park, 2006). PAR ensures that the project is focused on issues salient to the community under study (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005) and encourages greater ownership of project outcomes by local people because they have had the chance to participate in decision-making (Allen, Kilvington, & Horn, 2002).

We recognised from the beginning that we would benefit from a clear set of principles to guide our actions and decisions within the project. We understood that while collaborative projects can facilitate deep-level change (Jones, Yonezawa, Ballesteros, & Mehan, 2002) there can also be conflict due to differences in the underlying philosophy and goals of the partners (Bartholomewa & Sandholtz, 2009; Davies, Edwards, Gannon, & Laws, 2007) as well as more mundane issues, such as resentment about the amount of work contributed by each party (Sandlin & Feigen, 1995). We wanted principles that allowed us to maintain our integrity and purpose, no matter how the school responded. We therefore investigated literature from community psychology, action research, university-community collaborations and
environmental psychology in order to settle on the principles we thought most likely to enhance our relationship with the school and allow the project to gain momentum. After a number of discussions, we decided on five: strengths-based, empowerment, role modelling, communication, and measurement and feedback. We now elaborate on the theoretical basis and our practical interpretation of each principle.

A strengths-based approach builds on capacities that participants or settings already possess (Lietz, 2004). According to Saleebey (2000), this approach is a paradigm shift; a movement away from society’s and psychology’s tendency to be fixated on problems and pathology. Whereas lamenting what is lacking can lead to downward spirals of blame and negativity, building on strengths may generate upward spirals toward optimal functioning (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005; Fredrickson, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). In the community development literature, the strengths-based approach has been described as a “powerful and transformative force for positive social change” (Linley, Bhaduri, Sharma, & Govindji, 2011, p. 153). By seeking, celebrating, and building upon the strengths of the individuals, groups and wider networks that make up a community, it is possible to unearth people’s intrinsic motivation for change, and in doing so inspire them to believe in their own potential and capacities (Linley et al., 2011).

A strengths-based approach compels practitioners to treat people as independent and capable, rather than as requiring experts to make decisions for them (Rappaport, 1981) and to take the humble stance that we cannot know the upper limits of a person’s capacity to transform (Saleebey, 2000). Extending this notion to a broader ecological level, a strengths-based approach has high expectations of organisations, and envisages them to have many avenues for positive development. Importantly too, we reasoned that interventions based on strengths are more likely to be embraced by the organisation as they go with, rather than against, established cultural values and practices (see Hemmelgarn, Glisson, & James, 2006; Klesges, Estabrooks, Dzewaltowski, Bull, & Glasgow, 2005). To implement this principle, we aimed to seek out and work with the people of WSC who already wanted to contribute to sustainability, and to celebrate and utilise their strengths and community connections.
We also aimed to build project activities around pre-existing strengths within the culture of the school.

According to Rappaport (1981) empowerment is “the process by which people, organisations and communities gain mastery over their lives” (p. 3). It is consistent with action research philosophy and the strengths perspective because it focuses on helping people to discover and make use of the resources and tools within their reach (Saleebey, 1996). In particular, empowerment involves developing a critical awareness of the socio-political environment (Zimmerman, 1995) and discovering how to influence that environment.

By definition, an empowerment approach involves a considerable amount of restraint from researchers, so others can seize power (Labonte, 1994). When a research team is working with young people, it is important to balance support-giving with opportunities for them to take charge (see Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward, & Green, 2003; Jennings, Parra-Medina, Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006; Larson & Angus, 2011; Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005; Wong et al., 2010). In Wong and colleagues’ (2010) study on typologies of youth participation and empowerment, the authors noted that the co-learning approach of action research encourages a balance of power between young people and adult researchers. Rather than being experts, adults can serve as sources of support, social capital, and positive reinforcement for youth partners. Through joint planning and decision-making, adults may gain access to youth perspectives while youth reap positive developmental benefits such as increases in competence, self-efficacy and sense of control (Zimmerman, 1995).

Because empowerment is a multi-dimensional construct, Hawe (1994) argued that in the context of community programmes it must be broken down into more practical and recognisable terms. In our project we were especially interested in the attitudinal dimensions of empowerment, such as political self-efficacy (Craig & Maggiotto, 1982) and the skill dimensions of empowerment, such as how to advocate, lobby decision-makers, and take action (Balcazar, Seekins, Fawcett, & Hopkins, 1990). In order to encourage empowerment, we aimed to help the people of WSC achieve change, not to impose our ideas for change on them. We also hoped the young people
involved in the project would learn something about the political process of effecting positive sustainability changes.

*Role modelling* was perceived to have two key benefits. One is that people learn by observing others (Bandura, 1977). Several studies in environmental psychology show how people copy what they see or believe to be normal in a particular situation, such as littering (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990), composting (Sussman & Gifford, 2011), kerbside recycling (Schultz, 1998), energy-use (Schultz et al., 2007) and towel re-use (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008). Therefore, we reasoned, if we model a sustainable behaviour, that behaviour has a better chance of being imitated by others and absorbed into the culture of the school (see Harré, 2011, for more on how modeling can be put to work for sustainability). When working with young people modelling may be particularly pertinent, since the period of youth involves the consolidation of lifestyle habits and behavioural patterns (Hurrelmann & Raithel, 2005; Moreno et al., 2008).

The second key benefit is that engaging in the behaviours you are advocating is critical for integrity and credibility. In their paper on “greening” universities, Carmichael and Chameau (1999) argued: “In order to advance our thinking-and our behaviour-towards more sustainable practices, we need to experience them ourselves. Nothing kills a movement like hypocrisy among its leaders; students and faculty know this, and so do our partners in the community” (p. 1). It is interesting that this principle has not featured strongly in community psychology and health promotion literature (although see e.g. Rush, Kee, & Rice, 2005, for a study about nurses as role models). Possibly it is taken for granted. When working on a sustainability project, however, the practices being advocated take special effort as they penetrate almost every aspect of social life (see Woodhill & Röling, 1998). In other words, there are myriad areas in which one can “be the change” and demonstrate more eco-friendly ways of doing things (e.g. through how one travels, what one purchases, how one uses energy or deals with waste). To meet this principle we aimed to “walk the talk”, always considering the sustainability of our actions and image.
Effective communication has been consistently described as critical to collaborative partnerships (Bulloug & Kauchak, 1997; Giesecke, 2012; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992; Peel, Peel, & Baker, 2002; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2004; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). For instance, in Peel and colleagues’ (2002) review of practices influencing school-university partnership viability, “open communication that allows for frequent monitoring and decision-making based on the input of others” was identified as an effective practice, while “lack of communication” was identified as an ineffective practice (p. 322). The authors also attributed the successful outcomes of their own partnership to a collaborative spirit that was established early on through open and shared dialogue. In addition to formal channels, non-formal personal connections and communication links are posited to enhance the success of collaborative projects (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

Suarez-Balcazar and colleagues (2005) noted that establishing adequate communication requires time, respect for diversity, a grasp on the culture of the organisation, good listening skills and commitment to the project. They also stressed the importance of discovering each other’s preferred method of contact. While the literature emphasises face-to-face interactions as the most effective (Berkowitz, 2000; Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012), preferences may vary according to ecological factors such as ethnicity, age, technology, and geographic location (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). Since youth are increasingly using e-technology to create and maintain social networks (Flicker et al., 2004; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2012) and to promote activism (Lombardo, Zakus, & Skinner, 2002) it is important to understand these mediums in collaborative work with young people (see Davies & Cranston, 2008; Flicker et al., 2008). Thus we aimed to establish and maintain excellent lines of communication with the school, via a variety of means tailored to the recipient.

Our final principle, measurement and feedback, emphasises gathering data around an issue and feeding the information back to the organisation for use. Through these activities, researchers can help identify the need for change and possible routes for achieving that change (Dickens & Watkins, 1999). Then, after a course of action is completed, targeted data collection may be undertaken to evaluate its impact (Hockley
Alongside conventional data collection (e.g. surveys), photography may be useful for documenting the journey of a collaborative project and the changes that arise from it (Kelly, 2005). Although this principle has two parts, we see them as inextricably linked within the action research spiral of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

Within traditional research frameworks, the dissemination of data to the community involved is often neglected or poorly executed (Montoya & Kent, 2011). This is not only ethically problematic, but can lead to community members distrusting researchers (see Barnett, Anderson, Houle, Higginbotham, & Gatling, 2010) and the research process itself (Montoya & Kent, 2011). Since “knowledge is power” and can inform decisions that benefit the whole community (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998, p. 181) it is vitally important to disseminate research findings and interpretations to community members in a manner that is respectful, understandable and timely (Israel et al., 1998; Montoya & Kent, 2011). In order to be consistent with the principle of measurement and feedback, we aimed to document the project’s activities and measure their impact on the school community. We also aimed to give feedback on this to the school and to share our insights with external parties such as the local council and readers of this article.

The Project in 2008 and 2009

In 2008, our research team focused primarily on gathering baseline data and establishing relationships with members of the sustainability panel. We conducted a survey of the whole school using a questionnaire (see Sharma, 2009) and focus groups to get a sense of WSC’s understanding of, and interest in sustainability, and found strong endorsement of the sustainability goal. We disseminated the results through several channels including discussions at the sustainability panel, an oral presentation to the staff, assemblies, workshops with a junior mathematics extension class, and a poster distributed to all classrooms. We worked hard to build relationships with the student environmental leaders appointed by the school by inviting them out to coffee and university talks, helping the environmental group run an “Ecoweek” and planting trees with them at a local reserve.
In 2009, the project intensified. The school appointed three environmental leaders who were enthusiastic, well connected and keen to work with us. The primary focus of the year was on the design, building, painting, installation and promotion of new waste stations that would allow the school to separate waste into landfill, recycling and compost. The environmental leaders chose this focus, as they thought an artistic project would be appealing to WSC students and the school had previously done some work towards waste management. Our research team assisted the leaders and their support teacher in coordinating all the tasks needed to get the waste stations in place. We also helped them run extracurricular events such as an after school waste audit, a painting bee to paint murals on the waste stations and a lunchtime expo that showcased them. We held several meetings throughout the year to help them plan these events.

In June, we made a short film with the leaders called *Gumby the Fairy and his Merry Band of Eco Pixies in the Quest for Sustainability* (*Gumby*) to inform the school community of the waste station project and recruit helpers ([www.youtube.com/user/gogreenwithgumby](http://www.youtube.com/user/gogreenwithgumby)). Two of the environmental leaders and the support teacher acted in the film, while the third leader assisted the university crew. *Gumby* was screened in a full school assembly and students were subsequently invited to participate in two media workshops. These workshops were organised and facilitated by the research team and attended by 31 students. They included a demonstration waste audit, viewing and discussing video clips about recycling and environmental protection, and taking creative photographs of waste for a competition. Students also mapped out prospective locations for the waste stations.

In October, Author one led the production of a music video called *Sort It Out* to launch the waste stations and educate people as to how to use them (see our YouTube page). The music video involved 27 students in singing, dancing, acting and costume design, and was screened in school assemblies. In December, we held a *Showcase of Sustainability* community evening with the environmental leaders to celebrate our combined efforts. The showcase included screenings of *Gumby* and *Sort it Out*, slideshows of photographs and documentary footage from the media workshops and
waste station painting bee, and shared the results from several surveys and audits conducted throughout the year. In addition to the leaders, 89 students (10% of WSC) were involved in at least one of the above projects. Even more students were peripherally involved. For example, two English classes were shown the photographs taken in the media workshops and invited to submit captions for a competition.

It is of note that in 2010, the school introduced an ambitious goal to reduce landfill waste by 50%, increased the sustainability student leadership team to nine students, and substantially increased the status and time available to the support teacher. In 2011, they received a substantial waste management grant personally presented by New Zealand’s Minister for the Environment. By the end of 2012 the school had a state-of-the-art waste management system and had reduced the compostable waste going to landfill by 85% and recyclable waste going to landfill by 68% (Kilian & Yates, 2013). While we cannot claim this is all a result of our project, we believe our research team’s approach to working with the school is likely to have contributed to sustainability values getting increasing traction.

As noted, the overall aim of this study was to shed light on how principles may be used by researchers and community practitioners to guide their practice within collaborative projects. Using our sustainability project at WSC as an example, we present analysis of and reflection on our five guiding principles. We explore three key questions: (1) How did we experience our guiding principles? (2) What can we learn from the school’s experience of our practice? (3) In what ways did our principles complement and conflict with each other? Our analysis culminates in key insights we gained from the reflective process and associated recommendations for others.

Method

This study was informed by phenomenological inquiry. This involves collecting data from people who have experienced a particular phenomenon, and then attempting to uncover the essence of their experience (Brown & Duke, 2005). It also drew on autoethnography, a method in which researchers use their own experience to investigate the phenomenon under study, sometimes in combination with data from
others (Chang, 2008). While autoethnography is most often conducted by single researchers, collective approaches that allow for multiple voices to be heard are becoming more common (see Belgrave et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2009). As our guiding principles were the phenomenon of interest, a self-reflective survey was completed by each research team member. We also wished to understand how the principles were experienced by those partly outside the experience, but affected by it – that is, key participants from WSC. This is in keeping with the principle of triangulation that suggests a picture can be built up from multiple informants (Chang, 2008; Healy & Perry, 2000). To this end interviews were conducted with selected members of the school.

**Research Team Self-Reflections**

Our research team consisted of Author two, 48 years old (all ages are as of 2009), an associate professor in the School of Psychology at The University of Auckland; Author one, 23, who was involved as an honours student (first year postgraduate) in psychology in 2008 and a doctoral student in 2009; Author three, 25, a masters student in psychology on the project in 2008; Author four, 24, an honours student in psychology in 2008; Author five, 22, honours student in psychology in 2009 and Author six, 24, a student completing a postgraduate diploma in environmental management in 2009.

Each team member’s contribution to the project was influenced by their research interests and academic requirements. As already noted, Author two was coordinator of the sustainability panel as well as the academic supervisor of the team. Author one coordinated the 2009 film productions and organised the media workshops with Authors six and two. Author three led the development and execution of the questionnaire in 2008, with Authors four, two and one assisting with various related tasks. Author five explored the impact of the project on the environmental leaders and their social networks, while Author six focused on understanding WSC’s waste systems and littering habits.

To provide self-reflections, we needed a method that allowed us to focus on each principle separately, and then examine the complex interplay of the principles in
action. Therefore we each independently completed a two-part survey, designed by Authors one and two and administered via email. The first section asked what we had done to meet each principle, what had helped us, and what had hindered us. The second part asked which principles worked well together and why, and which principles came into conflict with one another and why. We each wrote between six and twelve pages of reflections.

School Participant Interviews

Participants were the three environmental leaders from 2009 and four teachers from the sustainability panel, selected purposely as we wanted the perspectives of school personnel we had collaborated with most closely. They were interviewed by a graduate student who was not part of the research team in the hope that participants would provide more candid perspectives (see Chang, 2008). Interviewees were provided with verbal and written information about the research process and allowed to ask questions before signing their consent. The interviews began with a broad question (what are the first five things that come to mind when you think of the sustainability research team?) and then targeted participants’ perspectives in relation to each of our principles (see Appendix 1). Participants were also asked about their role in the broader sustainability project. Interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 20 and 40 minutes, with 10-15 minutes typically spent on the target questions. Participants were sent their transcripts and given the opportunity to comment and request changes, however, none did so.

Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures were guided by the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, as described in Brown and Duke’s (2005) collaborative phenomenological self-study. This reductive method is used to “systematically distil essential themes, ideas, and concepts from dense, or “thick,” textual descriptions” (Duke, 2008, p. 24). The ultimate aim of the phenomenologist is to produce a concise, yet vivid written summary that depicts the “essence” of the phenomenon in question (Creswell, 1998). To this end, Author one began by reading through the material pertaining to each principle multiple times,
identifying and highlighting significant statements and noting down her initial ideas for common themes. Author two then examined the dataset and Author one’s notes, and made comments and further suggestions. Next, Author one went through the dataset again and grouped similar statements together into clusters of common themes. For each principle she constructed two tables, one for common themes and significant statements originating from the research team and another for themes and statements from the school interviewees. She also constructed a diagram to show which pairs of principles the research team had identified as complementary and which pairs we had identified as potentially conflicting. Author two then examined the tables against the dataset to verify and further develop the analyses.

Next, Author one began to work the material in the tables into written summaries to convey the essence of how each principle was experienced by our research team and perceived in our practice by the school. The material we provided about how the principles worked together or conflicted was also summarised. As articulated by Thomas Duke (Brown & Duke, 2005) phenomenological inquiry is “an intensely creative and dynamic process, in which ideas are generated, analysed, reorganised, recycled, and transformed” (p. 181). Writing and rewriting is considered a critical part of the method (van Manen, 1990), as it is through this process that researchers can distil meanings (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The two lead authors worked on several iterations of the results, experimenting with different structures and formats. There were no obvious disagreements between the lead authors during analysis. Once they were satisfied, Authors three, four, five and six were asked to check that the summaries were true to their experience and to suggest any alterations. However, no suggestions were made and all team members indicated they were satisfied with the interpretation of the survey data.

A notable limitation of this study was that we did not ask the school participants to comment on our interpretation of their data. We had reasons for this, however. First, we were concerned about exhausting the school with contact. Second, the format of our results meant that the school interviewees’ perspectives were summarised in tandem with our research team’s honest and occasionally negative appraisals of the project. We
felt that sharing these could be potentially detrimental to our relationship. Thus, we recognise that what is presented below is first and foremost our research team’s account. Furthermore it potentially favours the perspectives of the two lead authors, who spent comparatively more time working with the school than did the rest of the research team and who lead the analysis and interpretation. To enhance trustworthiness, quotations from participants in both groups are frequently incorporated (Healy & Perry, 2000). School participants are referred to by their role to protect confidentiality.

Summary of Each Guiding Principle

Strengths-based

One theme that emerged from the research team’s reflections was that the project had built on the school’s strength in the arts, which we also described as key to WSC’s culture and identity. All school participants also recognised this in their interviews, for example: “I think using the art and also the media thing worked really well, it just drew in not just people interested in sustainability but people who were interested in art, especially since that sort of stuff is quite big in our school” (student leader). In a broader sense too, some participants from both groups indicated that film and photography are particularly thriving fields of artist expression in our contemporary, technological cultures and young people are drawn to these mediums. One teacher said that the Gumby film had “galvanised” the WSC community, and had “absolutely” grabbed the attention of staff and students.

A second aspect of our strengths-based approach noted by some of the research team was that we worked from the entry point of the student leadership system. There was also evidence of some school participants recognising this, for example: “What I’ve seen is a hard core group that worked really closely with the leaders, so yeah, I think they’ve done well with that” (teacher). Multiple strengths of the 2009 environmental leaders came through in our research team’s reflections, with our use of terms such as “enthusiastic”, “knowledgeable about the school’s culture” and “highly socially connected”. We noted how we had encouraged them to draw on their networks, and a social
network analysis conducted by Author five (see Douglas, 2009) indicated that many of the attendees at the events were directly linked to the leaders.

Finally, a theme from the research team was that we had utilised the school’s strength as a community that is open to new ideas and willing to try them. This meant that WSC was amenable to collaborating with our team and exploring how sustainability could be promoted in a high school context. A few school interviewees spoke proudly about WSC’s progressive identity. For example, one teacher said:

I think that WSC is … used to beating a path that’s different from other schools … I’m sure it’s within the culture of the school to be able to say we can make this work … we’re doing this because we believe in creating a better pattern for the future.

**Empowerment**

One theme produced by the research team was that we tried to create an empowering atmosphere for the environmental leaders. First, we encouraged them to come up with their own ideas for sustainability solutions and worked on projects they suggested. Second, we helped them plan how they would take action, by working together to assign tasks with time frames and encouraging and supporting them to approach people who had the power to make things happen. Third, we gave them opportunities to take charge but made ourselves available to assist if needed.

Another theme that emerged was that through our scaffolding, the leaders improved their organisational skills. For example, Author five contrasted the poor turnout of the leaders’ environment group meeting in March (6 students) with the waste audit in July, when they successfully recruited 15 volunteers to sift through rubbish for two hours after school. It is of note that between these events we had discussed with the leaders strategies to attract students to the project, such as asking peers for support and marketing events as a chance to socialise while giving back to the community.
Although there was consensus we were focused on, or even “obsessed” (Author two) with trying to empower the student leaders, some of our team expressed concerns that we had failed in this regard. This was apparent in our descriptions that two of the leaders appeared to be gradually losing interest as the waste station project progressed. Author six recalled an afternoon when she and Author one had arranged to help them paint anti-graffiti varnish on the waste stations and only one leader had turned up: “I think we took too much responsibility for them and they began to think it was all right for us to do that and for them to step back”. Author two reported struggling with a sense that we were trying to empower people to do things they were “not bursting at the seams to do”. She also questioned the notion that one can empower another: “How do you empower people – don’t they have to seize power for themselves?” Author one reflected that she might have imposed a filmmaking agenda on WSC. It is notable that the language we used to describe ourselves in relation to this principle also hints at the tension we recognised and were constantly trying to balance. That is, we wanted the leaders to become “empowered” but to do this we felt we had to be fairly directive by “encouraging them to come up with ideas”, helping them plan, and even “giving them opportunities” as if we were ultimately in charge.

In spite of our worries, the school participants made many comments that suggested they observed or experienced us as empowering. The support teacher whom we worked with most closely said “they did a good job not to sort of say ‘look you should be doing this and you should be doing that’ because when you start doing that the kids will rebel”. He also described us as accepting of where people were at and having an “every little bit counts” ethic towards sustainability. Finally, he commented that the waste station project had attracted “a lot of buy-in” from students and “when you have that buy-in the ownership for them to actually use it and contribute goes up”.

One student leader stated: “They took our ideas and used those and then used their kind of abilities and their help and stuff to put those forward and still achieve something bigger”. Another leader said the research team steered her in the right direction when she got lost, and “made opportunities more available to students”. All three leaders expressed pride in what they had achieved, and two of them mentioned that they had
done more than the students leaders with other portfolios: “the cultural leaders and the academic leaders have done, you know, ‘math’s week’ and ‘cultural week’ but that happens every year … I think we’ve actually done more this year because we’ve done new projects … original projects”. One teacher reflected that through the project the leaders had acquired “generic skills that they can apply to any other situation that they want to be active around”.

**Role Modelling**

Our research team described numerous behaviours we tried to model in our visits to WSC. In terms of transport, we made an effort to walk, cycle, or catch a bus to the school. We usually provided food at meetings or events and made sure it met at least some of these sustainability principles: organic, fair trade, locally grown, low packaging. To ensure this we often brought in baking or food from our own gardens. We strived to minimise waste and dispose of it mindfully, even if this meant taking it home. Finally, we gave out relatively sustainable prizes to competition winners, such as cinema vouchers or reusable lunchboxes.

Most of the school participants perceived our role modelling to be salient, with one environmental leader saying it was “insanely” noticeable. Two teachers talked at length about how it had influenced them to think critically about their own habits. Walking the talk was described by one teacher as “absolutely” integral to the project’s authenticity and “another way of thrusting it forward”. Interestingly, the environmental leaders seemed to include themselves in the role modelling when they were asked about particular behaviours they had noticed. For example, although the research team provided all the food at events, one leader said: “just like you know, we often have food, but try to buy things without packaging or recycling packaging or not driving to places or, yeah”. Another recalled that “everyone” made a conscious effort not to leave rubbish lying around, and that it was important to all set a good example, because “no one wants to contradict themselves”. These comments suggest that the leaders identified waste conscious behaviours as group norms and clearly grasped the implications that hypocrisy would have on our combined team’s credibility.
A notable theme in our research team’s reflections was that we had all experienced practical difficulties with role modelling. For instance, while two of us lived near the school and found it easy to walk or cycle, others lived a considerable distance away and often opted to drive. Many of us expressed frustration that role modelling requires extra time and effort and “a rejection of convenience culture” (Author one). As Author five wrote: “It’s easier to buy packaged biscuits than to make them yourself, it’s easier to drive than to take the bus”. Nevertheless, we generally experienced modelling as rewarding because it aligned with our values and therefore felt good. A few of us described how we had found solace and inspiration in each other. Experiencing the same challenges built our team spirit, and if we ever made an “eco-blunder” (Author one) we could confide in each other and receive the empathetic reaction we needed to persevere.

Communication

Our research team reflected that we communicated with members of the school through multiple modes, including email, text messages, meetings, phone calls, and a Facebook account Author one set up. When exchanging personal details we also asked people for their preferred mode of contact, and tailored our communication accordingly. Some of us emphasised how vigilant we had been in ensuring our outgoing messages were crystal clear. Author two wrote: “We NEVER forwarded emails complete with old headers, tons of irrelevant information and quick, badly written messages”.

A strong theme that came through in our reflections was that our “technology saviness” and “understanding of youth mediums” enabled us to communicate effectively with the young people involved in the project. Facebook, for instance, proved to be a “fail-safe” (Author one) way to get hold of students, as well as a forum for publicising waste station events. The environmental leaders strongly endorsed the use of Facebook too. For example: “The Facebook thing did really well. I think that really drew people in, anyone that came to one event was constantly getting reminded [about other events]… even if they didn’t come, like kind of kept it on their minds”.

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Participants from both groups recognised that communication problems within the project stemmed primarily from the school end. Several research team members recalled feeling angst over nagging people when they had agreed to do something by a specific date but had not done so, or had not responded when we had asked them something important, such as whether a meeting was going ahead or not. Many school participants indicated sympathy for the challenges we faced. For example:

I’m sure they would wish that the school was more responsive. At times we get so busy that we don’t respond, and we sort of prioritise things and sometimes that gets down the priority list a little bit. I’ve always felt guilty about that (teacher).

Another staff member said she admired our persistence and energy and thought it must be “very frustrating” for us. All teachers expressed concerns about the school’s internal communication, in that not enough staff were informed about the project or involved in it. They also identified a need for staff with reduced workloads or paid management units that would allow more time for sustainability initiatives.

Measurement and Feedback

In our reflections we recalled various ways in which we measured the impact of the project and the efficacy of interventions and activities. These included questionnaires, audits, focus groups, social network maps, interviews, quizzes, feedback forms and general record keeping. We also identified multiple modes in which we fed results back to the school. These included posters put up in classrooms, presentations to the sustainability panel (in person or via email), presentations at full school assemblies, and our sustainability showcase evening. As coordinator of the panel, Author two also wrote up concise meeting minutes and annual reports on the school’s sustainability progress to circulate to panel members and the principal.

Many of our research team expressed gratitude that the school was highly receptive to our measurement. We described teachers as “flexible” and “accommodating” when we conducted measures in the classroom, and noted that senior students had willingly assisted us with the administration of questionnaires when asked. Those of us
involved in 2008 commended our measurement and feedback efforts in that year, especially our execution of the whole-school questionnaire. Those of us involved in 2009 however, expressed concerns about our measurement. Author two reflected that we had been very wary of “over measuring” or “intruding” on WSC, which may have led us to bypass some important measurement opportunities. We reported struggling with evaluating the impact of our films and admitted that we were not always completely clear on what we were measuring and why. Some of our team also acknowledged that we could have disseminated findings more thoroughly, especially the results of the waste audit. Competing demands on our time and getting wholly engrossed in the practical side of the project were reasons we gave for not utilising all the available channels for sharing the information. In hindsight, many of us described dissemination as something we would have liked to have done much better.

Not surprisingly, the school participants indicated only vague awareness of our measurement and feedback. One teacher recalled that we had conducted surveys and audits and were trying to measure the success of our films, but was only aware of this because she had attended a sustainability panel meeting. Our research agenda was not salient to the environmental leaders either. When asked if she was aware of our measurement, one said: “Well kind of, I know she [Author one] is doing a project but I don’t really know the findings, I don’t mind, it’s not, but yeah I don’t really know like her thesis or anything like that”. Importantly, participants from both groups acknowledged that we had presented at assemblies a number of times in 2009. However, these presentations were not for the purpose of sharing official research findings, but for showing films, artwork and photos and publicising what was happening next.

**Complementary and Conflicting Principles**

As noted the research team also reflected on which principles we felt worked well together and which we felt conflicted with each other, at least to some degree. Figure 3 shows the pairs of principles we identified in the survey as complementary to one another (solid lines) and the pairs we identified as at least partially conflicting (dotted lines). We elaborate on these relationships below.
Chapter Four: Guiding Principles for Community Engagement

Figure 3. Complementary principles (solid lines) and potentially conflicting principles (dotted lines) described in the research team survey.

Complementary Principles

Communication and a strengths-based approach were considered complementary, as asking the right questions (good communication) can lead to the discovery of individual and community strengths. Then, working on projects identified by a strengths-based approach can increase rapport and, in turn, lines of communication. For example, Author one noted that after the 2009 research team and student leaders spent a Sunday working together on the *Gumby* film, we became a much more cohesive group and communication between us improved markedly. In addition, we noted how working with the communication strengths of the participants was particularly effective. Regular meetings, texting and Facebook were especially good ways to communicate, email was not.

Communication and measurement and feedback were also highly complementary. As Author five noted: “Measurement and feedback also work well with the
communication principle. Reporting results from, say, a waste audit, is a more powerful communication than just saying that we think waste disposal needs attention”. Author four articulated that good communication is a prerequisite for accurate measurement and effective feedback. Both should be culturally appropriate and use language participants can relate to, or they will not be treated as relevant, resulting in poor data (compromising measurement) and low uptake (compromising the utility of feedback).

We considered the strengths-based and empowerment principles to be fundamentally interrelated; that the empowerment of a person was contingent on them perceiving that their assets had made a positive contribution to the project. As Author four wrote: “If you are utilising a person’s strengths they are going to feel a greater sense of mastery over what they are doing than if they are doing a task they don’t feel competent in”. In the case of WSC, this occurred most obviously for one of the 2009 environmental leaders who was particularly skilled in photography and design. She submitted several photos as part of the media workshops, sketched designs for the waste stations, liaised with the school carpenter to get them built, and created a page for a community bulletin that showcased all our projects. Author one reflected that this leader’s sound commitment to the project was probably partially due to its compatibility with her strengths and the resulting positive reinforcement she received.

Role modelling and empowerment were considered complementary, as being exposed to our eco-friendly behaviours could lead students to see them as easier to enact. This may be particularly true given the similar age of the university students to WSC students. Author five wrote about how role modelling aligned with empowerment because of its authenticity: “It doesn’t involve directly imposing ideas or standards on people, it’s more about just being authentic in our message, and people can learn from that without us preaching at them”.

Principles with Some Degree of Conflict

Measurement and feedback and empowerment were noted by three of us as in tension with each other. As Author six wrote: “Measurement and feedback are messy processes and hinder the broader principles of empowerment and strengths-based.
They call for detail, while the latter call for big picture, and being willing to work. So this principle may constrict other ones”. On the other hand, she reasoned that measurement and feedback are necessary for the long-term empowerment of an organisation:

If the school has data they can use it to advocate for more change and can concretely see how far they’ve come. If we leave without feeding back the information we’ve collected, new people will have nothing to work from and will find it harder to campaign for changes. So while it’s constricting in the short-term, it’s essential to keep the project going.

Author one articulated that the way to overcome the tension between these two principles is to get community members actively involved in devising research questions and collecting data: “that way they’d probably feel much more empowered to do something constructive with the results”. We know from our experiences at WSC that involving staff and students in research tasks is difficult, and creates additional logistical challenges. We generally got the impression that they were content with us conducting measurement on the school but were not particularly interested in participating in the research design, data collection, analysis or dissemination.

In a broader sense, Author two expressed that empowerment represented the “essence” of the school and measurement represented the “essence” of the university:

To truly ‘empower’ we would have had to have let go of our agenda, but we couldn’t do that. To truly ‘measure’ we would have had to have ignored the school’s needs and just gone ahead and gathered the data we wanted.

This comment reflected a deeper conflict between our aspirations to meet the ideals of action research and the pressure we felt to rigorously monitor changes in the school population for our theses and dissertations. In hindsight, however, the most compelling evidence for change was not in the waste audits, formal surveys or observations we had done (or not done) but in the cultural and physical artefacts we had co-created with the school (films, photographs, waste stations), and most significantly, in the new student leadership structure and ambitious waste reduction
target described in the introduction. So, paradoxically, dedicating ourselves to the action-related principles may have resulted in more robust outcomes.

A further tension was noted between communication and empowerment. We wanted the school to go “full speed ahead” towards sustainability. If we had been absolutely honest in our communication we would have fully expressed our ideas and values. However, for the sake of empowerment, we tried to keep our vision in check. This was sometimes difficult. For example, Author one recalled how in a planning meeting for the waste stations, we had not been able to resist pushing for a compartment for compostable food scraps, despite disinterest on the part of the environment leaders. After the meeting we had felt concerned that we had been “too honest” and compromised our empowerment aim of helping people achieve change, but not imposing our ideas on them. On the other hand, we knew this was a cutting edge improvement that would better position the school to gain external support, and thus be empowering to the organisation as a whole.

Discussion and Recommendations

This study enabled our research team to critically reflect on our practice through the framework of five guiding principles. By gathering the perspectives of school community members, we were able to glean deeper insights into how these principles operated and how we could improve our practice. While the project was successful in the sense that the school went on to take full ownership of their sustainability goal, we do not claim to have uncovered an objective truth about the utility of these principles. First, we cannot know exactly what role our research team played in the project’s success. It is possible that the school’s increasing interest in sustainability was part of a general societal trend and would have developed with or without our research team’s intervention. Second, we recognise that the findings presented here are limited by the shortcomings inherent to self-reflection, including memory distortion and other self-serving biases. Third, although the graduate student who conducted the interviews was not affiliated with the project, it is important to acknowledge that interviewees may not have been as candid as we had hoped for because they were aware we would see their responses. Finally, the second author had multiple roles within the school, as a
parent, a former member of the governing board, the school’s sustainability panel coordinator and a researcher. These factors amongst others combine to give this, like all case studies, unique characteristics. Despite these caveats, we offer recommendations for other researchers and community practitioners who may be interested in working to promote environmental sustainability, or who may find a similar principles-based approach useful in their own collaborative endeavours.

**Recommendation One**

As with any community development work, we recommend starting with the locally identified needs of the organisation (Wolff, 2000) alongside their strengths. In the case of our project, waste and litter reduction were identified as issues in need of attention by several parties within the school, such as the board, the sustainability panel, and the student environmental leaders. The school also had prior established links to a council agency with expertise in waste minimisation and resources for waste auditing. Although waste is likely to be a relevant issue for most organisations, there are numerous other areas in which sustainability leadership can be demonstrated (e.g. examining consumption practices and switching to fair trade or more local suppliers, improving facilities for active transport, participating in challenges to raise money for charities such as Oxfam).

**Recommendation Two**

Consider choosing a set of guiding principles. Principles are useful in several ways. They can help with real-world decision making by providing a framework against which to weigh up different options. In conjunction with this, they can produce a more coherent team, as they provide boundaries for conversation. For example, we did not debate if we should role model what we were advocating, although we did debate how to do this in particular instances. Having the principles helped prevent us from sinking into an unguided chaos that may have damaged our relationships with each other and our sense of being a team.

The principles also meant we were less attached to specific end results than we might have otherwise been. In other words, we could judge the success of the project
on the basis of our process rather than on the school’s “progress”. This detachment is critical to maintaining a genuinely collaborative partnership, as it allows a research team to remain open to dialogue about a project’s direction. Paradoxically too, detachment may also enhance persistence in the face of set-backs, by taking the focus off outcomes as key indicators of success. Although we did not do this often enough, regularly reflecting as a team on how well you are living your guiding principles is likely to improve your ability to deal with the challenges of collaborative projects.

**Recommendation Three**

Expect that you may need to switch between different roles such as learner, facilitator, researcher, and advocate throughout the project (Connors & Seifer, 2000). For example, we suspect it is almost impossible to be an effective empowerment practitioner and rigorous population-level researcher simultaneously, but you may be able to alternate between these roles. Deciding when to prioritise one stance over the other is rarely simple. For instance, do you “allow” community members to gather data in their own way (which may violate your ideas of rigour), or do you insist on controlling the process? There is no single answer to this question and we suggest that it is not always useful to struggle to be both completely true to the demands of your external affiliation and completely “collaborative” in relation to the same task. Similarly, it is important to genuinely learn, but also to teach when it is clear you have expertise that will help move the process forward.

**Recommendation Four**

Role modelling the behaviour you value is important. It shows integrity, an essential antecedent to trust and credibility (Simons, 2002). It also provides an avenue by which community members can experience and learn about the target issue. In the case of sustainability projects, there are numerous relevant behaviours. Targeting a few highly visible ones (e.g., bringing a reusable coffee cup to meetings; providing unpackaged food) and consistently sticking to them will reinforce the sustainability message and increase the chance that it will be adopted by others (Harré, 2011). In the
case of collaborative projects focused on global social justice, using certified fair trade products would be an obvious and highly visible choice.

**Recommendation Five**

Consider collaborating with organisations that are located close to researchers’ homes or workplace. In the case of sustainability projects, this will inevitably make role modelling easier, and may enhance your commitment to the project because of a shared place-identity with community members (see Harré, 2011). Prior personal connections between researchers and organisational staff are an asset to collaborative projects and may be critical in moving them beyond the initial stage (Buys & Bursnall, 2007). Unless there is a history of conflict, it is likely that the more connections there are between the “external” team and the community, the more viable the project.

**Recommendation Six**

Take time out to plan measurement and adopt a wide lens in deciding what qualifies as a research artefact. Media and artwork created by community members, as well as new infrastructure, organisational policies, and recognition from external agencies are primary sources of evidence. These can be documented throughout the project by keeping a log of emails, meeting minutes, community newsletters, and so on. In addition to serving as records of events, photographs can powerfully capture changes to a community’s environment over time and are essential for creating lively presentations about the project for sharing both internally and externally. Not measuring every aspect of the project and instead focusing on action may ultimately produce something of greater worth that is also easier to measure.

**Recommendation Seven**

Be patient. Be generous with offering your time and assistance to the community you are working with, especially in the early stages of a collaboration when personal contact is imperative to trust building (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005). In particular, it is important to volunteer to help with activities that have no obvious relationship to your agenda (see Barnett et al., 2010). This is part of adopting a long-range social change
perspective (see Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). Such a perspective accepts that you are not above the invisible and sometimes tedious work of simply doing what needs to be done. In this way too, your presence is assisting the community with their agenda, rather than overwhelming them with your own.

**Future Research**

Future research could further investigate the utility of these principles in action research projects. Experimenting with different levels of role modelling may produce interesting insights about social influence and the transmission of desirable practices. The current study suggested that effective modelling involves not only demonstrating the behaviour you hope to inspire, but also drawing attention to it without appearing to be judgmental. Moreover, it is important to choose the right behaviours to focus on. Behaviours that are visible and enhance group identity, like the choice of food at events, may be particularly powerful in prompting ownership of a project. Further studies could investigate people’s reactions to researchers who model different types of behaviours, who demonstrate varying degrees of alignment between their words and deeds, and who draw attention to their own behaviour using different strategies.

To conclude, we invite other action researchers to adopt our principles or principles that fit their setting and to reflect on how they are experienced and the tensions between them. On-going self-reflection may help maintain the research team’s focus and provide useful data to further understand the principles’ efficacy. This will enable us to build critical understanding about the guiding frameworks that can be used to inspire sustainability initiatives in community settings.
Appendix 1. Typical questions used in the school participant interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strengths-based</td>
<td>The team has tried to work with people in the school who are themselves keen to forward sustainability. Do you think they succeeded in doing that? The team also attempted to use the arts and media as strengths of the school. Do you think they succeeded in doing that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>The team aimed to help people achieve change but without imposing their own ideas about how that change could happen. Do you feel that they achieved that? What do you think the young people involved learnt about how to effect positive sustainability changes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role modelling</td>
<td>The research team has tried to role model sustainable practices in the project. Have you noticed that? What are you aware of that they’ve tried to do? Do you think their attempt to “walk the talk” helped the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>How do you feel about the communication channels between members of the school community and the research team? Is there anything you can comment on about how they can be improved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement and Feedback</td>
<td>Are you aware of ways the team has tried to measure and understand the sustainability culture of the school or the impact of the project? Are you aware of feedback the team has given the school about what they’ve measured? Do you have any comments on what they did well and how they could improve?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Five

Navigating the Path Less Travelled: A Case Study of Positional Student Environmental Leader Experiences

Context Statement

This article has been prepared for submission to an educational leadership journal. It has parallels to the previous chapter in that it foregrounds the experiences of core change agents within the WSC sustainability project. However, this time, the focus is on the three 2009 environmental leaders and their perspectives, experiences and practices in relation to their role and school context.

Drawing on data collected as part of the action research project, the piece takes a constructivist, case study approach and explores the experiences of the three leaders in some depth. The specific research questions are: What are young people’s experiences of holding an environmental leader position in a secondary school? How do school contextual factors shape student environmental leaders’ perspectives, experiences and practices? In particular, the paper foregrounds the uniqueness of environmental leadership roles as compared with other types of student leadership (i.e., cultural or sporting roles) and emphasises the role as a site of tension and transformation.

As noted in the introduction, I was inspired to write this paper partly because of certain observations from my research on the MAD programme that were outside the scope of the articles in Chapters Two and Three.
Abstract

Within secondary schools, the role of student environmental leader may differ from more traditional student leadership roles. Because environmental leadership often involves challenges to the status quo, this role is likely to sit in tension with some of the assumptions that underlie school life. In this article I explore these ideas through a case study of three young women appointed to lead a relatively new environmental portfolio within their school’s student leadership programme. Drawing on a range of data sources collected as part of a collaborative action research project, I present six themes to capture the young women’s experiences during their tenure. I suggest that the student environmental leader role is a site of tensions and transformations, and youth in such positions may benefit from additional support from intermediary organisations.

Key words: student leadership; environmental leadership; youth; case study; tensions; intermediary organisations
Introduction

Student leadership is a worthwhile topic of investigation (Archard, 2009; Bunn et al., 2010; Dempster & Lizzio, 2007; Hine, 2013; McNae, 2011) yet many have noted a dearth of research on this topic in the secondary school setting (Archard, 2009; Hine, 2013; McNae, 2010). Researchers in this field have stressed the need to explore leadership from the perspective of students (Archard, 2013b; Dempster & Lizzio, 2007; Hine, 2013; Keeffe & Andrews, 2011) since their voices have been historically absent from such conversations (Dempster, Stevens, & Keeffe, 2011; McNae, 2010, 2011). In response, recent scholarship has tended to focus both on students’ understandings and interpretations of leadership as a concept (Keeffe & Andrews, 2011, 2015; McNae, 2011) and the experiences of those currently involved in leadership programmes (Archard, 2011, 2012; Hine, 2013; Neumann et al., 2009). In the latter strain of research, students holding various types of leadership positions are often studied as a single group, with a focus on common experiences rather than the nuances of particular roles. Indeed, except for the role of school captain, studied in depth by Neumann and colleagues (2009), the experiences of students occupying specific leadership positions remain largely unarticulated.

In this article, I argue that student leadership roles should not always be treated as a single phenomenon. This “one size fits all” approach is particularly problematic in the case of the student environment leader, the position that is the focus here. As will be discussed further, this role may be different, in important ways, from those that support the traditional functions of a school (such as sporting and cultural leadership roles). Because much environmental leadership involves challenges to the status quo, this role may sit in tension with some of the assumptions that underlie school life. Therefore, if we want to understand the experience of students in this role, it is important to study them in and of themselves.

First, I briefly review literature on general student leadership structures and the experiences of appointed leaders. I then review a small selection of studies on student environmental clubs and non-formal sustainability programmes for secondary-aged
youth, to introduce the notion that tensions may arise when pupils lead environmental initiatives in their schools. The core of the article is a detailed examination of the experiences of three secondary students who were appointed to lead a newly introduced “environmental portfolio” within their school’s leadership programme. Drawing on data collected as part of an action research project, I consider how the school’s social structures and the portfolio’s lack of history shaped the young women’s perspectives, experiences, and practices, and how they were challenged in ways that resonate with and diverge from existing understandings of leader experiences. I conclude by suggesting that a fusion of support from school staff and intermediary organisations (Mitra, 2009) may help young people navigate the often-uncharted territory of environmental leadership in the secondary school context.

Background

Schools typically convey a commitment to developing students’ leadership skills (McNae, 2010). This is often expressed through mission statements that espouse visions of shaping pupils into well-rounded citizens, and via specialised programmes designed to build on the leadership potential of certain students (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001; Hine, 2013; Shertzer, Wall, Frandsen, & Guo, 2005). According to some researchers, school-based leadership programmes have evolved from hierarchical systems that privileged the elite few and bequeathed them with symbolic power and the rights to reward and admonish their peers (Keeffe & Andrews, 2011; Lilley, 2010). While some institutions may retain remnants of this “antiquated” model (Lilley, 2010, p. 34), most espouse a more expansive interpretation of leadership that aims to serve all students in some way (Keeffe & Andrews, 2011; Lilley, 2010). Indeed, Keeffe and Andrews (2011) note that successful contemporary leadership programmes are founded on more democratic notions of building a sense of community, shared values, and the development of participants’ skills in communication and teamwork (Bahou, 2011; Lodge, 2005; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006).
Positional Student Leadership

A small body of literature explores the experiences of young people holding leadership positions in their schools. As noted, Neumann and colleagues (2009) have focused extensively on the school captain role, while many have looked at senior student leaders more generally (Archard, 2011, 2013b) or cohorts of pupils moving through multiple positions on their schooling pathway (Hine, 2013). These positions commonly entail responsibilities such as running assemblies; working with staff to coordinate house or whole school events; being a spokesperson for students; representing the student body at events; encouraging peer participation; being a role model; and participating in school decision-making (Hine, 2013; Neumann et al., 2009).

Positive experiences of student leadership have included enhanced relationships with school staff, other adults in the community and younger students, improved communication, interpersonal, learning and self-management skills, improved self-confidence and a sense of making a difference through meaningful contributions (Hine, 2013; Neumann et al., 2009). Challenging experiences have included balancing the demands of the role and schoolwork (Hine, 2013; Neumann et al., 2009), uncooperative peers and deteriorating friendships amongst females in particular (Archard, 2011; Neumann et al., 2009), physical illness due to stress, and decreased financial freedom from having to withdraw from part-time work (Neumann et al., 2009). In relation to the school captain position, Neumann and colleagues (2009) proposed a model of anticipated impacts, based on the idea of a fast-tracked increase in maturity from a heightened sense of self-awareness and the demands associated with holding a high status position.

Researchers have voiced several pragmatic and philosophical concerns about positional leadership structures. As Hine (2013) summarised, these include a lack of teacher support for students in leadership positions, a paucity of teacher training in student leadership development, and student disengagement as a result of election processes that are perceived to be unfair or even hypocritical (Karnes & Stephens, 1999; Lavery, 2006; McNae, 2011). A major issue relates to staff perceptions of student roles, with several scholars cautioning that student leadership must not fall into the realm of
tokenism or manipulation (Lavery, 2006; McNae, 2011; Willmett, 1997). This can occur when student leaders are assigned tasks that are an extension of managerial duties usually allocated to staff (McNae, 2011; Willmett, 1997), rather than given capacity to innovate or exert influence over decision-making structures. Indeed, it is not unusual for leadership programmes to take the form of pastoral care initiatives for socialising new students into the school environment (see McNae, 2011). In such cases, older student leaders are encouraged to impart traditional understandings of school structures to younger students, thereby instilling and reproducing these structures (McNae, 2011). This may contrast starkly with environmental forms of student leadership, explored next.

**Student Environmental Leadership**

Research on secondary student environmental leadership has not tended to focus on leadership positions per se, but on student environmental clubs or extracurricular programmes that encourage school-based action (Barrett & Sutter, 2006; Blythe & Harré, 2012; Cincera & Kovacikova, 2014; de Vreede et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2007; Lousley, 1999; Roberts, 2009). While the purposes and methodologies of such studies are diverse, each at least points towards the potential for students to challenge cultural norms and assumptions that underlie school life. For instance, Blythe and Harré’s (2012) study on the *Make a Difference* youth sustainability programme in New Zealand cited evidence of students running workshops on consumerism and palm oil in their schools after participating in similar workshops at a residential leadership retreat. Indeed, one student reported conducting a palm-oil audit of his school’s food technology cupboard (Blythe & Harré, unpublished manuscript). De Vreede and colleagues’ (2014) study of Canadian peer education programme *MindShift* explains how participants rehearse and deliver a dramatic performance piece to junior classes in their school. The piece was authored by the youth-led team who developed *MindShift*, and focuses on a metaphor of the earth as a spaceship about to crash due to species extinction and climate change (see de Vreede, 2011). More generally, studies in this area have cited evidence of students setting up new waste management systems, challenging throwaway culture via mock posters, and greening school grounds and
neighbouring streams (Barrett & Sutter, 2006; Blythe & Harré, 2012). Such actions challenge assumptions that underlie school life; for instance, how and what resources are procured, how they are used and recovered, who is qualified to teach and what content is appropriate; and who makes decisions around school grounds, facilities and operations. For this reason, environmental leadership may be prone to causing tensions between students and other members of the school community when pupils stray too closely to structures they have been historically prohibited from (Lousley, 1999).

**Focus of this Research**

In recent years, student leadership researchers have highlighted the importance of attending to how school context impacts on students’ leadership perspectives and actions (Dempster & Lizzio, 2007; Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006; McNae, 2011). As emphasised by McNae (2011) and Osborn, Hunt & Jaunch (2002), leadership is socially constructed from, and practiced within, contexts where history and patterns over time matter. Accordingly, this research focuses on one particular secondary school and three elected student environmental leaders. Through a case study of their perspectives, experiences and practices, I explore the idea of the environmental leadership role as a site of transformation and tension.

**Research Context**

Western Springs College (WSC), the secondary school profiled in this study, is co-educational and located in a medium-high socioeconomic area of Auckland, New Zealand. The school’s vision, as detailed on its website, is to be an “inclusive learning community” which encourages “academic achievement through teaching excellence” and fosters “individuality, creativity and critical thinking” alongside “a sense of community, respect for and service to others”. WSC has traditions of cultivating students’ talents in the creative arts and a reputation for providing high quality pastoral care. Upon enrolment, pupils are streamed into a vertical form class (all year levels) and into one of five houses. During the case study period, the school role was approximately 1100 pupils.
Chapter Five: Positional Student Environmental Leader Experiences

Student leadership at WSC

WSC has a positional student leadership structure, introduced in 2007. The system has been significantly restructured since this study was conducted, and indeed some of the findings informed the restructure process. In 2009 when the data were collected, official leadership positions were reserved for senior students, a common pattern in secondary schools (Archard, 2009; McNae, 2011). The appointment process for leaders was as follows. Halfway through the year, Year 12 students were informed about the available roles, which included one student board representative, three house leaders per house, and three leaders each for the following portfolios: academic, sports, cultural, international, and environmental. Students could nominate themselves for up to two, and were required to ask a friend to endorse their application. Staff and the Year 12 cohort then voted on the portfolio candidates and the board representative, and all Year 9 – 12 students and staff voted on the house leader candidates within their own house. Based on popular vote, the programme director then put together a provisional team and refined this in consultation with house deans and senior managers.

Leaders had several responsibilities during their tenure, which began in January with a training camp, and concluded at the end of term three when preparation for external examinations took precedence. All leaders were required to attend weekly team meetings with the programme director, and each team of portfolio or house leaders was required to convene with a support teacher once a week. Generally, leaders were expected to help organise opportunities for students to participate in initiatives related to their particular portfolio or within their respective house. As will be explored in this case study, the environmental portfolio had less history than the other portfolios, having only been introduced in 2008. It is important to note that the introduction of the portfolio into the leadership structure was in part to accommodate the passions of a particular senior student, Frances2, who in 2007 started up a student environmental club and conducted a solid waste audit.

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2 Names of school participants have been changed to protect confidentiality.
Chapter Five: Positional Student Environmental Leader Experiences

Sarah, Maree and Chloe, the participants in this case study, were elected into the position of student environmental portfolio leader in 2009. Importantly, Sarah was the only leader who had applied exclusively for the environmental portfolio. Maree had applied for a house leader position first and an environmental position second, while Chloe had applied for an academic role first, and a house leader role second. A shortage of applicants for the environmental portfolio meant that Maree and Chloe were offered the positions after missing out on their preferences. All three young women were white and middle-class.

Researcher Positionality

This case study draws on data collected as part of a broader action research venture conducted at WSC from 2008-2010 called ‘Creating a sustainable school’. The venture was instigated by a faculty member from the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland, Niki Harré (the author’s academic supervisor), who at the time had recently finished a term on WSC’s board as a parent representative. The goals of the action research were to understand the school’s ‘status’ with regards to environmental sustainability values and practices, and to work with interested staff, students, and other stakeholders on initiatives to advance sustainability in various areas of school life – such as curriculum, culture, facilities and operations. The university research team was made up of Niki, the author, and two other graduate students, and our action research approach was informed by principles from community psychology, environmental psychology, youth-adult partnerships and university-school partnerships (Blythe et al., 2013).

The second year of the project, 2009, involved an intensive collaboration between the university research team and the environmental portfolio. When the first term commenced, we met with Sarah, Maree and Chloe to guide them through visioning and goal setting. Soon after this, the environmental portfolio came to be officially supported by Michael, a male teacher who was Head of WSC’s Physical Education department. Michael maintained he was no expert on environmental sustainability, but was keen to learn about it and to help the leaders out. For the remainder of their tenure, then, the research team and Michael jointly supported the
girls. As will be explored, the young women’s central goal was to improve the portfolio’s profile in the school, and their major undertaking was to construct and involve students in designing aesthetically pleasing ‘waste stations’ for separating organic, recyclable, and landfill waste at source. The stations were envisioned as a means to renovate the school’s facilities and simultaneously raise students’ awareness of different types of waste and their destinations. As well as helping in a support role, the research team facilitated a number of media-related initiatives in the second half of the year in an attempt to expand the waste station project’s scope and reach (see Blythe et al., 2013). As an example, the research team organised two afterschool ‘media workshops’ – attended by 31 students including Sarah, Chloe and Maree – in which we discussed waste discourses and invited participants to document the school’s waste facilities and culture through a photography exercise.

Research Questions

There were two questions guiding the focus of this research. Given the dearth of research around secondary student environmental leader positions, the first research question was: What are young people’s experiences of holding an environmental leader position in a secondary school? Because scholars have recommended attending to the interplay of the subjective experiences of the student and the more objective influences of the school (Keeffe & Andrews, 2011, p. 24), the second research question was as follows: How do school contextual factors shape student environmental leaders’ perspectives, experiences and practices?

Methodology

This study employed case study methodology (Stake, 1995, 2000; Yin, 1981). Yin (1981) noted that the distinctive characteristic of a case study is that it aims to explore “a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 59). In this case, the phenomenon was formal student environmental leadership within one particular Auckland secondary school lacking a strong sustainability culture. As suggested by Foster (2005), a case study approach is appropriate for studying leadership in schools
because of its constructivist assumptions, including the ideas that within any organisation, ‘reality’ can be construed in multiple ways; that people come to ‘know’ and understand reality through interactions with others; and that knowledge about the case is ‘socially constructed’ (Stake, 2000). The intention of this study was not to produce a theory or generalised truth about student environmental leader experiences, but rather to offer an interpretation of such leaders’ experience in one setting and allow readers to make their own judgments with regard to transferability (Stake, 1995). In other words, the current study allows those interested in environmental student leadership to contemplate parallels between the experiences and setting explored here and the contexts in which they are interested, and thereby appraise the applicability of the interpretations.

Data Sources

Data drawn on for this case study were collected periodically through 2009, and included individual interviews with the three young women, observations recorded in my research journal, and documents generated as part of the action research project and as part of regular school life. These are now outlined.

Interviews. Semi-structured, informal individual interviews were conducted three times throughout the school year in an attempt to invite the environmental leaders to actively reflect on their leadership experiences. All interviews were audio recorded with participants’ consent. The first set, conducted in May by the author alongside another research team member, Briar, lasted approximately 40 minutes. We conversed with the young women about their backgrounds, how they came to be leaders, what it was like being an environmental leader at school, what they were excited and concerned about in relation to their role, sources of support that they felt were present or lacking, what they hoped to achieve during 2009 and their ideas about what sustainability means.

The second set of interviews was conducted by Briar in September and each lasted approximately 25 minutes. The girls were asked about how things had been going, progress that they thought they had made on their goals, what they liked about
their role and the support and obstacles that they had experienced, as well as whether they thought that their views towards sustainability, or the views of other people at WSC, had changed. Finally, they were asked whether they thought that they had become better known at WSC and why.

The third set of interviews was conducted in November, after the end of the school year and examinations period. The interviewer was a new member of the research team who had not been involved in the project. This was an attempt to elicit more candid perspectives about the core research team members for a related study (see Blythe et al., 2013). The final interviews were 35 minutes on average, and covered a range of topics about the entire sustainability project. Of relevance to this study, the leaders were asked about: their contributions to the sustainability effort and what had helped and held them back; the various initiatives that they and/or research team had organised throughout the year and the effectiveness of these in engaging the school population; and how the year’s work had impacted on their own sustainability advocacy and their relationships with various people.

**Observations and Documents.** The author kept a field journal throughout the year of 2009. This included observational notes about the leaders, including their apparent levels of interest in the project, challenges they seemed to be facing in the role and in other aspects of their lives, and thoughts in relation to discussions I had with them in person or online. Several documents were also collected in a digital log throughout the year, including email exchanges, proposals for projects, and notes from planning meetings between the research team and the environmental portfolio team, school newsletters, and the school’s yearbook, which the majority of student leaders contributed to.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis occurred in two phases. The first phase occurred immediately after the each set of interview data was collected. Following each set of interviews, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by the interviewer/s and transcripts were sent to each respective leader for review and comment. The young women did not request any
changes to their transcripts, except to keep certain details about school personnel confidential, which we respected.

The second phase of analysis occurred after all data had been collected. I began by reviewing the interview transcripts, field journal, and digital log. As a primary source of data from the leaders themselves, the interview transcripts were read multiple times, and thematically analysed according to procedures described by Braun and Clark (2006). As implied, the epistemological approach was constructivist, as the intention was to speculate about the socio-cultural contexts and social structures that influenced the leaders’ accounts of their individual experiences and perspectives. In line with this, analysis was at the latent level, focusing on interpreting the underlying ideas and conceptualisations shaping the data’s semantic content (Braun & Clark, 2006). The process involved annotating the transcripts with codes, sorting codes into candidate themes and collating all data extracts within each theme; developing thematic maps; reviewing and refining themes and collapsing them if overlap was significant; and moving from working titles of themes towards final names. I coded the transcripts for each leader in chronological order with the intention to capture their evolving experiences and sense making, before looking across the dataset for common patterns. The analysis was largely inductive, with relevant literature accessed later in the process to help explicate the significance of the findings. The field journal and documents served as secondary sources to help flesh out certain themes. For instance, when I came across an incident discussed in an individual interview, I scanned the field journal and email log to check if these documents held material that would further illuminate the incident.

My enduring friendship with the young women enabled me to incorporate member checking into the analytic process, in a bid to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. Over a number of shared meals, we discussed my interpretations, considered additional interpretations (Stake, 1995) and clarified details about the school context and leadership system I was unsure about.
Findings and Discussion

The environmental leaders’ experiences of their role varied over time as they became accustomed to the demands of the position and navigated a path forward within a sometimes-inhospitable context. The six themes offered herein are introduced in a relatively chronological order in terms of when they first appeared salient in the data. The themes are: 1) an unpopular, ambiguous, and laughable position; 2) heightened environmental awareness and self-consciousness; 3) critiquing the status quo and encountering resistance; 4) apathy, empathy, and struggling to engage students; 5) enticing students through a multiplicity of targeted appeals; and 6) a sense of accomplishment through attracting crowds, being recognised, innovating and changing (a few) minds.

Predictable challenges cited in the positional student leadership literature, such as balancing the demands of the role with schoolwork (Hine, 2013; Neumann et al., 2009) certainly appeared in the young women’s accounts. However, the majority of selected themes emphasise aspects of the environmental leader role that diverge in key ways from typical student leader experiences. Literature from the fields of student leadership, education for sustainability and sustainability advocacy is woven into the findings to highlight connections and departures between this study and others, and to help illustrate the implications of certain themes.

An unpopular, ambiguous, and laughable position

According to the young women, one of the initial challenging aspects of leading the environmental portfolio was that it was unpopular amongst their cohort and staff. Chloe described it in the first set of interviews as the “random extra portfolio”. The lack of interest in the role was obvious from the shortage of nominees on the voting form and the fact that a student who had not self-nominated (Chloe) had been invited to take it up. Unlike all the other leadership groups, the environmental portfolio initially did not have a support teacher associated with it either. As Sarah explained:

We sort of just got dumped in it … like we went on this camp at the beginning of the year which was for all the student leaders … and everyone seemed to know
what they were doing, whereas we just sort of, like we didn’t have a teacher … we just had like no direction.

The leaders believed that the main reason the role was not highly sought after was that it was unclear, even to them:

Sarah: I think no one wanted to do it because it’s not a clear-cut role, like no one actually, like we didn’t know what it was, which shows you, you know? Like we were the environmental leaders and we had no idea what it was so how could anyone else?

Charlotte: So it’s pretty different from say a ball committee that’s got to plan one event that’s every year?

Sarah: Yeah, or even like the sports leaders, they … help out with sports.

These extracts draw attention to the fact that the environmental portfolio was not linked to particular events on the school calendar or a traditional academic department, and therefore the leaders were not able to latch themselves onto existing initiatives or yearly rituals like their counterparts. Notably, the school’s curriculum committee had rejected a proposal for a new Environmental Science course put forward by a Biology teacher in the year prior. Sustainability education was thus only just beginning to feature on the radar of school management, and had not yet secured even a peripheral spot within the formal curriculum. Moreover, although the girls vaguely recalled that their predecessor Frances had set up a student environmental club and undertaken a waste audit, they each made comments suggesting previous portfolio initiatives were not at all salient, and thus they were essentially “working from nothing” (Sarah).

All three leaders reported that they had been mocked about their appointment to the environmental leader role. This was mostly by fellow student leaders and Year 13 peers, but occasionally teachers, and even one young woman’s parents. As Chloe recounted: “My parents, I was like, ‘I’m an environmental leader’ and they were like ‘wow, that’s great’ (sarcasm) and I was like ‘oh shhh’ … people are so cynical.” Maree explained that
the taunts from peers and teachers revolved around how they should pick up rubbish. It is likely that such comments sat uncomfortably with the girls in part because the task of clearing the school of litter was typically assigned to students on after-school detention, and thus associated with WSC’s punishment structures.

Previous literature has emphasised the symbolic capital and high status associated with student leadership positions in a secondary school context (Keeffe & Andrews, 2011; McNae, 2011; Neumann et al., 2009). In the case of this study, the environmental leaders appeared to initially see their position as residing at the bottom of the student leadership hierarchy. While still privileged relative to their non-leader peers, the lack of history surrounding their portfolio, lack of teacher backing, and the pervasive discourse of environmentalism as picking up rubbish meant that the girls had significant challenges ahead. Increasing the portfolio’s visibility and social status thus became their top priority.

**Heightened environmental awareness and self-consciousness**

The three young women indicated that taking up the position had influenced their sense of environmental awareness and everyday behaviour, albeit to varying degrees. Sarah – who had composted her whole life, been involved in tree planting efforts and been vegetarian for the past four years – reported that she was now “just that little bit more careful” about recycling, tried to avoid driving too often, and was “more conscious of telling people to put things in the rubbish bin where I sit and stuff”. The role was thus a conduit for honing her practices as a sustainability advocate, rather than a significant catalyst for change.

Chloe, in contrast, described a suite of behaviours she had instigated since her appointment to the position:

I’ve been making a conscious effort to try and stop, you know, wasting power or anything … doing recycling at home, I have been trying to walk, I have really, really been trying to make an effort to do things that will help the environment and that will, you know, decrease my carbon footprint … obviously this is all really cliché, but yeah.
Chloe’s drive to engage in such behaviour seemed to stem from the fact that she initially saw herself as unfit for the title of environmental leader. She confided to us several times that she had felt “really hypocritical” taking on the role because she had been “really lazy” in the past and “often got lifts to school”. She also described her family as “really laidback” in terms of their environmental values and said this was starting to irritate her. Unsurprisingly, she felt ambivalent about influencing other students to act more sustainably, having only recently come to consider this herself.

Maree indicated that the role had sharpened her awareness and intolerance of people littering and driving “ginormous cars that need gigantic amounts of petrol”; traits she believed she had inherited from her mother. Now in a leadership role, she felt “even more ticked off” by these and obligated to be “more outspoken”. In Maree’s view, the role necessitated that she do independent research to become something of an expert on sustainability so she could be assured in her actions and viewpoints:

I have to have all the answers … I personally like to find things out for myself, so that I don’t get caught out by other people, I hate that … I like to know stuff and I like to know what I’m doing is correct … especially when you’re like … people are watching what you’re doing in the limelight.

This example highlights a sense of self-consciousness surrounding the role, and how the girls reasoned that they needed to “put up a good front” (Chloe) and practice certain, perhaps clichéd, notions of environmentalism in order to be credible in their leadership context. Similar behavioural transformations have been reported in other studies of students involved in eco programming (Blythe & Harré, 2012; de Vreede et al., 2014; Roberts, 2009). For instance de Vreede and colleagues’ (2014) research on MindShift peer educators found that assuming a role of authority led participants to feel obliged to act in alignment with the messages they were teaching fellow students.

Notably, Chloe mentioned a few times that friends had been quick to point out that her transport mode was below par: “If they see me getting a ride to school now it’s ‘ooh, naughty naughty’ … or ‘that’s not environmentally sustainable’.” Sarah reported similar kinds of comments from her parents. These remarks appeared to be in jest, yet they
underscore the entitlement other people may feel to admonish a leader’s behaviour if it appears out of sync with a purported cause.

Although prior studies have emphasised the role modelling and self-conscious aspects of leadership positions (Archard, 2013a; Hine, 2013; McNae, 2011; Neumann et al., 2009) this has often been in association with upholding school values (Neumann et al., 2009; Archard, 2011) such as exemplary personal grooming, attendance, punctuality and classroom behaviour, and tolerance and respect for all (Neumann, 2008, p. 91). Environmental leader roles, by contrast, may spur appointed students to modify their behaviour in ways that are not currently reinforced by the dominant culture and may lead them to become highly attuned to and troubled by the unsustainable actions of others.

Critiquing the status quo and encountering resistance

The core projects chosen by the environmental leaders at the beginning of the year each involved, to some extent, a critique of school culture, facilities or operations. For example, one project was designed to promote more conscious paper use, and came about through observations of teachers’ habits. As explained by Chloe:

The school goes through so much paper it’s ridiculous. And like our teachers say ‘we’ve got such and such a budget for photocopying’, and it’s like, ‘do you actually think about the paper or just the money?’

To encourage responsible paper use, the girls drew up a proposal in which they suggested adding footers to official school letterheads that said “please reuse, and then recycle” and customising staff email signatures to add a “think before you print” message. Although the deputy principal on the school’s new sustainability committee had endorsed the proposal in principle, when the girls later approached a senior manager responsible for ICT, they were faced with resistance. As Chloe relayed to the research team via email:

Fairly significant setback today … when she heard about our email signatures she catagorically [sic] denied it, and said that we could NOT have our email
signatures on the school emails. Kinda embarrassing. So, I guess that idea is truly dead, because she VERY firmly said no.

To use a concept coined by Lousley (1999), this example illustrates how when students ‘trespass’ into the territory of staff, they may provoke strong defensive reactions, including being directed to abandon a project altogether. It was clear that being reproached by a senior manager was a deeply unpleasant experience for Chloe, who later disclosed in an interview “it’s really scary when you go and put forward an idea to someone and they go, ‘no’”.

The de-politicisation of student environmental clubs by the cultures of schooling has been previously discussed in the education for sustainability literature. Lousley’s (1999) ethnographic study of Canadian secondary schools found that when club members shifted the target of their efforts away from students and towards official institutional channels and power structures they were “quickly silenced and redirected into less political forums, overtly and implicitly reminded to avoid conflict and controversy” (p. 297). Club members subsequently felt unable to raise controversial issues and were later observed to censor certain project proposals to avoid trouble (Lousley, 1999). Similarly, Roberts’ (2009) study of eco club programming in India found that students feared that adults might not approve of their desires to go beyond what the programme’s structure permitted.

While the reaction to the email signatures proposal was the most overt example of staff resistance in this study, the young women came to see the senior managers as generally mildly hypocritical. To illustrate, after successfully pitching the proposal for new waste stations to the sustainability committee, the girls were encouraged by the deputy principal to liaise with the school carpenter to devise a quote for the stations’ construction. This process took longer than expected, and required the building of several prototypes. When the costs were finally estimated, the senior management team recoiled and said they were only able to fund half. The project’s feasibility became quite uncertain for a period, which I observed to be very stressful for the leaders. For example, after a visit to WSC in August, I noted in my field journal:
Chloe seemed a bit upset today … she said she could not believe after all the lunchtimes she had spent chasing up Jon [the carpenter] that the project might not go ahead. She found out that Jon’s team had just started working on a mandated carpentry project, so it will likely be a rush to get the bins all cut out in time for the painting day.

In the second set of interviews Sarah made several disheartened comments about senior managers paying lip service to sustainability:

It’s difficult because they say that they support it but then at the same time they kind of don’t, and so it’s hard when someone is saying they’re doing something to actually turn around and be like, ‘actually no, you’re not doing that’, you know?

Everyone wants to be a sustainable school but doesn’t want to do anything about it … it’s not something people want to put money towards and the money doesn’t exist really.

Chloe echoed:

Money is a really big issue … Sarah’s really passionate [about it], she goes ‘oh we should put more money towards environmental initiatives and not sport’, but yeah, I tend to agree.

Passive support from senior managers, and a lack of programme funding for innovation are documented barriers to creating sustainable schools (see N. Evans et al., 2012) and sustaining eco club activities (Roberts, 2009). Although the budgetary challenges meant the young women were ultimately able to learn about soliciting sponsorship from other groups, the overall process of negotiating for bureaucratic approval was observed to consume much of their initial effervescence for the project.

It is easy to imagine a different experience for student leaders whose roles are focused on working with staff to organise annual whole school events (Neumann et al., 2009) or leading established choral and drama festivals (see Archard, 2012). Even if pupils in these positions wish to be innovative, they are advantaged by the fact that
their initiative is already sanctioned by senior managers, that staff may have experience mentoring students through the process and that there may be budgets and materials to work from. When a role is relatively new, however, there are no scripts. When a role is new and represents an essentially counter-cultural ideology, pioneering pupils must cope with the friction caused by pointing out flaws in institutional structures and/or asking for resources for reform.

**Apathy, empathy, and struggling to engage students**

The three young women’s prevailing concern for the first half of their tenure was that they would struggle to engage students in the environmental portfolio. Encouraging peers to get involved in events has been articulated as a challenge in other student leader case studies (e.g., Hine, 2013). However, in this instance, the task seemed particularly burdensome. As highlighted earlier, the link between environmentalism and litter was seen as a conceptual barrier that limited some people’s willingness to engage. Chloe explained:

> I think people are quite closed minded … they’re like … ‘I put my rubbish in the bin, and I don’t litter’ and that’s like all they really care about but there’s more to it than that … that’s an obstacle you have to overcome, just showing people that it’s not just picking up rubbish from the ground.

Likewise, Maree expressed that “people don’t understand the big deal of sustainability, like we do … they don’t see it as important”. Similar perceptions of student populations have been noted in previous studies (Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Lousley, 1999). For example, in a study of ‘model’ sustainable schools in the United States and Caribbean (Higgs & McMillan, 2006), staff from the institution most comparable to WSC in size, location and socioeconomic status reported that “frequent eye rolling” still accompanied sustainability discussions (p. 48). In addition, the pupils who were passionate about sustainability appeared frustrated with peers, with one describing the attitude of the general student body as “a sea of apathy” (p. 48).

Despite expressing disappointment about a perceived lack of concern for the environment, the leaders in this study empathised with their peers. Maree explained,
Chapter Five: Positional Student Environmental Leader Experiences

“The way I see it, the idea of sustainability isn’t enough in our society for everyone to be into it”. Chloe made sense of it through her own previous disinclination to support the portfolio, saying she could understand why students would not get involved. Interestingly, she disclosed how she had been hesitant to participate in Frances’s environment club in previous years because she thought it was for “people who are really really passionate”, and who might be a bit extreme for her liking. Based on her recent experience, Chloe speculated that her fellow students were unlikely to shift their perspectives on sustainability unless they, too, were appointed into a “position of responsibility” or underwent a similar transformative experience. She also reasoned that instructing people to change their habits was problematic, as she detested other people telling her what to do.

A litmus test of student interest was conducted at the end of term one when the leaders attempted to form an environmental committee. The committee’s launch was held after a special assembly in which the girls solicited a charismatic WSC alumnus who worked in the sustainability field to speak about his job. The hope was that this would attract a classroom of keen students. Unfortunately, only a few pupils turned up, one of whom was Maree’s brother who she believed did so “to be nice” rather than out of genuine interest. The senior school was barely represented, and none of the leaders’ friends or fellow student leaders showed. As noted in my field journal, “The girls’ disappointment was palpable; they kept looking towards the door to see if anyone else was coming, and they struggled to facilitate a lively atmosphere”. Maree later described the launch as an “anti-climax” while Sarah had sighed, “no one particularly wants to help the environmental leaders”. Ultimately, the idea of having a committee was let go, in favour of more strategic recruitment methods, as detailed next.

Enticing students through a multiplicity of targeted appeals

The anticlimactic environmental committee led to a conscious shift in the portfolio’s engagement strategy and the research team’s stance as supporters. As a combined team, we brainstormed how we could ensure that the waste station project was well received by the school and attracted participants. The author had prior experience in video production, so we decided to begin the campaign by making a
humorous promotional video. Sarah, Chloe and Michael starred in the film, and Maree assisted the crew (see www.youtube.com/user/gogreenwithgumby).

The video was screened in a full school assembly, and introduced the first opportunity for the student population to participate in the project – afterschool workshops to investigate WSC’s waste situation through photography. As noted earlier, the research team facilitated these workshops; however Sarah in particular took it upon herself to recruit as many students as possible. As recalled in her second interview, she “forced” her friends to come and “screamed out ‘everyone come to these workshops!’” to her classmates, emphasising that free pizza would be served for afternoon tea. Sarah also had the idea to market the workshops as “something you can put on your testimonial” which she thought would resonate with year thirteens who “wanted to make themselves look good” before they graduated. Given the significant number of workshop attendees, such promotional strategies seemed to work, and Sarah repeated them each time the team ran an event. Indeed, the pizza appeal proved invaluable when the team needed to recruit student volunteers for a waste audit in preparation for the new stations.

Competitions, with cash and cinema vouchers as prizes (funded by Niki’s research budget), were also employed to pique students’ interest. An optional photography contest was incorporated into the media workshops, and the murals that students painted on the waste stations were automatically entered into a judging process. Winners were announced in assemblies, newsletters, and the school yearbook. As Chloe reflected “people like prizes, immediately if there’s a prize people go ‘wow’”. Maree similarly reflected that competitions “drew people in” and made them “more enthusiastic”. However, she reflected that the competitive aspects might have been overpowering:

The main focus a lot of the time was to win the competition and get the prize and stuff … I think the sustainability idea behind the competitions should have been projected more.
Although competitions and their inherent links to extrinsic values may be considered antithetical to the idea of sustainability (see Kasser, 2013), they held considerable currency within the school’s extra-curricular climate for the other student leaders. For instance, the cultural leaders organised WSC’s annual talent quest and international dress-up day, both of which were contests that engaged large numbers of students and staff. Similarly, a core initiative the sports and house leaders helped out with was athletics day, an inherently competitive event that actively encouraged inter-house rivalry. Incorporating contests into environmental activities may have thus served to legitimise and mainstream the portfolio as something prestigious as opposed to simply picking up litter. As Chloe summed up:

I think because we’ve been doing these fun activities, where it isn’t just purely rubbish oriented, it’s actually like art oriented and socially oriented, and like you get free food, and prizes … people actually enjoy it! ... and because we’ve done that … people are never really quite sure what to expect from us so they’re going to pay more attention.

Appealing to the school’s arts strength appeared particularly effective. The waste station project seemed to provide a means for pupils – especially year thirteens – to effectively enshrine themselves into the school’s physical infrastructure. Notably, several house leaders attended the painting bee, and as Sarah described in the yearbook, “couldn’t resist painting house propaganda”. Likewise, the environmental leaders themselves painted a scene from the video created to promote the waste station project. Moreover, the people’s choice award winner painted his mural with the theme of WSC’s 2009 performance in a local performing arts competition. These examples attest to the power of the arts to stimulate community participation (Celedonia & Rosenthal, 2011; Reid, Reeve, & Curtis, 2005) and create a celebratory atmosphere (Curtis, Reid, & Ballard, 2012). Indeed, some have argued that the arts are critical for transitioning towards a flourishing and sustainable society (Kasser, 2013; Wright, 2013).
A sense of accomplishment through attracting crowds, being recognised, innovating and changing (a few) minds

Archard’s (2011) study about female student leaders found that teachers viewed leaders as most successful when they were “organising activities in which their peers would participate” (p. 8). Indeed, these teachers cited examples in which leaders coordinated large numbers of pupils in music and drama festivals. In a similar vein, the young women in this study rated their progress highly after they had hosted well-attended events. In her second interview, Chloe explained how things were “really good, because people are actually coming to events, it’s amazing, we were really worried about people not coming to events, but a lot have come”. The painting day was seen by the young women as the most successful event to date because the team attracted a large crowd, including “people that we didn’t know” (Sarah), which they took as clear evidence that their profile had been raised. Interestingly, Sarah reflected that their events had attracted “people that like to have fun” not necessarily sustainability-minded people. For the purposes of expanding the portfolio’s reach, this was seen as a positive.

Keeffe and Andrews’s (2011) study of secondary students’ leadership perspectives highlighted how easily participants made explicit connections between leadership and aspects of symbolic capital, such as “prestige, honour or attention” (p. 31). In other words, the students naturally acknowledged and valued the “rewards, recognition, and public acclaim” (p. 32) that accompanied leadership experiences. In accordance with this notion, the young women in this study appeared to relish when others a) noticed their efforts, or b) recognised them as environmental leaders. In relation to the former, Sarah shared an anecdote in the second set of interviews about the school’s Parent Action Group (PAG):

I heard the other day that at PAG they mentioned us and talked about how well we’re doing and stuff so I think it is being recognised … we sent them a letter asking for money … it’s really good that they’ve obviously acknowledged it and that we’re getting ourselves out there.
In relation to the latter, Chloe offered several comments indicating a sense of pride in being ‘known’ as an environmental leader, in stark contrast to her ambivalence earlier in the year. For example:

I really like the fact that people know we are the environmental leaders, because last year people knew that Frances was like head of the environmental committee but they didn’t really know about her as a leader so much.

Sarah echoed this, with the comment, “it’s cool when people come up and sort of recognise you and be like ‘oh, you’re an environmental leader’”. These forms of recognition seemed all the more meaningful given the difficulties earlier in their tenure, and the fact that the young women often perceived their “behind the scenes work” (Chloe) was invisible to others.

The girls’ tendency to compare themselves to the other student leaders continued until the end of their tenure. At this point they gleaned much satisfaction from perceiving they had done more than other portfolios, and been more creative. Chloe exclaimed:

I mean for the past couple of years it seemed like they had a bigger role than us. But I think we’ve actually done more this year because we’ve done projects that haven’t been done before ... whereas the cultural leaders and the academic leaders have done, you know ‘Maths week’ and ‘Cultural week’ but that happens every year ... we’ve done something different, created a project.

As far as increasing student sustainability advocacy, the young women were cautious about claiming to have influenced the masses. In her final interview, Chloe reflected:

I think you’ll always have people who will shoot it down ... the only people who are going to get their views changed are ones who actively want to ... it’s difficult to change thinking in terms of the entire population of students, but for ones who have taken an interest, I think we have [influenced them] ... but there’s more work to be done.
Sarah felt that her peers might have at least started on a process of acknowledging that sustainability could be relevant to them:

I think like seeing me being passionate about it, it’s less of a faraway concept … or at least they’re getting their heads around it a bit more as opposed to like, something that happens to people they don’t know … it’s less of a hostile idea, like it’s not ‘oh hippies’, it’s actually someone they know.

These comments illustrated that although the leaders had achieved their core responsibility to involve students in environmental initiatives, and had also left a legacy in a material sense (the waste stations), transforming their peers to value sustainability seemed beyond the scope of their abilities. By the end of their tenure, they seemed to be content with the idea that their portfolio was “not for everyone” (Chloe) and that it should simply be there to cater to the needs of interested students. As Sarah concluded: “you can’t force anyone to be into sustainability but I guess the idea is like, just to have people there … so if people want to get involved in sustainability and stuff like they can”.

Summary and Implications

The themes in this study highlight ways in which positional environmental leadership may be challenging and rewarding for encumbered students. To summarise, the young women grappled with occupying a position that was unpopular, lacking in history and rituals, and lacking in symbolic capital. They became attuned to and troubled by the habits of others, and were motivated to examine their own personal practices and adjust these to enhance their integrity in the environmental advocacy limelight. They challenged assumptions underlying school life by voicing their concerns about resource use, facilities and operations, and were at times met with defensive reactions and dead ends, or wavering support. Their role necessitated that they engage the school in environmental projects, and yet they perceived (and received signals) that the majority of their peers (and staff) were not especially interested. By strategically appealing to culturally sanctioned practices – such as artistic expression, provided meals, competitions, and people’s desire to (be seen to) contribute – the
leaders managed to entice students to participate. This in turn led them to feel accomplished; as did other subtle signs that their work was noticed and innovative compared to their counterparts. While not purporting to have changed attitudes, they reflected that they might have at least dissolved some prejudice and broadened people’s conceptions of sustainability advocacy.

Neumann and colleagues’ (2009) study on school captains proposed that the role fast-tracked the student’s developing maturity as a result of the high status and self-awareness that came with the position. In a similar vein, within a relatively short tenure of approximately eight months, the three young women in this study gained a complex understanding of what it was to embody a counter-cultural leadership role.

Figure 4 summarises three main sites of transformation explored within this case study; the self, school systems, and peers. While these sites may also apply to sustainability-minded students who are not in formal roles, I suggest there are likely to be stronger pressures on positional leaders to fulfil these responsibilities, even if the pressure is self-imposed. The diagram also highlights various types of support that youth may need to help negotiate and navigate the demands of their role within themselves and within the secondary school context. This support may be particularly critical when the role has been newly established and encumbered students have little guidance from predecessors, when curriculum links and annual rituals are missing and when school administrators are just beginning to embark on taking steps towards environmental sustainability.

Guiding leaders through an experiential learning process may be necessary to address their concerns about being credible in the limelight. In this study, Maree in particular initially claimed she was worried about being “caught out” and wanted to know her behaviour was “correct”. Such concerns suggest a rather reductionist view of environmental sustainability, as if it could be boiled down to black and white choices. I suggest that young leaders need to be nurtured to conceptualise sustainability as both a personal journey and a collective social enterprise to which they can contribute, rather than a biophysical problem with right and wrong solutions (Harré, 2011). This may
serve to liberate them from such concerns, and may orient them towards engaging peers to think similarly.

Figure 4. Sites of tension and transformation involved in a positional environmental leader role (white boxes) and support that encumbered students may need especially when the role is new (surrounding boxes).

On a more practical level, leaders may need financial resources and technical support to introduce new initiatives and to publicise them. In the case of this study, the leaders benefitted from our research team’s provision of pizza, prizes, and media skills, which allowed the waste station project to engage a greater number of people.

Helping leaders to anticipate and cope with the interpersonal tensions that come with challenging the status quo is essential. Kohfeldt, Chunn, Chloe and Langhout (2011) remind us of the critical importance of tensions in contexts where students demand a change in the boundaries of their participation in school life. They note (p. 42):

... the very fact that [tensions] arise can point toward where role relationships and therefore structures are the most intractable to change, indicating where the most pressure needs to be applied. Tensions can signal the potential for transformation because they not only aid in our understanding of the deeper
structures that uphold system maintenance, but can also signify movement
towards transformative change.

It is unlikely that school staff will be able to mentor students in this role on their
own. Research in the field of education for sustainability suggests that there is
generally a lack comprehensive teacher training in this area (Brignall-Theyer et al.,
2009; N. Evans et al., 2012; Pepper & Wildy, 2009). Moreover, teachers may be
constrained by structural forces such as a lack of time and the limited availability of
alternative teacher identities (Bragg, 2007; Kohfeldt et al., 2011). That is, when staff
members deviate from the traditional teacher identity they “risk being seen as
eccentric, if not outrageous” (Zembylas, 2003, p. 226). Indeed, both Cutter (2002) and
Gough (1997) have highlighted the unwillingness of teachers to explore controversial
environmental issues with pupils lest it affect relationships with students’ families and
other staff.

For the above reasons, partnerships with intermediary organisations (see
Epstein, 2013; Mitra, 2006) with an explicit focus on sustainability may be extremely
valuable to students in these roles and their support teachers. In the case of this study,
a university-based research team provided support. However, there are various
sustainability programmes run by local councils (e.g., the Enviroschools programme in
New Zealand) which may be able to provide professional development for staff, as
well as the spark and stability (Mitra, 2006) needed to set up and nurture teacher-
student partnerships for promoting sustainability in the secondary school setting. With
even a little bit of ‘on the ground’ support, intermediary organisations can help to pave
the way for this important type of leadership to thrive.
In the preface, I described my thesis as weaving together threads of three distinctive, intersecting journeys. The first journey was the Western Springs College (WSC) sustainability project. The second journey was the evaluation of the Make a Difference programme (MAD), which I began while still involved at WSC. The third journey involved the conceptualisation and construction of a set of studies drawing on aspects of these real-world projects. As noted in the preface, honing the focus of my thesis was a challenge, and involved a number of changes in direction.

In this final chapter, I critically reflect on this body of work and my own learning processes. It is divided into six parts. In the first, I offer a recap of the core papers. Second, I discuss key contributions my research makes to the fields of inspiring youth sustainability leadership and creating sustainable schools by linking it more explicitly to areas of literature reviewed in Chapter one. Third, I reflect on limitations of the MAD and WSC studies respectively. Fourth, I reflect on meta-themes of the thesis and my own transformative learning process. Fifth, I consider practical implications. I conclude with avenues for future research.

**1.0 Recap of the core papers**

The first two of my papers focused on the broad notion of how extracurricular, non-school-based programmes can inspire youth sustainability leadership. Paper one – *Participatory, Utilisation-Focused Evaluation of a Youth Sustainability Leadership Programme* – profiled the MAD programme’s theory of change and the participatory methods we used to create it, which included workshops with programme coordinators and youth participants, a follow up survey, and analysis of these data sources. The paper thereby offered an interpretation of how this initiative inspires and supports youth sustainability leaders and what types of actions are associated with it. The piece explained how the process culminated in the development of more sensitive tools for building feedback into MAD’s structure, and discussed the benefits and limitations of our approach.
Paper two – *Inspiring Youth Sustainability Leadership: Six Elements of a Transformative Youth Eco Retreat* – focused on MAD’s residential hui. Drawing largely on our observations of the camp, we constructed a chronological narrative to give the reader a vicarious experience of it. Following this, we presented six key concepts we suggested contributed to the hui’s power. These were based on a thematic analysis of data from the broader evaluation, a paired interview conducted at a camp, and hui feedback forms, in tandem with a review of relevant literature. In particular, the paper emphasised the camp’s consistency between its espoused values and practices, and suggested that its potent display of sustainability modelling would likely lead participants to feel a sense of hope for the future, thus helping to propel them on a journey of sustainability advocacy.

The third paper – *Guiding Principles for Community Engagement: Reflections on a School-based Sustainability Project* – focused on the notion of how researchers can contribute to creating sustainable secondary schools via university-community partnerships. Drawing on the traditions of autoethnography and phenomenology, this self-reflective study foregrounded my research team’s guiding principles – *strengths-based, empowerment, role modelling, communication and measurement and feedback* – and our practical interpretation of them within the WSC sustainability project. The paper offered a narrative about how we practiced and experienced our principles, based on findings from a self-reflective survey and interviews with school community members. In many ways we sought, through this study, to inquire into whether our style of collaboration was experienced as empowering to the school community members with whom we worked. We also reflected on tensions between our principles, by examining ways in which pairs of them seemed to complement or conflict with one another. The reflective process culminated in recommendations for other researchers facilitating organisational change for sustainability or who may wish to use a similar principles-based framework in other collaborative endeavours.

The fourth paper – *Navigating the Path Less Travelled: A Case Study of Positional Student Environmental Leader Experiences* – explored an extracurricular school-based leadership experience, that of appointed environmental leader. In particular, the study
examined the experiences of three young women appointed to lead a relatively new ‘environmental portfolio’ within WSC’s student leadership programme. Using a case study approach, and drawing on interviews, observations and documents collected during the WSC sustainability project, I constructed six themes to portray the environmental leaders’ experiences, perspectives, and practices during their nine-month tenure. In particular I emphasised aspects that appeared to diverge from existing understandings of student leadership experiences. The article concluded by highlighting the environmental leader role as a site of tension and transformation, and drew attention to specific types of support young people in such roles may need.

2.0 Key contributions of the research

My research contributes to several bodies of knowledge within the interlinked fields of inspiring youth sustainability leadership and creating sustainable schools. In this section I re-consider literature reviewed in Chapter One to highlight where my findings resonate with other studies and where they offer new insights.

2.1 Insights about a novel extracurricular programme configuration

The MAD research profiled a non-school-based sustainability leadership programme for high school students that entails a short, potentially transformative experience, followed by a longer term, loosely structured support system. This particular configuration may be novel, as it has not been emphasised in literature on youth sustainability programming. Many programmes appear to be short and high-density (i.e., conferences, summits and outdoor education experiences) (Harrison et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2009; D’Amato & Krasny, 2011; Johnson et al., 2013) or long and low-density (i.e., clubs) (Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2005; Roberts, 2009). MAD draws inspiration from Outward Bound’s concept of impelling youth into novel experiences in pristine nature (D’Amato & Krasny, 2011; Hattie et al., 1993), and yet the initial hui is much shorter than Outward Bound and less focused on physical challenges. The retreat has a similar format to a youth summit or conference (Johnson et al., 2009; Pancer et al., 2002), but offers a more intimate atmosphere with participants taking part in operations such as cooking, cleaning and waste management. Similar to
Canadian programme *MindShift* (de Vreede et al., 2014), MAD has an underlying ethos of recruiting and investing in students who are eager to become leaders in their respective schools. However, MAD lacks *MindShift’s* focus on dramatic performance, and caters to a smaller number of students from each participating school (i.e., two or three as opposed to *MindShift’s* eight or nine).

The outcomes in MAD’s theory of change are similar to those researchers have identified for contemporaneous programmes (Emmons, 1997; de Vreede et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2009; Schusler & Krasny, 2011). For example, *MindShift* researchers suggested that knowledge, values, skills, a sense of empowerment, interpersonal relationships, and domestic pro-environmental behaviours were significant areas of participant growth and that these interacted as antecedents to collective sustainability actions (de Vreede et al., 2014). Likewise, MAD’s theory of change posits that the developmental outcomes nurtured by the camp – *knowledge, inspiration, self-confidence, social connection, connection to nature, and resources and skills* – interact to produce a transformation in participants that may prompt them to take post-hui actions (including household / personal life behaviours). While some have suggested that environmental behaviours are distinct from actions (Jensen & Schnack, 1997), MAD coordinators appear to share the view expressed by *MindShift* researchers that everyday environmental behaviours maintain one’s commitment to sustainability and may incite further behaviours and actions as one aims to act in accordance with previous choices (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 1999; see also Harré, 2011).

Importantly, overarching themes within MAD’s theory of change resonate with theoretical concepts in the EE literature. Transformative learning, in which a person undergoes disorienting dilemmas followed by cognitive system reorganisation (Mezirow, 2000; O’Sullivan, 2002) is certainly a plausible process triggered by the MAD hui’s immersive environment. As noted in Chapter One, this theory was used by D’Amato and Krasny (2011) as a lens to interpret students’ experiences of Outward Bound and other similar programmes. Given that MAD is designed for youth who are eager to get involved in environmental action, it seems likely that prospective participants would experience such disorienting dilemmas before and during the hui
(in relation to their concerns about environmental issues), and cognitive reorganisation would transpire over the course of the camp as they discovered new constructs that made the perceptions more intelligible. According to Mezirow (2000, in D’Amato & Krasny, 2011) the process of transformative learning involves “critical self-reflection, social interactions, planning for action, and building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships as a result of taking action” (p. 239). Many of these elements are encouraged by the format of the hui, as is evident in the narrative in study two. Thus, it seems plausible that the camp triggers this process and it continues as students return home, perhaps forever changed by their belief in the capacity of youth to make a difference.

While the educational ideal of action competence (Jensen & Schnack, 1997) is not easily operationalised into observable phenomena (Schnack, 2000), outcomes in MAD’s theory of change resemble many of the characteristics posited to be important. For instance, inspiration, self-confidence, knowledge and resources and skills broadly resonate with the characteristics of commitment, courage, willingness to take action, knowledge about root causes of problems and the capacity to formulate visions for solutions (Breiting et al., 1999; Breiting & Mogensen, 1999; Jensen & Schnack, 1997). In addition, the social element of MAD resonates with action competence’s focus on contributing to actions for a more humane world as a person with other persons (Schnack, in Simovska, 2000).

The links in MAD’s theory of change between actions, action competence, and positive social impacts tally with the perspectives of other adult environmental action facilitators (Emmons, 1997; Schusler & Krasny, 2011; Schusler et al., 2009). As mentioned in Chapter One, Schusler and colleagues’ (2009) research on adult facilitators theorised that youth environmental action led to the development of democratic citizens and communities through a positive feedback loop. In other words, envisioning and bringing about environmental and community change in the short-term facilitates the development of youth’s understanding of democracy and citizenship, thereby empowering them to participate in community transformation processes over the long-term (Schusler et al., 2009). In a similar vein, MAD is founded on an assumption that
transforming youth to believe in their own potential, and offering them further training, resources and a supportive community, facilitates youth’s understanding of how to take meaningful action in the short-term, thereby enhancing their competence as agents of change over the long-term. In theory, MAD participants’ individual and collective actions contribute to more sustainable communities, though it is recognised that many contextual factors affect this level of outcomes.

2.2 A detailed example of a powerful youth gathering

As explored in paper two, the MAD hui appears to cultivate an atmosphere conducive to many of the significant life experiences, formative influences and ingredients on the pathway to environmental leadership identified in prior literature (Arnold et al., 2009; Almers, 2013; Chawla, 1998; Palmer, 1993; Peters-Grant, 1986; Tanner, 1980). These include time spent in nature (via a structured immersive excursion), interacting with inspiring role models (peers and older camp leaders), and the provocative emotion of hopefulness (arising from the hui’s positive approach and the care that has gone into it). Youth gatherings and conferences with environmental themes have been identified as formative in studies of exemplary leaders (Arnold et al., 2009; Harrison et al., 2013), yet it is rare to find detailed examples of such events. Paper two offers an example of a residential retreat that enables a confluence of powerful ingredients over three days.

2.3 An exploration into a school-based extracurricular leadership experience

My WSC research shed light on a particular type of extracurricular, school-based experience: fronting an environmental portfolio within a student leadership programme. As noted in paper four, prior studies on student experiences of leadership positions have had a tendency to look across roles and to emphasise common experiences (e.g., Hine, 2013; Archard, 2012). My case study of Sarah, Chloe and Maree demonstrated how much can be learnt from focusing on one particular type of role, understanding its history (or lack thereof) within the school context, and teasing out students’ perceptions and experiences of its demands.
Environmental leadership positions have not tended to feature within the literature on exemplary leaders’ key influences (Arnold et al., 2009; Almers, 2013). This may be because they are rare in schools – although my MAD research suggests they are becoming increasingly common in Auckland (perhaps partly as a result of MAD). Study four suggested that occupying such a position could be transformative for students in terms of their own practices and commitment to sustainability. Chloe, a WSC student who was initially reluctant to take on the role, is a case in point. Over the course of the year, our research team observed her shift from the least engaged of the three young women to the most dedicated. Interestingly, Chloe was incredibly busy with other extracurricular activities during her tenure, including being a leader of Stage Challenge (a performing arts competition), organising the Year 13 students’ graduation dinner and designing a new flag for her school “house”. Her dedication to the environmental leader role appeared to flourish in tandem with other efforts to give back to WSC in her final year of schooling.

Whereas previous studies in the extracurricular sustainability programming literature have highlighted challenges related to team dynamics (de Vreede et al., 2014), the frequency of meetings (de Vreede et al., 2014; Roberts, 2009), and socio-political constraints (Johnson et al., 2007), the themes in paper four identified a multiplicity of challenges pertaining to the positional environmental leader experience within a school context. These included stepping into a role that was new but unpopular, unclear, and associated with a problematic discourse around picking up litter; becoming highly attuned to and troubled by the unsustainable actions of others; struggling to reconcile one’s behavioural choices with perceptions of the role’s demands; coping with others pointing out one’s hypocrisy; having time and energy swallowed up by negotiating for bureaucratic approval; and having to use any means necessary – including bribery with food and promises of glowing testimonials – to attract other students to sustainability events.

Although paper four drew attention to much student leadership literature, the challenges that Sarah, Chloe and Maree faced are in some ways comparable to the grassroots, administrative, and conceptual barriers proposed by Evans and colleagues
(2012) in relation to staff champions of sustainability. As such, my research offers a student perspective to the body of knowledge on challenges in the early stages of a school sustainability effort.

2.4 An approach to partnerships for creating sustainable schools

A key contribution to the sustainable schools literature is the university-community partnership configuration emphasised in study three. As noted in the introduction, the practitioner and scholarly community strongly emphasises community links and partnerships as part of a whole-school approach (Evans et al., 2012; Henderson & Tilbury, 2004; Kadji-Beltran et al., 2013). However, previous research has not fully addressed how such partnerships should be set up (Evans et al., 2012). Paper three highlighted how a research team, using an approach inspired by principles from university-community partnerships, action research, and community and environmental psychology, can contribute in myriad ways to facilitating a school’s whole-school sustainability journey. As explored in the paper, our approach involved seeking out people within the school who wanted to contribute to sustainability; attempting to empower community members by supporting their visions and ideas for sustainability initiatives; facilitating and supporting projects built around the school’s cultural strengths; and attempting to measure and share progress with the school community. In our view, this combination of principles likely enabled the sustainability project to gather momentum, and was critical in the school taking much greater ownership of it from 2010 onwards.

2.5 Links between inspiring youth sustainability leadership and creating sustainable schools

Previous research has emphasised theoretical links between youth development and environmental action (Schusler & Krasny, 2010; Schusler et al., 2009) and between secondary school sustainability and student participation in school governance (Higgs & McMillan, 2006; Schelly et al., 2012). In a similar vein, my research offers insights about the potential links between inspiring youth sustainability leadership and creating sustainable schools. More specifically, my studies demonstrate how school-based (i.e.,
formal positions) and non-school-based (i.e., MAD) extracurricular youth leadership initiatives can contribute to a culture of sustainability within schools. Below, I briefly articulate how they both contribute in one way, before detailing their unique contributions.

Non-school-based and school-based initiatives both contribute to a culture of sustainability by encouraging youth empowerment, and by scaffolding youth to take school-based environmental actions. When students take action (and especially when they involve school peers in that action), stories about their projects may filter through the institution’s informal and formal communication channels (i.e., conversations, notices, newsletters, assemblies and yearbooks). When such permeation occurs, it signals to others that there are people within the school willing to take a stand for sustainability. Presumably, this strengthens the likelihood that others will take action.

Formal leadership roles are strategically important for developing a culture of sustainability within schools, in that they communicate that environmental leadership is valued enough to be associated with a position. Moreover, focusing on supporting students in an environmental role can highlight the enormous scope of this portfolio. Although study four emphasised asymmetries in the internal support and resources available for the WSC environmental leaders in 2009 (compared to other leaders), in later years these were more than remedied, and the school managers invested in restructuring their entire student leadership system to focus on sustainability. While WSC was a unique case study, my research suggests that once a formal environmental leader portfolio has been incorporated into a secondary school’s institutional structure, it is likely to stay – or expand, in terms of the numbers of positions and resources allocated to it. This is because appointed students and their support teachers will almost inevitably have the experience that the portfolio’s size is inadequate for coordinating all the possible sustainability activities that should take place. In summary, I suggest that unless senior managers are actively resisting a shift towards sustainability, momentum is likely to build when environmental positions are included in a formal student leadership structure.
Chapter Six: General Discussion

Non-school-based programmes like MAD can contribute to sustainable schools in different ways. One way they contribute is by connecting students up to external, high resource adults and related programmes. For instance, at the hui, MAD staff expose young people to a range of adult mentors from Auckland Council’s related EfS programmes such as Enviroschools, Waicare (a community water quality and monitoring programme) and Wastewise (a waste minimisation programme). This means that when students head back to school, they can easily call on these adults for help with, for instance, waste audits, stream clean ups, and applying for funding. As one MAD student in Study one explained, “Having links and networks outside school makes my role within the school more effective”.

Another, critical way that MAD-type programmes assist with creating a culture of sustainability in schools is by fostering interschool networks. By setting up Facebook groups and holding regular follow-up reunions, such programmes can strengthen the local student sustainability networks, and in doing so, may speed up communication and cross-pollinate ideas for action. For instance, although not discussed in the core studies in this thesis, I observed an instance in which a MAD student began a petition shortly after the hui, and it reached almost every secondary school that participated in the programme over the course of a few months.

In summary, my thesis demonstrates how extracurricular youth sustainability leadership initiatives help create sustainable schools via multiple pathways: by empowering youth to take school-based action, by demonstrating the scope and strategic importance of environmental student leadership, by linking schools to related EfS programmes, and by strengthening interschool sustainability networks. All of these influence the viability of sustainability projects within participating schools.

On the other hand, it is important to recognise that there are more elements to a sustainable school than empowered, connected and motivated students. The process of creating a sustainable school does not (and perhaps should not) proceed from student empowerment alone. In the best case scenario, students will be mentored to work with school staff on actions that complement an organisation’s sustainability agenda and respond to, and build on previous change agents’ efforts.
3.0 Limitations

Each of the core studies had limitations, as did my research approach in each setting. Here I briefly discuss some limitations that were not fully addressed in earlier chapters.

3.1 Limitations of the MAD studies

A notable limitation of the MAD research was its focus on positive attributes and interpretations of the programme. While the workshops and online survey did invite comments around programme improvements, the primary impetus was to collect stories of how young people were changed by MAD, what their aspirations were for the future, and evidence of their post-hui actions. This reflected the utilisation-focused, practical participatory evaluation orientation, which addressed the needs of programme staff (i.e., communicating the value and outcomes of MAD to their managers). Our efforts were not targeted towards attending to the specific needs and desires of youth participants, as might have been the case in a more transformative participatory evaluation (Cousins, 2003).

The positive focus had interesting implications. For one, it led to studies that emphasised MAD’s strengths rather than offered a more critical perspective on the programme. After the publication of paper two, I found out that the primary coordinator had started sending out the electronic version of the article to parents of prospective participants when they contacted her for information regarding the hui. Although on one hand I was delighted my work was being read, on the other hand I felt uneasy that it might become the staff’s go-to, researcher-endorsed promotional piece. Wiltz (2005) discussed how when evaluators working in nonformal education contexts are faced with a programme that is doing good work, it can be tempting to move into the role of cheerleader or public relations consultant. This can be problematic for maintaining one’s credibility as an evaluator, since this is based in part on the ability to provide a balanced perspective in reporting both programme strengths and weaknesses (Patton, 1997).
On a related note, Wiltz (2005) drew attention to a common dynamic between evaluators and practitioners of nonformal programmes which resonates with my experiences:

Just as immersion in sublime environs or challenge-based activities leads to a program gestalt for participants, a sense of shared adventure often enriches the evaluator-practitioner relationship. The nonformal setting blurs the professional and informal. It is hard to maintain any degree of separation from a program during which you ford creeks, climb mountains, and fell trees—and that was just to get to the program site. By the time the evaluator gets to the program, a sense of camaraderie has developed with the program staff that is difficult to ignore. That bonding is often the goal of a program. The practitioners and evaluator have fallen prey to the program’s “intended unintentional” benefits (Wiltz, 2005, p. 23).

It is notable that the “Journey Through a MAD hui” narrative in study two was written from the assumed perspective of a youth participant, rather than based on data provided by participants over the course of a camp. As such, specific feelings and learning processes implied in the narrative (e.g., “cringing at how much landfill waste you generated” or “you’ll realise how morally complex sustainability is”) may not reflect young people’s sense-making during the activities.

3.2 Limitations of the WSC studies

In paper three, we noted that a limitation was that we did not ask the school participants to comment on our interpretation of their data. We justified this decision by claiming that the study was first and foremost our research team’s tale, directed at other scholars. However, in relation to this orientation, a limitation not discussed in the paper was that the study involved some researchers reflecting on experiences up to a year and a half previously. Systematic reflection on the principles as a phenomena of interest during the course of the fieldwork at WSC would have likely yielded a more nuanced dataset and might have facilitated more transformative learning in situ. On a related note, the fact that the study was conducted within the context of a doctorate
limited its potential as a collective autoethnographic inquiry. Although I engaged my fellow graduate students in providing reflections on their experiences, I could not reconcile a collaborative data interpretation process with the requirements of this degree. If it had been conducted outside this realm, I suspect the study could have been more dynamic and educative for all researchers involved.

While member checking with school personnel did not seem necessary or appropriate for study three, I made a point to engage in this process for study four on the appointed environmental leaders. There were two limitations in relation to this process, however. First, only two of the three leaders read the manuscript; the third had since moved overseas and was not responsive to my communications. Second, the piece was written a number of years after the data were collected. Thus, although the two young women who read it endorsed my representations of their experience, they might have responded differently if the process had more immediately followed their tenure. For instance, they might have been more discerning about which aspects were most faithful to their experiences.

4.0 Meta-themes and transformative learning

In this section I consider two meta-themes within this thesis, and reflect on these and on my learning in relation to them.

4.1 Modelling

An overarching theme within this thesis was the importance of modelling – at both the individual and institutional level. As explored in study two, MAD staff put a concerted effort into “walking the talk” with the camp’s facilities and operations, ensuring that meals were designed to be waste-free, having comprehensive waste separation facilities, and encouraging people to play the “Caught Being Green” game. As explored in study three, my research team used role modelling as a guiding principle within the WSC sustainability project, reasoning that our own eco-friendly behaviours would a) encourage sustainable practices to more readily imitated and absorbed into the culture of the school, and b) enhance our credibility. Indeed, our fear of the damaging implications of hypocrisy motivated us. The student environmental
leaders felt a similar compulsion to act as role models in order to uphold the demands of their visible position, as explored in study four. Interestingly, Sarah, Chloe and Maree each cited examples of parents and peers pointing out their hypocrisy for driving or getting a lift to school, whereas the adult participants in other studies did not mention being accused of this. This may be a function of the full-time nature of positional leadership. It is clearly much easier to ensure you ride your bike or bring a reusable cup each time you visit a school, or put in place waste management facilities for a three day camp, than to be an essentially round-the-clock role model.

It is interesting to consider the degree to which modelling is made explicit to one’s “audience”. As noted in study three, my research team felt that drawing attention to our modelling without appearing to be judgmental was important, and that imposing standards on others was problematic. This sentiment was shared by Chloe who was deeply ambivalent about telling others what to do, given her only recent conversion to sustainability advocacy.

As noted in study two, the Caught Being Green game presents an innovative approach to modelling. While in study two we suggested it encouraged “healthy rivalry”, “learning” and “emulation”, I now think the value of this game is not necessary emulation, but the way in which it encourages participants to be creative in their construal of what constitutes modelling (in themselves and in others). In her research on action competent Swedish young adults, Almers (2013) suggested that her participants were constituted by “action permeation through mimesis … a process in which action assumes new content and shape” (p. 122). Put another way, in relation to role models, her participants engaged in “creative representation” as opposed to direct imitation (Ricoeur, 1976). I find this framing interesting and useful, and more inspiring than wishing others would directly copy me.

I have thought a lot about modelling over the course of this doctorate and the ways in which sustainability advocates – myself included – find ourselves worrying about contradiction. While there certainly are undesirable forms of contradiction – in which we push ideas or behaviours onto others that we cannot or do not follow through on ourselves (i.e., hypocrisy) – I am intrigued by the idea of using conscious or
deliberate forms of contradiction. In an essay about contradiction, agency and feminism, Renegar and Sowards (2009) explained how third wave feminists sometimes deliberately engage in contradiction as a way to develop new ways of thinking and to stimulate new forms of social action. For instance, some third wave feminist magazines take negatively connotative labels and problematise them by using them in the context of empowerment (e.g., the magazine *Bitch*). By using old words in novel ways, complexities and contradictions in definitions emerge, and these contradictions themselves can be used to question or unearth hidden assumptions. As Renegar and Sowards argue:

The ability to engage in contradiction is a renunciation of conventional social norms, traditional argument structure, and consistency as desirable practices. This both requires and fosters agency through transcendence and counter-imaginations … The polarisations and forced choices of the status quo often create situations in which it is impossible to enact authentic, self-created decisions, so the process of engaging practical-evaluative agency to find new ways of thinking about seemingly black and white choices is essential. The deliberate practice of contradiction, then, becomes a vehicle to reveal new structures of thought that expose artificially dichotomous choices … years of education that demand logic, consistency, order, organisation, structure, and rational arguments in the way that humans think and communicate must be suspended. This analysis of the agency that is fostered by deliberately using contradiction challenges the tradition of consistency and negative framing of contradiction (p. 16).

I find this notion incredibly interesting when reflecting on how we argued, in paper two, that the MAD hui’s power lay in the coherence between its espoused values and practices, its absence of contradiction and hypocrisy, and the resultant sense of hope participants would feel. I am not suggesting I now disagree with this framing, but I can appreciate that contradiction might play a role in fostering agency and innovation in an entirely different way. With the environmental movement being among the most diverse in history, it seems important to interrogate the black and white choices and
representations we may feel are available to us. Using deliberate contradiction for artistic or learning purposes – for instance, by bringing highly packaged food to a sustainability meeting, thanking the planet and society for offering us such convenience, and then exploring the processes behind such products – might offer more in the way of critical thinking than consistently bringing unpackaged food.

4.2 Tensions

A second meta-theme within this thesis was tensions. In study four, I suggested that since sustainability leadership involves challenging the status quo, positional environmental leadership roles are likely to sit in tension with some of the assumptions that underlie school life. Thus, they are prone to causing conflicts between encumbered students and other people. In the study, I emphasised tensions within the self, such as Chloe experiencing the role’s demands as incompatible with her personal norms; the peer level – such as the leaders having to succumb to extrinsic values to incentivise students to participate in their projects; and at the institutional level – clashing with senior managers who appeared to act inconsistently with each other and with the school’s commitment to sustainability. At the end of the paper I suggested tensions were inevitable and useful in that they signify potential for transformation by aiding our discovery of the structures that uphold the system, and signify movement towards transformative change (Kohfeldt et al., 2011). This idea is undoubtedly similar to the contradiction and agency notion noted earlier.

In study three, where exploring tensions between our research team’s principles was integrated into the design of the survey, I learned much about the underlying epistemological assumptions framing our approach. One of the conflicts noticed by three members of our research team was between the principles of strengths-based / empowerment and measurement and feedback. When examining the nature of this conflict, it became clear that it partially stemmed from their divergent epistemological assumptions. The very concept of measurement exuded an air of superiority and rigour associated with our identities as scientists, whose expertise was in generating knowledge through rigorous, unbiased data collection, being able to ‘detect’ changes in the school population over time, and timely, clear dissemination. Strengths-based and
empowerment were the softer principles, through which we paid attention to, and honoured the local knowledge and ideas of people internal to the school, positioning them as the experts, and seeking to work in partnership with them on sustainability projects. At a broad level, these different lenses represented potentially incompatible paradigms (i.e., positivism versus constructivist or participatory paradigms), though I do not think we quite realised this during the period of the fieldwork. Or rather, we didn’t have the appropriate constructs to make sense of it. Study three was an opportunity for us to find them – especially for me as I attempted to interpret the essence of the rich data my team produced.

In particular, the sense that in 2009 we had achieved a lot, but had focused on “action related principles” rather than “research tasks” (i.e., measurement and feedback) represented a disorienting dilemma. The study’s recommendation around adopting a wide lens in terms of what counts as a research artefact, suggested that we (or I) came to understand what is meant by appreciating many forms of knowing (Marshall et al., 2011). In other words, understanding the nature of this tension crystallised in the lesson learned that the most compelling evidence for change was not found in conventional pre-post surveys, but realised in other modalities, such as the aesthetic, presentational and relational (i.e., in the digital and physical artefacts we co-constructed with the school community and in actions senior managers subsequently took to resource sustainability innovation and the university-community partnership).

The autoethnographic style of study three enabled a focus on tensions that was pivotal to my own intellectual development. As Ellis and Boschner explain of this methodology (2000):

“[t]he stories we write put us into conversation with ourselves as well as our readers. In conversation with ourselves we expose our vulnerabilities, conflicts, choices, and values. We take measure of our uncertainties, our mixed emotions and the multiple layers of our experience. Our accounts seek to express the complexities and difficulties of coping and feeling resolved, showing how we changed over time as we struggled to make sense of our experience” (p. 748).
A tension I experienced in relation to the MAD research – which remains unresolved – is one I mentioned near the very beginning of this thesis. This was the challenge of thinking about MAD, an emancipatory EE programme, in more instrumental terms. The experience of trying to reduce rich qualitative data from MAD participants into a series of casual mechanisms, as detailed in study one, became uncomfortable for me as a researcher who has come to see the world through a constructivist epistemological lens, and sees programme impacts as social constructions (Lincoln, 2003). I also became concerned that the more rigorously we attempted to specify MAD’s desired action outcomes the more instrumental the programme would become and as such it might lose its transformative potential. As Wals and colleagues explained in their paper comparing instrumental and emancipatory EE:

[H]aving indicators within more emancipatory approaches to EE … is [not] necessarily a bad thing, but the question then becomes: For whom are these indicators? How have they been created? By whom? Are they carved in stone or subject to change and even abolition? The process of identifying indicators can in and by itself be a very useful part of the learning process, but when indicators are then authoritatively generated and prescribed, a project becomes more instrumental and less emancipatory as the transformative learning disappears and is replaced by the kind of education and training that might lead to changes in awareness and behaviour but might at the same time block the creation of a more reflexive, empowered, critical, self-determined citizenry that competently and creatively co-designs a more sustainable world (Wals et al., 2008, p. 62).

Part of the challenge with monitoring action outcomes of MAD is because of what I classified in study one as ‘contextual factors’. Because participants’ post-hui actions will be inextricably related to dynamic factors within their contexts (i.e., the presence of passionate parents and teachers, eco clubs, leadership roles within their schools, access to funding, etc.), it is very tricky – perhaps futile – to attempt to judge the extent to which any action can be attributed to a MAD participant’s own sense of agency (and by extension, to quantify the extent to which MAD enabled this). In my
view, a broad spectrum of MAD stakeholders need to be engaged in, and convinced of the value of a monitoring and evaluation framework that is more reflective of MAD’s emancipatory ethos. To this end, transformative participatory evaluation (Cousins, 2003) and empowerment evaluation (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2007) models offer promise (see also Proost & Wals, 2005).

5.0 Practical Implications

In this section, I summarise implications of my research findings for various types of practitioners – adults interested in youth sustainability programming, mentors of appointed student environmental leaders within secondary schools, and academic researchers interested in participatory, sustainability-focused research in schools.

For practitioners interested in facilitating extracurricular youth sustainability programming, my research on MAD suggests the combination of an initial high-density experience and a follow-up support system with myriad further opportunities may be empowering, even “life-altering” for youth. However, I would caution that this was not necessarily the case for all participants, and that MAD’s particular configuration is not necessarily superior to contemporaneous non-school-based programmes. The loose post-hui support structure certainly puts the onus on participants to take ownership of their own sustainability actions and learning process; MAD does not scaffold individual participants’ actions except when specific help is requested. While MAD’s Facebook groups facilitate the building of networks to some extent, if participants do not use social media and/or struggle to attend post-hui reunions they may lose touch with the programme community and lose interest in taking action (and in filling out action surveys for programme staff). Moreover, because the programme caters to only a few students in each school (i.e., sometimes only two) it relies on an assumption that these students will work collaboratively on school-based actions together, and will be able to engage their teachers as potential mentors. It seems plausible that if each school was able to send a slightly larger number to the hui (i.e., 4-5 students), the programme might be associated with a self-sustaining MAD community within schools as well as between schools. Of course this alteration could have interesting implications for the students that miss out on MAD and the dynamics
of student environmental clubs. Nevertheless, all in all, I suggest MAD’s structure has immense potential for inspiring youth sustainability leadership and creating sustainable schools, but it is important to reflect on its potential limitations, and to acknowledge that the various related leadership programmes and opportunities MAD exposes participants to are inextricably linked to MAD’s “success” (and vice versa). In line with this, if other practitioners wish to create their own version of MAD, it would be essential for them to be connected to various other EE opportunities for linking participants to in the post-gathering period.

As suggested by one anonymous reviewer of paper two, the ‘Journey through a MAD hui’ narrative and elements offered may be instructive to practitioners who wish to create similar powerful short-term youth gatherings. On that note, practitioners should be mindful not to pack the schedule too tightly. Although not discussed in the core studies, more downtime was a suggestion for improvement made by a few MAD participants in the online survey and hui evaluation forms, and also mentioned by participants of the similarly dense Global Youth Summit (Johnson et al., 2009).

For adults who mentor appointed student environmental leaders, study four’s findings may be useful. I suggest it is important to be cognisant of the history surrounding the position within the school, including potential asymmetries in budgets, curriculum links, and annual rituals when compared to other leadership roles, as well as possible problematic discourses surrounding litter. Engaging appointed students in critical discussions about the status of their role and the many types of tensions that are likely to arise as they seek to fulfil its demands is likely to be empowering. Moreover, exploring the multi-layered interpersonal challenges that come with questioning the status quo is likely to assist students to understand the systemic nature of sustainability issues, and to appreciate the demands on certain staff members who might appear defensive or unsupportive. When internal financial resources are lacking, looking outward for support may help pave the way for fruitful partnerships with local community groups or industries.

In light of the calls for higher education institutions to engage in partnerships for sustainability research and action (Wright, 2004; Universitas 21, 2009), the
approaches articulated in this thesis should offer some guidance to those within academia. For researchers curious about initiating sustainability projects with schools and other community organisations, the recommendations offered at the end of study three may be useful. To recap, these included: collaborating with organisations located close to one’s home or workplace, starting from locally identified needs and community strengths, choosing a set of guiding principles as a framework for practice and reflection, accepting that you will likely experience role conflict and may need to switch between different stances, modelling the sustainability-related behaviours you value, adopting a wide lens in terms of what counts as a research artefact, and being patient and generous with your time. As a whole, study three suggested that dedicated reflection, including attending to tensions between one’s guiding principles, is exceptionally valuable for enabling new insights about one’s practice.

6.0 Future Research

It would be incongruent with the ethos of this thesis to suggest highly specific avenues for future research. Nevertheless, here I articulate a few areas that warrant further investigation from a qualitative case study orientation. I then put forward a general invitation to psychologists to engage in more emancipatory EE research.

The transformative learning process associated with the MAD hui warrants further exploration. It would be illuminating to conduct case studies of clusters of MAD students from a few participating schools, exploring their experiences prior to the camp, their learning processes during the hui, and the months following the camp as they make sense of their experience and attempt to carry out their action plan (or not). In relation to this latter aspect, it would be interesting to shed light on whether and how students engage teachers as potential mentors, since this is a suggestion made emphatically by hui staff at the end of the camp, and may be critical for students being able to make meaningful changes to school facilities and operations.

Another area that warrants further exploration is formal student leadership structures in secondary schools. While it is important to challenge the notion that student leadership is associated with a formal position (see McNae, 2010), as noted
earlier, I see the creation of environmental positions as strategically important for the building of a secondary school’s sustainability culture. In the case of WSC, such positions grew from two to nine between 2008 and 2011, and the school has continued to champion student leadership through the development of panels that enable junior students to apply for leadership roles as well as seniors. It would be interesting to conduct comparative case studies of different schools to explore how their institutional structures are evolving (or not) to cater to students’ interest in sustainability leadership, and how they facilitate student participation in school governance.

At the beginning of this thesis, I suggested that the instrumental and emancipatory forms of EE offer psychologists different lenses for contributing to sustainability. We can engage in research projects that fit with an instrumental paradigm, encourage us to think in terms of specific environmental behaviours, antecedents, mediators, barriers, and scientifically-determined “best practices”. These fit well with the training most of us have received, and the paradigm many of our peers will be immersed in. However, I invite psychologists interested in environmental issues to consider engaging in more emancipatory, collaborative forms of research. These emergent forms of inquiry offer immense potential for our own transformative learning. They can help to advance a sustainability culture within schools and communities but also within the university departments we are part of. We need not be afraid of our multiple selves, of blending our scholarly endeavours with actions and counter-actions for a more sustainable world. And we need to support each other in realising and navigating such approaches within departments that may not be used to such an activist/academic orientation.

6.1 Concluding remarks

As the three journeys in this thesis come to an end, I am finding my feet on another path – in a job as a Sustainability and Environment Engagement Coordinator at the university at which I undertook this degree. This role involves meeting and working with staff and students who show an interest in sustainability, engaging them in efforts to improve facilities and operations, and building a culture of sustainability.
My experiences in the MAD and WSC projects have prepared me well by equipping me with an array of useful concepts, strategies, and ideas for future research within this organisation. I am deeply fascinated with how this context differs from high schools – its size, scope, and institutional identity – and how subversive pockets of people are reorienting it towards sustainability.
Appendix A

Permission to Include Published Material in Thesis
Permission to include *Ecopsychology* article within thesis (Paper Two)

Ballen, Karen [KBallen@liebertpub.com]  
Friday, 9 August 2013 2:45 a.m.  

Dear Charlotte:  
Copyright permission is granted for this request to use your paper from ECOPSYCHOLOGY in your thesis.  
Kind regards,  
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Charlotte Blythe

To: info@liebertpub.com  
Sent Items  
Thursday, 8 August 2013 10:01 a.m.  

Dear publisher,  

In November 2012 I had a manuscript for an original article accepted for publication in *Ecopsychology* (citation below). The article was completed as part of my doctoral studies.


I am writing to request permission from Mary Ann Liebert Inc. to include the work as a chapter within my PhD thesis which I will be submitting in 2014 at The University of Auckland.

Please let me know whether there would be particular requirements such as statements or electronic links I would need to incorporate into my thesis to acknowledge the journal and/or publisher.

Kind regards,  
Charlotte
MAD Coordinators Workshop Script

**Rationale Activity**

**CHARLOTTE:** We’re going to do a few activities now. Firstly we want you to write down in your pairs a rationale for MAD. (Give them blank sheet for brainstorm and purple card)

A rationale is a core set of beliefs based on knowledge about how changes occur in the target population and how the programme facilitates those changes. Basically it’s a justification for why you run MAD the way you do.

It might be hard to summarise it in a few sentences, but that’s what we want. We’ll give you about two minutes to do this in your pairs and to write it on the card.

**Logic Modelling Activity**

**EMMA:** Ok now we’re giving you each a big sheet of paper and some cards.

What we’ll be trying to do with the information we gather today and at the students workshop soon is build a programme logic model. A logic model tries to map out graphically how the activities within the programme lead to short-term, intermediate and long term outcomes.

List/brainstorm the activities in the programme. You can choose whether to focus on the whole programme or a smaller component – any meaningful component.

**Outcome Mapping**

**CHARLOTTE:** We’ve given you a sheet about outcomes of programmes. On your big sheet of paper we’d like you to work in your pairs to brainstorm what you think the programme’s outcomes are. List some ideas for short term outcomes, intermediate outcomes and long-term outcomes. The sheet has definitions of what these are and we can help you. Think about how short term outcomes lead to intermediate, and so on, because the progression is the important part of this exercise. Also try and link the activities to the short term outcomes which the activities are supposed to create.

Now we would like you to write outcomes onto cards with different colours for each type. Don’t worry if you’re not entirely sure if something is short versus intermediate, or intermediate versus long, just pick either. Also make cards for the different activities in the programme.

Short term = Orange (Might be straight after the hui, immediate effects of the hui), Intermediate = Green, Long term = Blue, Yellow = Activities, Pink = Inputs.

Now please arrange them on the paper with BLU-TAK. Draw links between the cards.

Try and rank your long-term outcomes from critically important to not important. Write NI, I or CI for Not Important, Important or Critically Important.

We’ll get each group to present their model. Don’t worry about how it looks or whether it’s a bit messy, all we want is to get a sense of how you think your programme is leading to your goal and long term outcomes!

SHORT TERM – Learning (expect)
INTERMEDIATE – Change Behaviour (Students actions, events etc.?) (want)
LONG TERM – Change Condition (Whole school becomes more aware, changes policies etc.) (hope)
Instructions: Please read through the worksheet below before you start writing. Then fill out the sections below as best you can. You can either type your answers or print out this sheet and write on it. During the workshop you will be asked to tell a story of your MAD journey based on your responses to these questions. You will be put into small groups and each group member will have about 3-4 minutes to tell their story.

When I think of MAD....
In the space below, jot down any general ideas about your MAD journey (e.g. five words that come to mind when you think of MAD, any feelings or images related to MAD).

MAD Hui
In the space below, write about your experiences of the MAD Hui (e.g. how you got involved, activities you did, people you met, what you liked). Also try and write about how the Hui affected or changed you (e.g. your knowledge, beliefs, values, emotions, or behaviour).
### You and MAD
In the space below, write about what you are like now (e.g. your knowledge about sustainability issues, any actions you have done since the Hui, how well you think you achieve your sustainability goals, what you find challenging about sustainability leadership). Consider how the MAD programme has shaped the person you are today.

---

### Your future
Imagine yourself ten years from now. In the space below, write about how you think you will be then. You may want consider things like your career, your lifestyle, etc.
Appendix B

Online Survey Pages from Survey Monkey

Consent Form

1. Evaluation of the MAD programme

Participant consent form: Survey Participant

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. It will involve a survey that will take up to 30 minutes to complete. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that I was selected because I am involved in the Make A Difference (MAD) programme and that my participation is voluntary.

I also understand that:
I may withdraw my agreement to participate at anytime up until I have submitted my responses to the researcher.
The surveys will be kept by the researchers on private computers at the University of Auckland or on the researchers' personal computers at home.
My answers to the survey will be supplied anonymously.
The data will be stored indefinitely and may be used in other research projects.

I agree to take part in this research.

☐ Yes
☐ No
## MAD Sustainability Hui

2. Please indicate which year or years you attended a MAD Sustainability hui, and indicate whether you were a Participant or Student Leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Student Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. We are interested in how the MAD Sustainability hui changed you as a person. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

Imagine that each one begins with "The MAD hui..."

**Note:** If you have been to more than one MAD Sustainability hui (e.g. if you went once as a participant and once as a leader) please answer the questions with regard to the first hui you went on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raised my awareness of sustainability</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deepened my knowledge about sustainability</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opened my eyes to opportunities for change in the world</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspired me</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me more confidence</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me the sense that I could make a difference</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivated me to get involved in environmental change in my school and community</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me a better idea of who I am and who I want to be</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduced me to like-minded people</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me the opportunity to form new relationships with people</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthened my relationship with the person or people I went with</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me a powerful feeling of being part of a group</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made me feel more connected to nature</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built my leadership skills</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked me to experts and resources</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opened my eyes up to different career ideas</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Intermediate Outcomes: Home and school

4. Since the MAD hui, have you taken any actions in your personal life / household to promote sustainability? (E.g. taken up cycling, installed energy efficient light bulbs, grown vegetables, made an effort to buy organic or locally grown food, taken reusable bags when shopping).

If so, please try and give as much detail as possible.

5. Since the MAD hui, have you taken any actions in your school to promote sustainability? (E.g. taken on a role as an environment leader, set up or joined my school's envirogroup, helped build a worm farm, promoted recycling at assembly, led a food garden project).

If so, please try and give as much detail as possible about your involvement.
6. Since the MAD hui, have you taken any actions in your local community to promote sustainability? (E.g. attended a community meeting, joined Greenpeace or other environmental NGO, signed a petition, taken part in a beach clean-up, helped out at a community garden).

If so, please try and give as much detail as possible about your involvement.

7. Since the MAD hui, have you taken any actions at the national or international level to promote sustainability? (E.g. been part of NZYD, attended the Sir Peter Blake Youth Environmental Forum).

If so, please try and give as much detail as possible about your involvement.
Intermediate Outcomes: MAD activities and Learning

8. Since the MAD hui, what extra MAD/Council organised activities have you taken part in?

Please select any which apply.

☐ Tree planting
☐ Tiritiri Matangi
☐ Ambury Farm day
☐ City Mission volunteering
☐ MAD Morne
☐ Leadership workshop
☐ Writing submissions workshop
☐ Social marketing workshop
☐ I’ve been a student leader at a MAD hui

Other (please describe)

9. Since the MAD hui, is there anything you have done to continue learning about sustainability?

If so, please describe.
**Intermediate Outcomes: Summary**

10. We are interested in how you think you are now. Below are some statements which may or may not describe you.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with these statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am putting into practice the information given to me at the MAD hub</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am deepening my knowledge about sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am learning how to implement meaningful sustainability projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am developing networks which connect me to helpful people and resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look for solutions to problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t let obstacles stand in my way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am engaging with my community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am successful in executing my action plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I celebrate my achievements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am still in touch with other MAD grads</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel supported by the MAD community to achieve my sustainability goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take opportunities that are put before me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek opportunities to learn more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Long-term Outcomes**

11. We are interested in how you think you will be in the future. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

Imagine each one starts with "In the future, I see myself..."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing to deepen my knowledge about sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a sustainable role model in my personal life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a critical thinker and questioner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging with sustainability issues in my career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking leadership opportunities in my field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being active in community and political issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching or inspiring others to take care of the environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging environmentally friendly practices in my workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Overall satisfaction with MAD

12. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the following components of MAD. If you haven’t attended any follow-up activities or workshops, please click N/A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Extremely Disatisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAD hui</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAD follow-up volunteering activities (e.g. Tree planting)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAD follow-up workshops (e.g. Social Marketing workshop)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAD staff’s support of you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Is there anything about the MAD programme you think could be improved?

Please describe any suggestions you have below.

14. If you could write one sentence about the effect the MAD programme has had on you, what would it be?

Hint: Think about how you were before you went to the MAD hui and how the programme has shaped you into the person you are today.
Appendix C
Copies of Ethics Documents for Make a Difference
Evaluation of the MAD programme
Participant information sheet: Programme Representative

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD student), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

We would like to invite the organisers and participants of the Auckland Regional Council’s Make A Difference (MAD) programme to take part in our research on MAD. The research is being conducted by Charlotte Blythe, a PhD student, Emma Green, a research assistant, and Niki Harré, an associate professor. We are all from the Department of Psychology. We want to work out what it is that makes MAD effective and how being in MAD has helped or changed MAD participants. We will use this information to outline what is working and what could be improved about the MAD programme. This research has been funded by the Auckland Regional Council and we hope that it will be useful to the people who run MAD to further develop the programme.

In the current research, we will conduct three different research activities: Workshops with participants and workshops with organisers, a survey of participants, and possible follow-up interviews with participants. In the workshops, participants will be asked questions about their experiences in MAD. There would be no more than 25 people in the participants’ workshop and no more than 5 people at the organisers’ workshop. Participants will be asked to write about their experiences in MAD before the workshop. This should take no more than about half an hour. At the workshop itself, they will be asked to share what they have written. We will also ask them questions about what they liked about MAD, what they think worked well, and how they think they were helped or changed by MAD. There will also be an activity to complete in groups of about 5 or 6. The activity will involve writing down components and outcomes of MAD on cards and deciding which components led to which outcomes. The workshop should take no more than two hours. The survey and follow-up interviews of participants will be designed based on what we discover in the workshops. They will help us to test out our guesses about how MAD works, and clarify what people think works well about MAD and what could be improved. The survey should take no more than half an hour and the interviews no more than an hour of participants’ time.

We’d like to record the workshops and the interviews. A person who is not a member of the research team may transcribe these recordings. This person will have signed a transcriber confidentiality agreement saying they understand that the contents of the recordings are confidential, and that they must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researchers. In any reports from the project we will never use anyone’s name. We will change all names on our computer as soon as the recordings are transcribed and the original recordings will be kept private to the University of Auckland team and destroyed at the end of our project. No one from MAD will be able to see the original recordings even if they ask us.

Participants may withdraw their agreement to participate at any time. Participants can decide to stop or not answer all our questions at any time. However, because the workshops will involve a group of MAD participants, once a workshop has started it will be difficult to withdraw any information participants have provided, although we will endeavour to achieve this. We will discuss with everyone that the information people share during the workshop is confidential, and we will actively encourage everyone to respect this confidentiality.

We will be using an online programme to deliver the survey. At no point in the questionnaire will participants be required to provide their names or personal details. Participants will access the survey via an electronic link which they will be emailed by Cate Jessep. This ensures the researchers are not able to see the any details of the respondents.
We will use the information from this research in reports to the Auckland Regional Council, in Charlotte’s PhD, and possibly in academic articles and presentations. We wish to keep the data indefinitely in case it is useful for further studies. It will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home. The data will be stored separately from the Consent Forms and the Consent Forms will be stored in a locked cabinet at the university. You will receive a summary of the research findings. Other participants are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if they contact us before March 2011.

You do not have to agree for MAD to participate in this research if you don’t want to. We also seek assurance that the participation or non-participation of MAD participants will in no way affect their relationship with MAD or jeopardise their participation in MAD activities.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time you can contact Charlotte on cbly004@aucklanduni.ac.nz, Emma on egre025@aucklanduni.ac.nz or Niki on n.harre@auckland.ac.nz or 09 373 7599 Ext 88512.

Niki’s address is: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. The Head of Department, who can be contacted at the same address, is: Dr Doug Elliffe, ph 09 373 7599 ext 85262.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact: The Chair, The Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, ph 09 373 7599 ext 83711.

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453**
Evaluation of the MAD programme
Participant consent form: Programme Representative

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD student), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS. IT WILL BE KEPT SEPARATE FROM DATA AND STORED IN A LOCKED CABINET ON UNIVERSITY PREMISES

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. It will involve workshops with a subset of MAD participants and with MAD organisers, and a survey and follow-up interviews with MAD participants. These activities will take at least 15 minutes (for surveys) but no more than two hours (for workshops). I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that MAD’s participation is voluntary. I also understand that:

- Participants will not be identified by name in any reports that result from this research.
- Participants may withdraw their agreement to participate at any time.
- It may not be possible for participants to withdraw the information they provide in the workshops and questionnaire.
- The participation or non-participation of MAD participants will in no way affect their relationship with MAD or jeopardise their participation in MAD activities.
- Hard copies of the data will be kept by the researchers in a private office at the University of Auckland. Electronic copies will be kept on the researchers’ computers.
- The data will be stored indefinitely and may be used in other research projects.
- I agree for the organisers and participants of the MAD programme to take part in this research.

Signed: ____________________________

Name: ____________________________
(please print clearly)

Date: ____________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453
Evaluation of the MAD programme
Participant information sheet: Organisers/Facilitators Workshop

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD student), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

We would like to invite you to take part in our research on the Auckland Regional Council’s Make A Difference (MAD) programme. You have been identified because you are involved with organising or facilitating MAD. The research is being conducted by Charlotte Blythe, a PhD student, Emma Green, a research assistant, and Niki Harré, an associate professor. We are all from the Department of Psychology. Your involvement would help us work out what it is that makes MAD effective and how being in MAD helps or changes MAD participants. We will use this information to outline what is working and what could be improved about the MAD programme. This research has been funded by the Auckland Regional Council and we hope that it will be useful to the people who run MAD to further develop the programme.

In the current research, participants will attend a workshop where they will be asked questions about their experiences in MAD. The workshop will take place at [a location to be entered when known]. There would be no more than 5 participants. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to write about your experiences in MAD before the workshop. This should take no more than about half an hour. At the workshop itself, you will be asked to share what you have written. We will also ask you questions about what you like about MAD, what you think works well, and how you think MAD helps or changes its participants. There will also be an activity to complete. The activity will involve writing down components and outcomes of MAD on cards and deciding which components led to which outcomes. The workshop should take no more than two hours.

We’d like to record the workshop. A person who is not a member of the research team may transcribe these recordings. This person will have signed a transcriber confidentiality agreement saying they understand that the contents of the recordings are confidential, and that they must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researchers. We will use the recordings in our project, and Charlotte might use them in her PhD thesis. However, we will never use your name. We will change all names on our computer as soon as the recordings are transcribed and the original recordings will be kept private to the University of Auckland team and destroyed at the end of our project. No one from MAD will be able to see the original recordings even if they ask us.

Because the workshop will involve a group, once the workshop has started it will be difficult to withdraw any information you have provided. We can try and find any comments you made and delete them from our transcripts or notes but we can’t guarantee we will be able to do this. However, you can decide to stop or not answer all our questions at any time. At the beginning of the workshop, we will also discuss with everyone that the information people share during the workshop is confidential, and we will actively encourage everyone to respect this confidentiality.

You do not have to participate in this research if you don’t want to. The people who run MAD have assured us that your participation or non-participation will in no way affect your relationship with MAD or jeopardise your participation in MAD activities.

We will use the information from this research in reports to the Auckland Regional Council, in Charlotte’s PhD, and possibly in academic articles and presentations. The workshop notes and transcripts will be stored indefinitely in case they are useful for further studies. Data will be kept on the researchers’
Appendix C

computers at the university or at home. MAD will receive a summary of the research findings. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2011.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time you can contact Charlotte on cbly004@aucklanduni.ac.nz, Emma on egre025@aucklanduni.ac.nz or Niki on n.harre@auckland.ac.nz or 09 373 7599 Ext 88512.

Niki’s address is: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. The Head of Department, who can be contacted at the same address, is: Dr Doug Elliffe, ph 09 373 7599 ext 85262.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact: The Chair, The Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, ph 09 373 7599 ext 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453
Evaluation of the MAD programme
Participant consent form: Organisers/Facilitators Workshop
Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD student), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS. IT WILL BE KEPT SEPARATE FROM DATA AND STORED IN A LOCKED CABINET ON UNIVERSITY PREMISES

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. It will involve a workshop that will take up to two hours to complete. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that I was selected because I am involved in the Make A Difference (MAD) programme and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that:

- I may withdraw my agreement to participate at anytime.
- Once the workshop has started, I may decide to stop or not answer all our questions at any time.
- It may not be possible for me to withdraw information provided in the workshop.
- What is said in the workshop is confidential, and I agree to not disclose anything discussed.
- What I say may be recorded, either in writing or on an audiotape.
- A third party who has signed a confidentiality agreement may transcribe what is recorded in the workshop.
- Hard copies of the workshop proceedings will be kept by the researchers in a private office at the University of Auckland. Electronic copies will be kept on the researchers’ computers.
- I will not be identified by name in any reports that result from this research.
- The data will be stored indefinitely and may be used in other research projects.
- I agree to take part in this research.

Signed: ______________________________________
Name: _______________________________________
(please print clearly)

Date: ___________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453
Evaluation of the MAD programme
Parent information sheet for participants under 16 years: MAD Participant Workshops

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD student), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

We would like to invite your child to take part in our research on the Auckland Regional Council’s Make A Difference (MAD) programme. Your child has been identified because they have participated in MAD. The research is being conducted by Charlotte Blythe, a PhD student, Emma Green, a research assistant, and Niki Harré, an associate professor. We are all from the Department of Psychology. Your child’s involvement would help us work out what it is that makes MAD effective and how being in MAD has helped or changed them as a person. We will use this information to outline what is working and what could be improved about the MAD programme. This research has been funded by the Auckland Regional Council and we hope that it will be useful to the people who run MAD to further develop the programme.

In the current research, participants will attend a workshop where they will be asked questions about their experiences in MAD. The workshop will take place at [a location to be entered when known]. There would be no more than 25 participants. If you agree for your child to participate, they will be asked to write about their experiences in MAD before the workshop. This should take no more than about half an hour. At the workshop itself, they will be asked to share what they have written. We will also ask them questions about what they liked about MAD, what they think worked well, and how they think they were helped or changed by MAD. There will also be an activity to complete in groups of about 5 or 6. The activity will involve writing down components and outcomes of MAD on cards and deciding which components led to which outcomes. The workshop should take no more than two hours.

We’d like to record the workshop. A person who is not a member of the research team may transcribe these recordings. This person will have signed a transcriber confidentiality agreement saying they understand that the contents of the recordings are confidential, and that they must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researchers. We will use the recordings in our project, and Charlotte might use them in her PhD thesis. However, we will never use your child’s name. We will change all names on our computer as soon as the recordings are transcribed and the original recordings will be kept private to the University of Auckland team and destroyed at the end of our project. No one from MAD will be able to see the original recordings even if they ask us.

Because the workshop will involve a group of MAD participants, once the workshop has started it will be difficult to withdraw any information your child has provided. We can try and find any comments your child made and delete them from our transcripts or notes but we can’t guarantee we will be able to do this. However, your child can decide to stop or not answer all our questions at any time. At the beginning of the workshop, we will also discuss with everyone that the information people share during the workshop is confidential, and we will actively encourage everyone to respect this confidentiality.

Your child does not have to participate in this research if they don’t want to. The people who run MAD have assured us that the participation or non-participation of MAD participants will in no way affect their relationship with MAD or jeopardise their participation in MAD activities.

We will use the information from this research in reports to the Auckland Regional Council, in Charlotte’s PhD, and possibly in academic articles and presentations. The workshop notes and transcripts will be stored will be stored indefinitely in case they are useful for further studies. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home. The data will be stored separately from the Consent
Appendix C

Forms and the Consent Forms will be stored in a locked cabinet at the university. The MAD organisers will receive a summary of the research findings. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2011.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time you can contact Charlotte on cbly004@aucklanduni.ac.nz, Emma on egre025@aucklanduni.ac.nz or Niki on n.harre@auckland.ac.nz or 09 373 7599 Ext 88512.

Niki’s address is: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. The Head of Department, who can be contacted at the same address, is: Dr Doug Elliffe, ph 09 373 7599 ext 85262.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact: The Chair, The Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, ph 09 373 7599 ext 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453
Evaluation of the MAD programme
Parent consent form for participants under 16 years: MAD Participants Workshop
Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD student), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS. IT WILL BE KEPT SEPARATE FROM DATA AND STORED IN A LOCKED CABINET ON UNIVERSITY PREMISES

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. It will involve a workshop that will take up to two hours to complete. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that my child was selected because they are involved in the Make A Difference (MAD) programme and that their participation is voluntary. I also understand that:

- My child may withdraw his/her agreement to participate at anytime.
- Once the workshop has started, my child may decide to stop or not answer all our questions at any time
- It may not be possible for my child to withdraw information provided in the workshop.
- What is said in the workshop is confidential.
- What is said in the workshop may be recorded, either in writing or on an audiotape.
- A third party who has signed a confidentiality agreement may transcribe what is recorded in the workshop.
- Hard copies of the workshop proceedings will be kept by the researchers in a private office at the University of Auckland. Electronic copies will be kept on the researchers’ computers.
- My child will not be identified by name in any reports that result from this research.
- The data will be stored indefinitely and may be used in other research projects.
- I agree for my child to take part in this research.

Signed: ______________________________________
Name: _______________________________________
(please print clearly)

Son/Daughter’s name:___________________________
Date: ___________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453
Appendix C

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Faculty of Science

Evaluation of the MAD programme
Participant information sheet: MAD Participants Workshop

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD student), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

We would like to invite you to take part in our research on the Auckland Regional Council’s Make A Difference (MAD) programme. You have been identified because you have participated in MAD. The research is being conducted by Charlotte Blythe, a PhD student, Emma Green, a research assistant, and Niki Harré, an associate professor. We are all from the Department of Psychology. Your involvement would help us work out what it is that makes MAD effective and how being in MAD has helped or changed you as a person. We will use this information to outline what is working and what could be improved about the MAD programme. This research has been funded by the Auckland Regional Council and we hope that it will be useful to the people who run MAD to further develop the programme.

In the current research, participants will attend a workshop where they will be asked questions about their experiences in MAD. The workshop will take place at [a location to be entered when known]. There would be no more than 25 participants. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to write about your experiences in MAD before the workshop. This should take no more than about half an hour. At the workshop itself, you will be asked to share what you have written. We will also ask you questions about what you liked about MAD, what you think worked well, and how you think you were helped or changed by MAD. There will also be an activity to complete in groups of about 5 or 6. The activity will involve writing down components and outcomes of MAD on cards and deciding which components led to which outcomes. The workshop should take no more than two hours.

We’d like to record the workshop. A person who is not a member of the research team may transcribe these recordings. This person will have signed a transcriber confidentiality agreement saying they understand that the contents of the recordings are confidential, and that they must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researchers. We will use the recordings in our project, and Charlotte might use them in her PhD thesis. However, we will never use your name. We will change all names on our computer as soon as the recordings are transcribed and the original recordings will be kept private to the University of Auckland team and destroyed at the end of our project. No one from MAD will be able to see the original recordings even if they ask us.

Because the workshop will involve a group of MAD participants, once the workshop has started it will be difficult to withdraw any information you have provided. We can try and find any comments you made and delete them from our transcripts or notes but we can’t guarantee we will be able to do this. However, you can decide to stop or not answer all our questions at any time. At the beginning of the workshop, we will also discuss with everyone that the information people share during the workshop is confidential, and we will actively encourage everyone to respect this confidentiality.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to take part, you don’t have to respond to all our questions. If you don’t want to answer a question you don’t have to tell us why. If you don’t want to be in this study, you don’t have to tell us why. If you agree to take part you can still withdraw at any time. If you want to withdraw, you don’t have to give a reason. The people who run MAD have assured us that the participation or non-participation of MAD participants will in no way affect their relationship with MAD or jeopardise their participation in MAD activities. If you are under 16 your parents or guardians will also need to sign consent for you to participate.
We will use the information from this research in reports to the Auckland Regional Council, in Charlotte’s PhD, and possibly in academic articles and presentations. The workshop notes and transcripts will be stored indefinitely in case they are useful for further studies. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home. The data will be stored separately from the Consent Forms and the Consent Forms will be stored in a locked cabinet at the university. The MAD organisers will receive a summary of the research findings. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2011.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time you can contact Charlotte on cbly004@aucklanduni.ac.nz, Emma on egre025@aucklanduni.ac.nz or Niki on n.harre@auckland.ac.nz or 09 373 7599 Ext 88512.

Niki’s address is: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. The Head of Department, who can be contacted at the same address, is: Dr Doug Elliffe, ph 09 373 7599 ext 85262.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact: The Chair, The Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, ph 09 373 7599 ext 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453
Evaluation of the MAD programme

Participant consent form: MAD Participants Workshop
Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD student), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS. IT WILL BE KEPT SEPARATE FROM DATA AND STORED IN A LOCKED CABINET ON UNIVERSITY PREMISES

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. It will involve a workshop that will take up to two hours to complete. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that I was selected because I am involved in the Make A Difference (MAD) programme and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that:

- I may withdraw my agreement to participate at anytime.
- Once the workshop has started, I may decide to stop or not answer all our questions at any time
- It may not be possible for me to withdraw information provided in the workshop.
- What is said in the workshop is confidential, and I agree to not disclose anything discussed.
- What I say may be recorded, either in writing or on an audiotape.
- A third party who has signed a confidentiality agreement may transcribe what is recorded in the workshop.
- Hard copies of the workshop proceedings will be kept by the researchers in a private office at the University of Auckland. Electronic copies will be kept on the researchers’ computers.
- I will not be identified by name in any reports that result from this research.
- The data will be stored indefinitely and may be used in other research projects.
- If I am under 16, my parents or guardians will also need to sign consent for me to participate.
- I agree to take part in this research.

I am/am not under 16 years of age (Please circle one).

Signed: ______________________________________
Name: _______________________________________
(please print clearly)
Date: ___________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453
Draft of the email we will send to MAD Coordinator (Cate) when the time comes to recruit survey participants.

Hi Cate,

We have made an online survey for MAD participants to complete. Because it is impossible for us to gain reliable parental consent via the internet, we ask that the survey is only sent to MAD participants who are over 16 years of age. Please email the link below to them as you see fit.

All the same confidentiality and anonymity rules that we had for the workshops still apply i.e. participants will never be named in any reports we write of the results and we will not be able to see their personal details when we access their completed survey responses. Also, as you’ll see when you take a look at the online version, all participants are fully informed of their rights and need to consent to the process by checking a box. They will also have to check a box declaring that they are over 16 years of age in order to participate.

Below is the text of an email you might want to use to advertise this to other members.

Many thanks for your help.

Regards,

Niki, Charlotte and Emma

Evaluation of the MAD Programme

Hello MAD participant,

As you may know, the MAD Programme is being evaluated in a research project conducted by researchers from The University of Auckland. The researchers are Charlotte Blythe, a PhD student, Emma Green, a research assistant, and Niki Harré, an associate professor. We are all from the Department of Psychology.

Earlier this year, we ran workshops where MAD participants told us about their experiences in MAD. We then used this information to develop a survey that we are inviting you to participate in now. Your involvement would help us work out what it is that makes MAD effective and how being in MAD has helped or changed you as a person. We will use this information to outline what is working and what could be improved about the MAD programme.

This is the link to the survey: LINK WILL BE INSERTED ONCE KNOWN

When you click on the link you will get more information about the project and you will be asked to check your agreement to participate. You will also be asked to check a box to declare that you are over 16 years of age. The answers you supply will be anonymous.

If you have any queries about this research, please email cbly004@aucklanduni.ac.nz. Thank you for considering participating.
THIS PIS WILL BE IN THE FIRST SECTION OF THE SURVEY MONKEY SURVEY

Evaluation of the MAD programme
Participant information sheet: Survey Participant

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

We would like to invite you to take part in our research on the Auckland Regional Council’s Make A Difference (MAD) programme. You have been identified because you have participated in MAD. The research is being conducted by Charlotte Blythe, a PhD student, Emma Green, a research assistant, and Niki Harré, an associate professor. We are all from the Department of Psychology. Your involvement would help us work out what it is that makes MAD effective and how being in MAD has helped or changed you as a person. We will use this information to outline what is working and what could be improved about the MAD programme. This research has been funded by the Auckland Regional Council and we hope that it will be useful to the people who run MAD to further develop the programme.

Earlier in our research, we ran workshops where MAD participants told us about their experiences in MAD. We used this information to develop the survey that we are inviting you to participate in now. You will be asked questions about [THE MAIN TOPICS OF THE SURVEY WILL BE DETERMINED FROM THE WORKSHOPS, AND WILL BE FILLED IN ONCE KNOWN]. The survey should take no more than about half an hour to complete, and is more likely to take about 15 – 20 minutes.

Your participation is completely voluntary. At no point will we ask for your name. When we access your survey responses we will not be able to trace them to you. We will use the survey results in our project, and Charlotte might use them in her PhD thesis.

No one from MAD will be able to see your original survey results even if they ask us. If you agree to take part, you don’t have to respond to all the statements or questions. If you don’t want to answer a question you don’t have to tell us why. If you don’t want to be in this study, you don’t have to tell us why. If you agree to take part you can still withdraw at any time up until you have submitted your responses to the researcher. You can do this by exiting the survey browser any time. If you want to withdraw, you don’t have to give a reason. The people who run MAD have assured us that the participation or non-participation of MAD participants will in no way affect their relationship with MAD or jeopardise their participation in MAD activities. You must be 16 years or over to take part in the survey.

We will use the information from this research in reports to the Auckland Regional Council, in Charlotte’s PhD, and possibly in academic articles and presentations. The completed surveys will be stored indefinitely in case they are useful for further studies. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home. The MAD organisers will receive a summary of the research findings. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2011.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time you can contact Charlotte on cble004@aucklanduni.ac.nz, Emma on egre025@aucklanduni.ac.nz or Niki on n.harre@auckland.ac.nz or 09 373 7599 Ext 88512.
Niki’s address is: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. The Head of Department, who can be contacted at the same address, is: Dr Doug Elliffe, ph 09 373 7599 ext 85262.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact: The Chair, The Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, ph 09 373 7599 ext 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Faculty of Science

Evaluation of the MAD programme
Parental information sheet for participants under 16 years: Follow-up Interview Participant

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

We would like to invite your son/daughter to take part in our research on the Auckland Council’s Make A Difference (MAD) programme. Your son/daughter has been identified because they have participated in MAD. The research is being conducted by Charlotte Blythe, a PhD student and Niki Harré, an associate professor. We are from the Department of Psychology. Your son/daughter’s involvement would help us work out what it is that makes MAD effective and how being in MAD has helped or changed them as a person. We will use this information to outline what is working and what could be improved about the MAD programme. This research has been funded by the Auckland Council and we hope that it will be useful to the people who run MAD to further develop the programme.

Earlier in our research, we ran workshops where MAD participants told us about their experiences in MAD. We used this information to develop a survey that MAD participants then completed. We are now inviting your son/daughter to participate in a follow-up interview based on what we found from the workshops and surveys. If you agree for your daughter to participate, the interview will take place at the MAD 2012 hui. They will be asked questions about their experiences of the hui and what they think makes it effective. The interview should take no more than half an hour, and is more likely to take about 10 – 15 minutes.

We’d like to take an audio recording of the interview. Even if your son/daughter agrees to being taped, they may have the recorder turned off at any time. If your daughter doesn’t want to be taped, that is OK and we will take notes. We will use the recordings and transcripts in our project, and Charlotte might use them in her PhD thesis. However, we will never use your son/daughter’s name. We will change all names on our computer as soon as the recordings are transcribed and the original recordings will be kept private to the University of Auckland team and destroyed at the end of our project. No one from MAD will be able to see the original recordings even if they ask us.

We will send a copy of the transcribed interview or notes to your son/daughter. If they ask, we will take out anything they don’t want used, clarify things we may have got wrong or add extra information from them as long as they let us know within two weeks of us sending the transcript or notes. If your daughter asks we will delete the whole interview.

Your son/daughter’s participation is completely voluntary. If your son/daughter agrees to take part, they don’t have to respond to all our questions. If they don’t want to answer a question they don’t have to tell us why. If they don’t want to be in this study, they don’t have to tell us why. If they agree to take part they can still withdraw at any time. If they want to withdraw, they don’t have to give a reason. The people who run MAD have assured us that the participation or non-participation of MAD participants will in no way affect their relationship with MAD or jeopardise their participation in MAD activities.

The interview transcripts and notes will be stored for at least several years. Any audio recordings will be wiped at the end of the project. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home. We wish to keep the data indefinitely in case it is useful for further studies. The MAD organisers will receive a summary of the research findings. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2011.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time you can contact Charlotte on epicharlotte@gmail.com or Niki on n.harre@auckland.ac.nz or 09 373 7599 Ext 88512.
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Niki’s address is: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. The Head of Department, who can be contacted at the same address, is: Dr Doug Elliffe, ph 09 373 7599 ext 85262.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact: The Chair, The Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, ph 09 373 7599 ext 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010/453.
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Faculty of Science

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS. IT WILL BE KEPT SEPARATE FROM DATA AND STORED IN A LOCKED CABINET ON UNIVERSITY PREMISES

Evaluation of the MAD programme
Parental consent form for participants under 16 years: Follow-up Interview Participant

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. It will involve an interview that will take up to half an hour to complete. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that my son/daughter was selected because I am involved in the Make A Difference (MAD) programme and that their participation is voluntary. I also understand that:

- My son/daughter may withdraw their agreement to participate at anytime.
- Once the interview has started, my son/daughter may decide to stop or not answer all our questions at any time.
- What my son/daughter says may be recorded, either in writing or on an audiotape.
- My son/daughter will be sent a copy of the transcribed interview or notes. If my son/daughter asks within two weeks of receiving this material, the researchers will take out anything they don’t want used. This may include the whole interview.
- The interview transcripts and notes will be stored for at least several years. Any audio recordings will be wiped at the end of the project. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home.
- My son/daughter will not be identified by name in any reports that result from this research.
- The data will be stored indefinitely and may be used in other research projects.
- I agree for my son/daughter to take part in this research.

Signed: ______________________________________

Name: _______________________________________
(please print clearly)

Son/Daughter’s name: _________________________

Date: ________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/10 for 3 years, Reference Number 2010 / 453.
Evaluation of the MAD programme
Participant information sheet: Follow-up Interview Participant
Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

We would like to invite you to take part in our research on the Auckland Regional Council’s Make A Difference (MAD) programme. You have been identified because you have participated in MAD. The research is being conducted by Charlotte Blythe, a PhD student, Emma Green, a research assistant, and Niki Harré, an associate professor. We are all from the Department of Psychology. Your involvement would help us work out what it is that makes MAD effective and how being in MAD has helped or changed you as a person. We will use this information to outline what is working and what could be improved about the MAD programme. This research has been funded by the Auckland Regional Council and we hope that it will be useful to the people who run MAD to further develop the programme.

Earlier in our research, we ran workshops where MAD participants told us about their experiences in MAD. We used this information to develop a survey that MAD participants then completed. We are now inviting you to participate in a follow-up interview based on what we found from the workshops and surveys. If you agree to participate, the interview will take place at a location convenient to you. You will be asked questions about [THE MAIN TOPICS OF THE INTERVIEW WILL BE DETERMINED FROM THE WORKSHOPS AND SURVEY RESULTS, AND WILL BE FILLED IN ONCE KNOWN]. The interview should take no more than about hour, and is more likely to take about 30 – 45 minutes.

We’d like to take an audio recording of the interview. A person who is not a member of the research team may transcribe these recordings. This person will have signed a transcriber confidentiality agreement saying they understand that the contents of the recordings are confidential, and that they must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researchers. Even if you agree to being taped, you may have the recorder turned off at any time. If you don’t want to be taped, that is OK and we will take notes. We will use the recordings and transcripts in our project, and Charlotte might use them in her PhD thesis. However, we will never use your name. We will change all names on our computer as soon as the recordings are transcribed and the original recordings will be kept private to the University of Auckland team and destroyed at the end of our project. No one from MAD will be able to see the original recordings even if they ask us.

We will send a copy of the transcribed interview or notes to you. If you ask, we will take out anything you don’t want used, clarify things we may have got wrong or add extra information from you as long as you let us know within two weeks of us sending the transcript or notes. If you ask we will delete the whole interview.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to take part, you don’t have to respond to all our questions. If you don’t want to answer a question you don’t have to tell us why. If you don’t want to be in this study, you don’t have to tell us why. If you agree to take part you can still withdraw at any time. If you want to withdraw, you don’t have to give a reason. The people who run MAD have assured us that the participation or non-participation of MAD participants will in no way affect their relationship with MAD or jeopardise their participation in MAD activities. If you are under 16 your parents or guardians will also need to sign consent for you to participate.

We will use the information from this research in reports to the Auckland Regional Council, in Charlotte’s PhD, and possibly in academic articles and presentations. The interview notes and transcripts will be stored will be stored indefinitely in case they are useful for further studies. Data will be kept on the researchers’
computers at the university or at home. The data will be stored separately from the Consent Forms and the Consent Forms will be stored in a locked cabinet at the university. The MAD organisers will receive a summary of the research findings. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2011.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time you can contact Charlotte on cbly004@aucklanduni.ac.nz, Emma on eggre025@aucklanduni.ac.nz or Niki on n.harre@auckland.ac.nz or 09 373 7599 Ext 88512.

Niki’s address is: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. The Head of Department, who can be contacted at the same address, is: Dr Doug Elliffe, ph 09 373 7599 ext 85262.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact: The Chair, The Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, ph 09 373 7599 ext 83711.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/2010 for (3) years, Reference Number 2010/453
Evaluation of the MAD programme

Participant consent form: Follow-up Interview Participant

Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD student), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS. IT WILL BE KEPT SEPARATE FROM DATA AND STORED IN A LOCKED CABINET ON UNIVERSITY PREMISES

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. It will involve an interview that will take up to one hour to complete. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that I was selected because I am involved in the Make A Difference (MAD) programme and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that:

- I may withdraw my agreement to participate at anytime.
- Once the interview has started, I may decide to stop or not answer all our questions at any time.
- What I say may be recorded, either in writing or on an audiotape.
- A third party who has signed a confidentiality agreement may transcribe what is recorded in the interview.
- I will be sent a copy of the transcribed interview or notes. If I ask within two weeks of receiving this material, the researchers will take out anything I don’t want used. This may include the whole interview.
- The interview transcripts and notes will be stored indefinitely. Any audio recordings will be wiped at the end of the project. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home.
- I will not be identified by name in any reports that result from this research.
- The data will be stored indefinitely and may be used in other research projects.
- If I am under 16, my parents or guardians will also need to sign consent for me to participate.
- I agree to take part in this research.

I am/am not under 16 years of age (Please circle one).

Signed: ______________________________________

Name: _______________________________________
(please print clearly)

Date: ___________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 15/09/2010 for (3) years, Reference Number 2010/453
Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

Project Title: Evaluation of the MAD Programme
Researchers: Charlotte Blythe (PhD), Emma Green (research assistant) and Niki Harré (supervisor)
Transcriber: TO BE COMPLETED WHEN KNOWN

I agree to transcribe the audio recordings for the above research project. I understand that the contents of the recordings are confidential, and that they must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than the researchers.

Signed: ________________________________

Name: ________________________________
(please print clearly)

Date: ______________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON
15/09/2010 for (3) years, Reference Number 2010/453
Appendix D
Data Collection Tools for Western Springs College
Excerpt from the Research Team Reflective Survey

Research Team Reflective Survey

Please think back to your time on the project and answer the following questions. If you don’t think you can answer the question, that’s okay, put a N/A next to it. If you want to use any extracts (e.g. from emails or documents you have copies of) as evidence for what you are saying, you are welcome to. Just explain where the extract is from (e.g. “This is something I wrote in an email to so-and-so”).

**ACTIVITY #1: EXPLORING EACH PRINCIPLE SEPARATELY**

For each principle, please fill out the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>What did we do to meet this principle?</th>
<th>What helped us in meeting this principle?</th>
<th>What hindered us in meeting this principle?</th>
<th>Can you think of a specific example where we successfully met this principle? Please describe in as much detail as possible (a paragraph would be great).</th>
<th>Can you think of a specific example where we failed to meet this principle? Please describe in as much as possible (a paragraph would be great).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**ACTIVITY #2: ISSUES WITH PRINCIPLES**

What do you think about trying to promote all of these principles simultaneously?
Which principles work well together and why?
How do the principles conflict with each other? (I.e. are there any tensions between them?)

Please think about these questions and explain your thoughts below as best you can.
| ISSUES WITH PRINCIPLES |
Appendix E

Copies of Ethics Documents for Western Springs College
Appendix E

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Faculty of Science

To: Principal, Western Springs College
Creating a sustainable school
Participant information sheet

This information sheet is a reminder about our action research project “Creating a sustainable school”, and an official request to continue the project at Western Springs College in 2009. The project is supervised by Niki Harré, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland. The rest of the research team for this year are psychology students - Charlotte Blythe (master’s thesis student) and Briar Douglas (an honours dissertation student). The purpose of this research is to test, measure and document strategies to create a more environmentally sustainable school at Western Springs College. We hope that our project will provide a case-study that other schools may find useful, and demonstrate that it is possible to make positive changes in a secondary school context. The project would involve various activities designed to create a more sustainable school, in keeping with the school’s strategic goal to work towards sustainability. The activities would be decided jointly between ourselves and people at the school. We will work through the sustainability advisory panel.

In consultation with this year’s sustainability panel, and after obtaining your approval, we would like to continue to observe and take notes on the activities of the sustainability panel. This will include noting decisions made at meetings. We will explain this process in detail to the panel members and get their signed consent to participate, please see the Observations information sheet and consent form attached. We may also wish to do one or more of the following:

- Interview individual students or staff members, in relation to particular activities. We will obtain written consent for these interviews from the participants and their parents if they are students under 16 years. They will be conducted at school, outside of class time. Interviews may range in length from 15 minutes to 1 hour.
- Measure and monitor the use of resources, for example if lights and computers are turned off after use, the percentage of recyclable waste that is put in the allocated bin compared to the percentage put in the general rubbish. We may also wish to take other ‘objective’ measures of school practices or the school environment – for example we may count the number of trees on the grounds before and after the project.
- Document the activities initiated by the sustainability panel and undertaken by groups at the school. E.g. if a speaker is invited to the school we may note the date and time, content of the talk and how many students attended.
- Observe the activities initiated by the sustainability panel and undertaken by groups at the school.

At all times, we will be sensitive to the school’s reputation and to our participation as invited guests at the school. Niki Harré will read all material produced by the University of Auckland students prior to it being shown to anyone else. Three types of reports may arise from this study: theses or dissertations produced by the students (student work), articles for academic journals (articles) and media releases, magazine articles, material for the school website or other similar material (public reports).

In all of the above, the name of the school will only be used with your permission. We will ask you to sign your agreement to this on the consent form, but you may change your mind as long as you give us reasonable notice. In the case of our students’ work, this will need to be by October 1, 2009. We will not use individual’s names in any material we produce, however we may refer to people by their role. Therefore, it will be possible to identify some of the individuals involved. In most cases individuals will not be able to be identified and only summary data from the questionnaire and anonymous interview quotations will be used.

If you sign the attached consent form, you will not be able to withdraw the material from individual interviews or observational data once it is collected. However, we will show you all articles and public
reports, as described earlier, before they are released. If requested we will modify these reports until both you and ourselves are happy for them to be released. If we cannot reach agreement, we will not submit academic articles or release any public information about the study. This does not apply to the students’ work which will be submitted for marking, prior to showing the final documents to you or your representative.

The following additional measures will be taken to ensure everyone is fully informed about this project, gives voluntary consent to participation, and feels able to withdraw anything they have contributed within a reasonable time.

All staff and students will receive an information sheet (attached) informing them that the project is taking place. Information sheets will also be provided for parents, to be distributed in a way negotiated with you, ideally with a school newsletter posted home directly. Additional information sheets (identical to last year) will be given to people at the school we’d like to interview and members of groups whose activities we wish to observe, and to their parents if they are under 16 years old. Written consent to participate will be obtained in the case of observations and interviews. For students under 16 years, the written consent of their parents will be obtained (consent forms identical to last year).

In every case, when we interview an individual, we will send that person a copy of our notes or the transcript, to allow him or her to clarify, veto or add information. All recorded interviews will be transcribed by the university student conducting the interview. Similarly, we will send our observation notes of group activities to a representative or representatives agreed to by the group to allow him or her to clarify, veto or add information.

We would also like to ask for your assurance that the participation or non-participation of students and staff at the school in this research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in the sustainability activities.

All data from this year’s activities will be stored indefinitely, except original observation notes that will be destroyed at the end of 2009 and any audio recordings that will be wiped also at the end of 2009. Data will be kept on the researcher’s computers at the university or at home. We wish to keep the data indefinitely in case it is useful for further studies.

You have the right to withdraw the school’s participation from further data collection at any stage in the process. You will receive a summary report of our findings by March, 2010. We can also send you copies of all our students’ work, after it has been marked, if you request this.

To contact Niki Harre: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88512, n.harre@auckland.ac.nz. The Head of the Psychology Department is Associate Professor Fred Seymour: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88414, f.seymour@auckland.ac.nz. If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at 3737599 ext 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS’ ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.
From: Principal, Western Springs College  
Creating a sustainable school  
Participant consent form  

Researchers: Niki Harré, Charlotte Blythe, Briar Douglas  

This consent form will be kept for six years.  

I have received an information sheet about the operation of this project in 2009. I have also received copies of the information sheets to inform students, parents and staff of the project revised for 2009.  

I understand that students and staff may be approached to take part in individual interviews or have their sustainability activities observed and notes taken.  

I understand that all data collected in 2009 will be stored indefinitely. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home.  

I understand that I may withdraw the school’s participation at any time and no further data will be collected.  

I understand that I may not withdraw information from individual interviews or observational data once it is collected. Participants in the interviews and observations will have the right to withdraw or modify the data obtained by them as outlined in the information sheets I was given in 2008.  

I understand that I will receive a summary of the results by March, and can request copies of Charlotte Blythe’s master’s thesis and Briar Douglas’s dissertation.  

The participation or non-participation of students and staff at the school in this research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in the sustainability activities.  

☐ I agree that Western Springs College take part in this research.  
☐ I agree that the name of the school be used in all written reports, including the students’ theses and dissertations.  

Name________________________  
Signed _______________________
Date_________________________  

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS’ ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.
To: Staff, Western Springs College
Creating a sustainable school
Participant information sheet

Last year we worked with your school on a research project “Creating a sustainable school”. This is to let you know that the project will be continuing in 2009. The project is supervised by Niki Harré, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland. The rest of the research team are psychology students - Charlotte Blythe (a master’s thesis student) and Briar Douglas (an honours dissertation student). The purpose of this research is to test, measure and document strategies to create a more environmentally sustainable school at Western Springs College. We hope that our project will provide a case-study that other schools may find useful, and demonstrate that it is possible to make positive changes in a secondary school context.

The project will involve activities designed to create a more sustainable school, in keeping with the school’s strategic goal to work towards sustainability. The activities will be decided jointly between ourselves and people at the school, through the sustainability panel established in 2008. We will document and measure these activities through observations, interviews and measuring resource use or features of the school environment as appropriate.

Later in the year, we may approach you about being involved in an interview on sustainability at the school, or we may ask to observe a sustainability activity you are involved in. We may also wish to measure resource use in an area in which you work, for example if lights and computers are turned off after use, to see if sustainability improvements can be made. Your principal has assured us that participation or non-participation of students and staff in our research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in sustainability activities. Parents have been sent an information sheet similar to this one about the project. Students will also be given information sheets.

All data collected this year will be stored indefinitely. Data will be kept on the researcher’s computers at the university or at home. We wish to keep the data indefinitely in case it is useful for further studies. If you have any questions or concerns at all, please get in touch with us. The principal of Western Springs College will receive a summary of the research findings and can also get copies of the students’ university work if he asks us for it. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2010.

To contact Niki Harre: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88512, n.harre@auckland.ac.nz.

The Head of the Psychology Department is Associate Professor Fred Seymour: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88414, f.seymour@auckland.ac.nz.

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at 3737599 ext 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS’ ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.
To: Parents, Western Springs College
Creating a sustainable school
Participant information sheet

This year we will be continuing to work with the school on our action research project “Creating a sustainable school”. This project started in 2008 and is supervised by Niki Harré, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland. The rest of the research team are psychology students - Charlotte Blythe (a master’s thesis student) and Briar Douglas (an honours dissertation student).

The purpose of this research is to test, measure and document strategies to create a more environmentally sustainable school at Western Springs College. We hope that our project will provide a case-study that other schools may find useful, and demonstrate that it is possible to make positive changes in a secondary school context.

The project will involve activities designed to create a more sustainable school, in keeping with the school’s strategic goal to work towards sustainability. The activities will be decided jointly between ourselves and people at the school, through the sustainability panel established in 2008. We will document and measure these activities through observations, interviews and measuring resource use or features of the school environment as appropriate.

Later in the year, we may approach you about your child being involved in an interview on sustainability at the school, or we may ask to observe a sustainability activity your child is involved in. The principal has assured us that participation or non-participation of students in our research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in sustainability activities.

All data collected this year will be stored indefinitely, and kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home. We wish to keep the data indefinitely in case it is useful for further studies. If you have any questions or concerns at all, please get in touch with us. You are welcome to a summary report of our findings, if you contact us by March, 2010.

To contact Niki Harre: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88512, n.harre@auckland.ac.nz.

The Head of the Psychology Department is Associate Professor Fred Seymour: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88414, f.seymour@auckland.ac.nz.

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at 3737599 ext 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS’ ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.
To: Students, Western Springs College
Creating a sustainable school
Participant information sheet

Last year we worked with your school on a research project “Creating a sustainable school”. This is to let you know that the project will be continuing in 2009. The project is supervised by Niki Harré, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland. The rest of the research team are psychology students - Charlotte Blythe (a master's thesis student) and Briar Douglas (an honours dissertation student).

The reason for our project is to try and make Western Springs College a more environmentally sustainable school. It is one of the school’s goals. We are really looking forward to working with students and staff this year to make this happen and to measure and write about our progress. We hope that Western Springs can show other schools how it can be done.

Later in the year, we may ask you to take part in an interview on sustainability at the school, or we may ask to observe a sustainability activity you are involved in. We’ll give you another sheet like this to explain that, if it happens. Your principal has assured us that whether or not you agree to be part of these activities won’t affect things at the school or whether you can take part in the activities to help make the school more environmentally friendly.

We’ll store all the information we get this year for several years at least. If you have any questions or concerns at all, please get in touch with us, we’d be more than happy to chat with you and answer all your questions. The principal of Western Springs College will receive a summary of the research findings and can also get copies of the students’ university work if he asks us for it. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2010.

To contact Niki Harre: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88512, n.harre@auckland.ac.nz.

The Head of the Psychology Department is Associate Professor Fred Seymour: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88414, f.seymour@auckland.ac.nz.

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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS’ ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.
To: Observation participants

Creating a sustainable school: Notes on sustainability advisory panel
Participant information sheet

As you know, we are working with the school on a research project “Creating a sustainable school”. The project is supervised by Niki Harré, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland. The rest of the research team for this year are psychology students - Charlotte Blythe (a master’s thesis student) and Briar Douglas (an honours dissertation student). The reason for our project is to measure and write about the school’s progress on sustainability.

We would like to take notes on meetings and interactions with members of the sustainability panel. We may use these notes in our reports about the project. This may include the University of Auckland student’s theses or dissertations, research articles and public releases that are published in newspapers or magazines.

Your name will not be used in any of our reports, we will delete all names on our computer as soon as the notes are transcribed and the original notes will be kept private to the University of Auckland team and destroyed at the end of 2009. No one at school will be able to see the original notes even if they ask us. We might refer to you by your role at the school in the transcribed notes and any reports we write, so if you are a staff member or in a leadership role in this project people may be able to work out who you are. If you request on the consent form, we will send you a copy of the transcribed notes to you to check you are happy with what has been noted down. We’ll discuss this more. If you ask within two weeks of receiving the transcribed notes, we will take out anything in the notes you don’t want used, clarify things we may have got wrong or add extra information. If you are ever worried about something you’ve said and want to check we don’t record it you can get in touch with Niki. As long as it is within two weeks of the event we’ll take out any reference to whatever is concerning you.

You do not have to be observed if you don’t want to. It won’t affect you taking part in the sustainability panel. If the whole group decides they don’t want to be observed, then we won’t do so. If some people don’t mind being observed, but you don’t want to be, we’ll make sure that we don’t take notes about what you are doing. Even if you agree to be observed now, you can change your mind at anytime and we’ll stop taking notes about what you are doing. Your principal has assured us that the participation or non-participation of students and staff at the school in this research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in the sustainability activities.

We know that sometimes groups don’t work out well and people end up disagreeing and saying or doing things they regret. If that happens with the panel, we’ll be really careful to make sure you are happy with what we write in our notes. If you are ever worried about how you might come across in our notes or if you have any other concerns, we are always happy to talk with you.

The transcripts of our observation notes will be stored for at least several years. Our original notes (which might have your name on) will be destroyed at the end of 2009. Transcriptions will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home. We want to keep the transcriptions indefinitely in case they are useful for further studies. The principal of Western Springs College will receive a summary of the research findings and can also get copies of the students’ university work if he asks us for it. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2010.

To contact Niki Harre: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88512, n.harre@auckland.ac.nz.
The Head of the Psychology Department is Associate Professor Fred Seymour: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88414, f.seymour@auckland.ac.nz.

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at 3737599 ext 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS' ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.
From: Observation participants
Creating a sustainable school – Notes on sustainability advisory panel
Participant consent form

Researchers: Niki Harré, Charlotte Blythe, Briar Douglas

This consent form will be kept for six years.

I have received an information sheet about being observed for this project

I understand that I can ask Niki Harré within two weeks of an event for notes on me to be withdrawn.

The principal has agreed that the participation or non-participation of students or staff at the school in this research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in the sustainability activities.

I understand that the principal of Western Springs College will receive a summary of the research findings and is also entitled to copies of the students’ university work.

I understand that my name will be removed when the notes are transcribed, but I may be referred to by my role in the school. The school’s name may be used in any reports of the study.

I understand that the observation transcripts will be stored for at least several years. The original observations will be wiped at the end of 2009. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home.

☐ I agree / I do not agree to take part in this research

☐ I wish / do not wish to see a copy of the transcribed notes

Name________________________
Signed _______________________
Date_________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS’ ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.
To: Interview participants
Creating a sustainable school (Student Leader Interviews)
Participant information sheet

You have already received an information sheet about this project which explained who we are. To recap: We are working with the school on a research project “Creating a sustainable school”. The project is supervised by Niki Harré, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland. The rest of the research team are psychology students - Charlotte Blythe (master's thesis student) and Briar Douglas (honours dissertation student). The reason for our project is to try and make Western Springs College a more environmentally sustainable school and to measure and write about our progress. We hope that Western Springs can show other schools how it can be done.

We would like to interview you about your roles as environmental leaders and your views on sustainability. The interviewers will be Charlotte and Briar. We’d also like to take an audio recording of the interview. Even if you agree to being taped, you may have the recorder turned off at any time. If you don’t want to be taped, that is OK and we will take notes. We will use the interview transcript or notes in our reports about the project. Niki, Charlotte and Briar will summarise all the interviews and might use some quotes from what you say in their university work. We might also use summaries of the interviews and quotes in research articles and in public releases – like in newspapers or magazines or on the school’s website. We’ve let Ken Havill know that he, or someone he decides on, can check any public releases about this project before they go out and we’ll change them or not use them if he decides that is best for the school.

We will never use your name. We will change all names on our computer as soon as the notes are transcribed and the original recording or notes will be kept private to the University of Auckland team and destroyed at the end of 2009. No one at school will be able to see the original recording or notes even if they ask us. We might refer to you by your role at the school, so because you are in a leadership role in this project people may be able to work out who you are. We’ll discuss this with you more when we do the interview to make sure you are happy with how what you say might be used.

We will send a copy of the transcribed interview or notes to you, if you give us your email address. If you ask, we will take out anything you don’t want used, clarify things we may have got wrong or add extra information from you as long as you let us know by June 2nd. If you ask we will delete the whole interview as long as it is by this date. The interview will take place (after school in a classroom or local cafe) and will take between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

You do not have to be interviewed if you don’t want to. It won’t affect you taking part in (the activity – details to be added). Your principal has assured us that the participation or non-participation of students and staff at the school in this research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in the sustainability activities. Even if you agree to be interviewed you can stop at anytime or not answer all our questions.

The interview transcripts will be stored for at least several years. Any audio recordings will be wiped at the end of 2009. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home. We wish to keep the data indefinitely in case it is useful for further studies. The principal of Western Springs College will receive a summary of the research findings and can also get copies of the students’ university work if he asks us for it. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before June 2010.

To contact Niki Harre: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88512, n.harre@auckland.ac.nz.
Appendix E

The Head of the Psychology Department is Associate Professor Fred Seymour: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88414, f.seymour@auckland.ac.nz.

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at 3737599 ext 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS’ ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2009/024.
From: Interview participants
Creating a sustainable school (Student Leader interviews)
Participant consent form


This consent form will be kept for six years.

I have received an information sheet about being interviewed for this project

I understand that I will be sent a copy of the transcribed interview or notes. If I ask by (date specified here) the researchers will take out anything I don’t want used. This may include the whole interview.

The principal has agreed that the participation or non-participation of students or staff at the school in this research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in the sustainability activities.

I understand that the principal of Western Springs College will receive a summary of the research findings and is also entitled to copies of the students’ university work.

I understand that my name, or any names I use in my interview will be removed when the interview or notes are transcribed, but I may be referred to by my role in the school. The school’s name may be used in any reports of the study.

I understand that the interview transcripts will be stored for at least several years. Any audio recordings will be wiped at the end of 2009. Data will be kept on the researcher’s computers at the university or at home.

☐ I agree / do not agree to take part in this research

☐ I agree / do not agree to be audio-taped and understand that even if I agree the tape may be turned off at anytime.

Name________________________
Signed _______________________
Date_________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS’ ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.
To: Interview participants
Creating a sustainable school (Activity Participant)
Participant information sheet

As you are aware, we are working with the school on a research project “Creating a sustainable school”. The project is supervised by Niki Harré, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland. The rest of the research team are psychology students - Charlotte Blythe (master’s thesis student) Briar Douglas and Amadia Didsbury (honours dissertation students) and Emma Green (University of Auckland summer scholarship). The reason for our project is to try and make Western Springs College a more environmentally sustainable school and to measure and write about our progress. We hope that Western Springs can show other schools how it can be done.

We would like to interview you about the sustainability projects this year at WSC. We would also like to ask you questions about your impressions of us, as a research team, working in partnership with the school. The interviewer will be Emma Green. We’d like to take an audio recording of the interview. Even if you agree to being taped, you may have the recorder turned off at any time. If you don’t want to be taped, that is OK and we will take notes. We will use the interview transcript or notes in our reports about the project. Charlotte may use material from the interviews in her master’s thesis. We might also use summaries of the interviews and quotes in research articles and in public releases – like in newspapers or magazines or on the school’s website. We already have an agreement with the school that the principal or his representative can check any public releases about this project before they go out and we’ll change them or not use them if he decides that is best for the school. At present Ivan Davis is doing this.

We will never use your name. We will change all names on our computer as soon as the notes are transcribed and the original recording or notes will be kept private to the University of Auckland team and destroyed at the end of our project. No one at school will be able to see the original recording or notes even if they ask us. We might refer to you by your role at the school, so if you are a staff member or in a leadership role in this project people may be able to work out who you are. We’ll discuss this with you more when we do the interview to make sure you are happy with how what you say might be used.

We will send a copy of the transcribed interview or notes to you. If you ask, we will take out anything you don’t want used, clarify things we may have got wrong or add extra information from you as long as you let us know within two weeks of us sending the transcript or notes. If you ask we will delete the whole interview. The interview will take about half an hour.

You do not have to be interviewed if you don’t want to. Your principal has assured us that the participation or non-participation of students and staff at the school in this research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in the sustainability activities. Even if you agree to be interviewed you can stop at any time or not answer all our questionnaires.

The interview transcripts will be stored for at least several years. Any audio recordings will be wiped at the end of the project. Data will be kept on the researchers’ computers at the university or at home. We wish to keep the data indefinitely in case it is useful for further studies. The principal of Western Springs College will receive a summary of the research findings and can also get copies of the students’ university work if he asks us for it. You are welcome to a summary of the research findings as well if you contact us before March 2010.

To contact Niki Harre: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88512, n.harre@auckland.ac.nz.
The Head of the Psychology Department is Associate Professor Fred Seymour: Department of Psychology, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Ph 3737599 ext 88414, f.seymour@auckland.ac.nz.

If you have any concerns of an ethical nature you can contact the Chair of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee at 3737599 ext 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS' ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.
From: Interview participants
Creating a sustainable school (Activity Participant)
Participant consent form

Researchers: Niki Harré, Charlotte Blythe, Briar Douglas, Amadia Didsbury, Emma Green

This consent form will be kept for six years.

I have received an information sheet about being interviewed for this project

I understand that I will be sent a copy of the transcribed interview or notes. If I ask within two weeks of receiving this material, the researchers will take out anything I don’t want used. This may include the whole interview.

The principal has agreed that the participation or non-participation of students or staff at the school in this research will in no way affect their relationship with the school or jeopardise their participation in the sustainability activities.

I understand that the principal of Western Springs College will receive a summary of the research findings and is also entitled to copies of the students’ university work.

I understand that my name, or any names I use in my interview will be removed when the interview or notes are transcribed, but I may be referred to by my role in the school. The school’s name may be used in any reports of the study.

I understand that the interview transcripts will be stored for at least several years. Any audio recordings will be wiped at the end of the project. Data will be kept on the researcher’s computers at the university or at home.

☐ I agree/do not agree to take part in this research

☐ I agree/do not agree to be audio-taped and understand that even if I agree the tape may be turned off at anytime.

Name________________________
Signed _______________________
Date_________________________

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS’ ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20/2/08 for three years from 20/2/08 to 20/2/11. Reference Number 2008/024.


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