

## CHILD CITIZENSHIP IN DISASTER RISK AND AFFECTED ENVIRONMENTS

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Children can't always be protected from exposure to unpredictable disaster events and the subsequent disruption that can undermine mental, physical, emotional and social health, often extending into adulthood (Anderson, 2005; Bonanno, Brewin, Kaniasty, & La Greca, 2010; Changaris, 2010; McFarlane & Van Hooff, 2009). It can also interrupt development and learning (Gilligan, 2000; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004). However, many children demonstrate resilience by negotiating the periods of initial distress and family, school and community disruption and then continuing to thrive in these different settings (Anderson, 2005; Boyden, 2003; Hagan, 2005; Peek, 2008).

There is no single agreed definition, theory or intervention framework for child and youth resilience. Extensive research has identified child characteristics and family circumstances associated with high or low resilience, and wider social and environmental influences, as well as opportunities to offset risk factors and promote resilience (Reavley, Bassilios, Ryan, Schlichthorst, & Nicholas, 2015; Shean, 2015; Tollit et al., 2015). Focussing simply on the child response to adversity is too narrow and the creation of supportive environments is required as the mechanism for change in the child experience (Richard F. Catalano, 2004; Shah, 2015; Ungar, 2011). Ungar (Ungar, 2011) argues that:

By decentering the child it becomes much clearer that, when growing up in adversity the locus of change does not reside in either the child or the environment alone, but in the processes by which environments provide resources for use by the child. (p6)

In this chapter resilience is understood as a dynamic interaction between an individual, their social circumstances and their environment over time that determines their capacity to adapt or respond to risk (Davis, 2005; Norris & Stevens, 2007; Price-Robertson & Knight, 2012). This reminds us of the importance of structures to ensure adversity being experienced by children is offset by strong social connections and supportive environments. These are unlikely to be universal in design because some protective factors can be risk factors in other contexts (Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 2007). However, the principle of providing positive environments that are customised to the sociocultural context of the child and their changing life circumstances should underpin intervention (Ungar, 2011), provided existing structural injustices are not ignored in the process (Shah, 2015). Involving children in identification of priority issues and relevant approaches is also an important means of achieving positive outcomes.

“In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to *navigate* their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well being, and their capacity individually and collectively to *negotiate* for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, p. 225).

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (United Nations, 2015) calls for the involvement of children and youth in planning for disaster risk reduction:

Children and youth are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula... (p23)

Engaging children as contributors to decision making is difficult and is not yet standard practice in the emergency management sector. There are, however, relevant policy and practice guidelines and case studies of use of participatory approaches with children from other sectors (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010; Save the Children UK, 2005).

### **REPRESENTATIONS OF CHILDHOOD**

The different ways in which childhood is represented over the centuries and within and across cultures matters because representations shape how we care for, legislate for and look after children and young people. For example, before the Industrial Revolution in the United Kingdom there was a brief period of childhood, followed by a rapid transition to adulthood associated with work. The new and dangerous work in industries led to the abolition of child labour, the introduction of compulsory schooling and for the first time a hiatus between childhood and adulthood now socially constructed as adolescence. These extended representations of childhood and youth lead directly to increased surveillance and reluctance to accept children as citizens.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 1386 (XIV) on 20 November 1989, and has the most signatories of any international treaty. Of the Convention's 54 stated rights, Article 12, 'Children's right to participate in all matters that affect them', and Article 13, 'Children's right to express themselves using appropriate methods', are particularly relevant for research involving children and disasters. This has its origins in a global human rights movement supported by the development of the United Nations in order to work for world peace following the atrocities and genocide of World War II. This was also reflected in the

establishment of research ethics committees to protect the rights of humans and animals in academic research.

An emerging methodological tradition in qualitative research takes a child-centred approach and considers the rights of children to have agency in their own lives (Gibbs, Mutch, O'Connor, & MacDougall, 2013; MacDougall, 2009). The citizen-child approach problematizes and addresses power relationships with children during research and the wider approach critiques the view of children as passive and compliant citizens.

To apply a citizen child approach to disasters, we need to understand what UNCRC says about the roles of adults and the various representations of childhood. Table 1 shows a plain language version of UNCRC written for children and young people.

*Insert Table 1 here*

Inspection of Table 1 shows that adults have significant roles in the lives of children. Item 2 provides a rationale for the supportive environments approach of this chapter, setting out the role adults need to play in setting the conditions for children to grow and develop. Further, Items 1, 4, 6 and 7 underpin the *developing child* representation and acknowledge children's different stages of maturation and competencies, thereby requiring adult oversight while transitioning to self-representation.

According to Item 9, children should be among the first to get help following a disaster, and Item 10 requires children to be protected. These items reflect the *child at risk representation*, which promotes the need to protect children who may be perceived as vulnerable and passive victims.

UNCRC therefore guides approaches to children and disasters by simultaneously making room for adults to nurture children through development and protect them from risk, within an overarching ideal of progressively achieving citizenship. In this way, we can

plan how best to apply to disasters these three representations of childhood: *citizen-child*, *developing child* and *child at risk*.

### **APPLICATIONS IN DISASTER CONTEXTS**

The three representations of childhood can be considered in relation to the three phases in the disaster cycle: commonly referred to as preparedness, response and recovery. The primary consideration during response to a hazard event is protecting the child from the risk of physical or mental harm. The best way to achieve this is to evacuate children before an event takes place. Local government in Australia is required to prepare annual emergency management plans. A 2013 review conducted by Save the Children found very limited consideration of children's needs in local government emergency planning with far greater planning for animals evident than for children (Davie, 2013). The absence of references to children renders them invisible in safety considerations. There was an implicit assumption that children's needs would be addressed by families and schools. However, there were no specific links to emergency plans in child care and educational settings (Davie, 2013). There tended to be a mention of children in generic statements about vulnerable groups which included the elderly and the disabled and very few opportunities for children to contribute to local emergency planning. A planning guide for local government now exists to support the engagement of children and young people in emergency planning, providing best practice examples (Health & Human Services Emergency Management, 2013).

During the recovery period in the days, months and years after the disaster, adults can support children, in developmentally appropriate ways, to contribute to individual, family, school and community rebuilding and recovery. This can enhance a sense of safety and stability through restoration of routine and self efficacy. Following Japan's triple disaster

in 2011, Associate Professor Aiko Sakurai from the International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS), Tohoku University, conducted a Disaster Recovery Mapping Project at Elementary and Junior High Schools that involved children walking around their local areas and mapping the town reconstruction process over time (A., 2016). This fostered school-community interactions that supported child recovery and provided the community with a valued historical record.

Preparedness activities, particularly in the absence of previous disaster experiences, provide opportunities for the citizen-child to learn about living in their environment and build resilience. A pilot study by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) in Victoria, Australia is building the capacity of children to develop skills in disaster preparedness and to act as disaster educators. In a partnership between the CFA, the local primary school and the University of Melbourne, children in the final 3 years of primary school attend the CFA for fortnightly classes to learn about living in their bushfire prone environment, to identify risk, learn about preparedness and response, and then to educate their families, other students in the school, and visiting schools from urban areas, about bushfires. The focus of the study is on building children's knowledge, skills, and sense of efficacy, to promote resilience in a disaster risk area.

Of course the unpredictability of disasters and different roles of children and youth in different societies means that in reality it is rarely this straightforward and opportunities to protect, support and enable children arise at all stages of the disaster preparedness, response and recovery cycle. In this section, we will elaborate on the complexities of working with children in disaster contexts and the need to reflect on representations of children as the *child at risk*, the *developing child* and the *citizen child* in the process. In doing so we will also elaborate upon conceptions of citizenship.

## **CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION**

Westheimer and Kahne discussed three conceptions of the good citizen – personally responsible, participatory and justice-oriented (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Personally responsible citizens focus on individual character traits such as honesty, integrity, self-discipline, respect, courtesy and compassion, assuming a better society if everyone acts responsibly and with self-discipline. Participatory citizens actively participate in school, community, local and national affairs. It is assumed that communication, collaboration and facilitation skills bring collective and creative solutions to societal problems. Justice-oriented citizens go beyond an understanding of rules and laws or the functioning of government to examine how social, political and economic forces advantage or disadvantage members of society.

## **CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION CASE STUDIES**

How adults frame children's engagement in post-disaster activities provides an insight into adult perceptions of children's citizenship possibilities, or what Thorson calls 'citizenship vocabularies' (Thorson, 2012). We now illuminate the nuances of how children are positioned as citizens throughout the disaster sequence by examining the 2010/2011 Canterbury earthquakes in New Zealand. Natural disasters do not only occur in developing countries with limited infrastructure. The Canterbury earthquakes allow us to examine how even an affluent, well-prepared, democratically-governed country can be overwhelmed by a major event and retreat into a command and control mode which limits the engagement of its citizens.

The Canterbury earthquakes were a series of major jolts (four over 6 on the Richter scale accompanied by thousands of aftershocks) between September 2010 and December

2011 (Aydan, Ulusay, Hamada, & Beetham, 2012). Two major quakes caused the most damage. The September 4 2010 earthquake, at 7.2 on the Richter scale, destroyed buildings and infrastructure, but as it was located outside the city of Christchurch and occurred in the early hours of the morning, people were injured but there were no deaths. The February 22 2011 earthquake, in the middle of a working day, located much closer to the city centre, caused further major damage to an already fragile city. Thousands were injured and 185 people lost their lives.

Post-disaster research following the earthquakes revealed a continuum of adult understanding of children's ability to participate in decision-making on child-related matters, such as engagement in post-disaster planning or research (Mutch, 2013; Mutch & Gawith, 2014; O'Connor & Takahashi, 2013). Table 2 places the three conceptions of childhood (the *child at risk*, the *developing child* and the *citizen child*) along a continuum and matches them to Westheimer and Kahne's three conceptions of a citizen, making a conceptual continuum of citizenship from *minimal* to *maximal* (McLaughlin, 1992). This conceptual framework frames the case studies that follow.

*Insert Table 2 here*

To explore these representations of children we examine the experiences of children, particularly at school, in Christchurch. Schools are located in centres of populations and are therefore often directly affected by a disaster. Crucially, they need to deal with the aftermath when affected children return to school. Thus research in schools can provide insights into how children, their families and wider communities are coping. Two of the chapter authors (Mutch and O'Connor) worked extensively in primary schools in Christchurch post-earthquake and these case studies draw on their insights.



In the September earthquake parents were the first responders because children were at home. In February, most children were at school, so principals and teachers were first responders. Schools were closed for some time after both events. They resumed in repaired classrooms, relocated or shared sites, in tents, church halls or family living rooms. We plot how the adults responsible for children framed their ability to participate in disaster response and recovery activities along a continuum of engagement from minimal to maximal. Three case studies illustrate the range of adult representations of children as citizens under the headings of *child-at-risk*, *developing child* and *citizen child*. The first two case studies were part of UNESCO and University of Auckland-funded research in which engaging children in the research was a key aspect. At Hillview<sup>1</sup> School, researchers observed a mainly *child-at risk* approach. Riverside School took a more participatory and *developing child* approach. The third case study was compiled from different accounts of a post-earthquake school closure. Freeville School was furthest along the continuum, engaging *citizen children* in justice-oriented action.

#### The child-at-risk

##### Case study: Hillview School

*Hillview school is on a hill overlooking Christchurch's city centre. As children gathered on the school field immediately after the February earthquake, they reported watching the city shrouded in dust. Several thought an atomic bomb had gone off. In September, children had been safe at home; in February, they watched the city disintegrate in front of their eyes, never knowing if they would see their parents again. This was to be the case for two children at the school and thus Hillview's approach was cautious and protective. While the school principal thought that it would be good for the school to be engaged in the wider project involving Christchurch schools telling their earthquake stories, teachers and parents required*

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<sup>1</sup> Hillview and Riverside are pseudonyms; Freeville is a real name.

*much more convincing. It took time to develop trust. We held meetings to allay concerns by outlining the benefits to children engaging in the processing of traumatic events.*

*The school chose to create a book from 30 interviews; half with children and half with teachers and families. Children's interviews were video-recorded and adults could choose video or audio-recording. Children were interviewed in small groups – with their siblings, classmates or parents. The school arranged the interview location, order and grouping. A teacher remained present while the children were interviewed to give reassurance or to be ready to provide emotional support, if necessary.*

*The interviews took place in the school library and were conducted by two interviewers (Mutch and O'Connor), who took turns to lead the conversations. We were careful, as interviewers, not to ask direct questions that would bring up traumatic memories, so we asked children to reframe their experiences. We asked how they would explain what happens in an earthquake to children who had never experienced one or to imagine they were telling the story of their experiences to their grandchildren in the future. As the children felt more comfortable with us they opened up and talked more about their memories and fears. But they also talked about what they had learned about themselves and their hopes for the future. Children's recall was very vivid. They could remember sights, sounds, colours and smells. Their stories were not all bleak; they recalled moments of courage, of pride and even of humour. There were tears but we worked through these moments gently and in the following days, both children and parents reported how beneficial their participation had been.*

*Interviews were transcribed, edited and returned to participants (and, in the case of children, also to their parents). This step required careful negotiation as some parents wanted to remove or alter children's words to make them less colloquial or more sensitive,*

*especially when they talked about death. Eventually, the text was agreed upon and the book was published.*

The protective child-at-risk approach was very apparent in this school. As researchers, we were carefully scrutinised as we conducted our interviews, in case we upset children. Parents frequently told us how traumatised the children were. We found the children in this school more jumpy and twitchy and prone to tears than at the other schools we worked with and we wondered how much their parents' anxieties contributed to this. Children were often surprised when we asked if they had helped others in their neighbourhood after the earthquakes. This was not something they did or had even thought about. On further probing we found that many had been removed from Christchurch after the earthquakes. Being a higher socio-economic community, many had gone to the family's holiday home or to stay with relatives in other parts of New Zealand or even overseas. Children reported feeling like they had been on holiday when they were away, and when they came back to school they didn't seem to fit in as the children who had remained behind had begun to process their experiences and adjust to the 'new normal'. Another common story was that they didn't discuss the earthquake much at home. Parents tried to protect their children and children reported trying not to talk about it or ask questions so they wouldn't upset their parents. In contrast, one of the families we interviewed who had been through a major trauma reported discussing their concerns and fears regularly and they focused on helping each other each other find ways through the events that followed. These parents said they worried that they had been too open with their children but there was no evidence of any negative impact on the children.

Adults led the Hillview approach and framed children primarily as passive and in need of protection – well beyond the immediate response phase. Adults thought they were doing their best for the children in their care by emphasising the need for control. They did

not, however, use all the three C's of hardiness (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982) – control, commitment and challenge. *Control* means having a plan to get through the ordeal; ...*commitment* is, firstly, to the plan and, secondly, commitment to supporting each other in times of stress; and *challenge* is deliberately framing the ordeal as a challenge that can be a learning experience. Instead, the adults took control, sending children away, closing down discussion and, unintentionally, heightening levels of anxiety.

Children were sent back to school quickly and were out of the way of the recovery process. If they were in school, they could be accounted for and managed appropriately. Children were seen as being in need of protection and any re-traumatising, by revisiting the events, was to be avoided. Of course, there would have been children that were suffering deeply. The Ministry of Education brought in trauma teams to help schools identify the children in most need and other psychosocial agencies and charities were on hand to offer counselling and support. The literature, however, tells us that most children will recover equilibrium in time. Bonanno et al., (p.1) report:

Some survivors recover their psychological equilibrium within a period from several months to one or two years. A sizeable proportion, often more than half of those exposed, experience only transitory distress and maintain a stable trajectory of healthy functioning or resilience. (Bonanno et al., 2010)

We noted that the two most common strategies to help children were returning to routines and distracting children from unhelpful rumination. The Ministry of Education suggested that schools return to regular routines and to teaching the curriculum. Schools also organised fun events for children and families to distract them from the disaster and on-going difficulties. While these are approaches that are supported in the literature (Prinstein, La Greca, Vernberg, & Silverman, 1996) it did not involve emotional processing. Emotional processing is defined as “a diverse set of physical, cognitive and affective actions that lead to absorption of emotional disturbances...” (Prinstein et al., 1996, p.464). Without appropriate

absorption or opportunities to put events into perspective, reminders of the event can interfere with normal functioning resulting in nightmares, distress or listlessness. Activities such as guided conversations, story telling, mobile methods or arts-based activities enable children who are not suffering major trauma to begin to make sense of their experiences and absorb them into their personal histories (Cahill, Beadle, Mitch, Coffey, & Crofts, 2010; Prinstein et al., 1996). Rather than children 'being over the earthquakes' as adults reported, children's accounts revealed they were moving through different phases of understanding and acceptance of what had happened. It is important to for adults to understand children's ways of processing and that recovery is not a linear process. Children might display regressive behaviours as they gain perspective and build these events into their personal histories but giving them appropriate opportunities to express themselves will increase their self-efficacy. Cahill et al., (2010, p.13) remind us that:

While on the one hand, it is important to emphasise the vulnerability of children and adolescents and the requirement for protection and assistance, it is equally important to recognize their ability to form and express opinions, participate in decision-making processes and influence directions.

#### The developing child

Emotional processing is of more benefit when adults engage children more fully in decision-making that concerns them. The schools that took a more participatory-citizen, developing-child approach offered varied and on-going ways for students to process their experiences, moving them from 'my story' to 'our story' as they put the events into a wider context (Gibbs et al., 2013).

#### Case study: Riverside School

*The September 2010 earthquake had a marked effect on the Riverside community, with high levels of liquefaction, slumping and damage. One third of the community lost their homes and the town lost many of its historic buildings. The principal wanted to design a memorial seating area where the school and community could come and contemplate what they had been through. From the beginning, the decision-making was passed over to the students, and, in fact, the project took a slightly different turn once they took control. The children wanted to make something 'out of broken bits' of their homes. We used a blend of discussion, group work and arts-based activities to help students to come up with a design concept. The idea that emerged was a circular mosaic mural that could portray their earthquake journey. As the students were working in groups, one boy drew a local sailing ship. When asked what it represented he said it was 'sailing through a river of emotions' and that became the mosaic's title.*

*The first panel would represent their town in early times, including the indigenous Māori people, who had a major settlement there, followed by the arrival of the European settlers who set up farming and industry. The second panel would portray their town in modern times, prior to the earthquakes, with people going about their daily lives. The third panel would be their town being torn apart by the earthquakes, with collapsed buildings, cars falling into cracks in the road and ambulances taking people to hospital. The fourth would represent their hopes for the future.*

*All children in the school (all five hundred) were to contribute to the mosaic. This required a relationship of goodwill between the research team and the school as we worked through the logistics of designing the panels, turning small pictures into mosaic templates, cutting tiles and cleaning bricks. The school provided an empty classroom to use as workroom and storeroom. We also needed a bulldozer to prepare the ground, special gravel for drainage and concrete to set the mosaic in. The community got to hear of the project and*

*it grew from one for children to one where children and community volunteers worked side-by-side in participatory fashion. Not only did the community donate the goods and services we needed, such as a bob-cat (small bulldozer), but they also gave their time in multiple ways. 'Community service' took on a new meaning. Youths on supervised period detention were sent to clean and lay bricks. The local bank had staff members donate a day each to help children cut and glue the pieces of tile.*

*Riverside's approach was a developing child participatory citizen approach. Adults dealt with matters of logistics, technicalities and safety. Children made the conceptual and artistic decisions. They decided on motifs, colours, shapes and placements. In contrast to the children at Hillview, where the conversations were strained and constrained, the conversations at Riverside showed the children absorbing the earthquake events into their personal narratives more organically. As children worked together, their conversations about school, television programmes or who they 'liked' would be interspersed with memories of the earthquakes as they talked about the images portrayed in the mosaic they were creating. A common pattern of behaviour was to walk around the mosaic before they started working on it and 'talk' to it and point out the parts they liked. In many cases they could identify a piece of crockery from their home or an image that they had drawn months ago as a pencil sketch. When they finished their rostered time, they would say, 'Goodbye mosaic!'*

As post-disaster social relationships are important predictors of coping and resilience (Bonanno et al., 2010; Gordon, 2007; Prinstein et al., 1996), it is important that more of these opportunities are provided. Not only did the mosaic help the children (and adults) of Riverside process the events, but also it enabled them to create a new shared narrative, what Gordon would term 're-bonding' (Gordon, 2007). It also took their focus beyond themselves to their wider community. Doing something for others is another useful trauma recovery strategy (National Association of School Psychologists, 2008) and this

community, through their participatory citizenship approach, helped themselves by helping others.

The city's early attempts to engage children more widely in recovery projects did not take children's views seriously. After an enthusiastic weekend of children making models of their city of the future and writing their thoughts on Post-it notes, the ideas were collated but shelved. This was a dispiriting activity for both children and adults. Any control, commitment or challenge that they could channel their energies into was caught in the power struggle between local and central government.

In 2013, however, one of the Government's anchor projects engaged children in its conception. A competition to design a multi-million dollar children's playground on the site of a former swimming pool attracted input from thousands of children. The winning concept led to the completion several years later of the Margaret Mahy playground, named after a favourite New Zealand children's author and opened to acclaim from children and parents alike. Apart from this one initiative, children are, and have been, largely invisible in wider disaster recovery planning (Cahill et al., 2010; Gibbs et al., 2013; Save the Children, 2006). As Cahill et al., suggest (2010, p.6), "Caught between the perceptions that infants are the most vulnerable and adults are the most capable, there can be a tendency to overlook their needs." A citizen child justice-oriented approach is one way to ensure that their voices are heard and their ideas are valued.

### Critical Citizens

A human rights perspective on the complexities of citizenship assumes that participatory democratic traditions such as the guarantees of the freedoms of the press, of speech, of religion, peaceful assembly, and to vote, work best when exercised in the interests of all citizens. Constructions of citizenship and democracy are being re shaped at a



time of increasingly globalised capital that has reduced the role and nature of the nation state and its citizenry.

Critical citizenship is “a framework for finding strategies to develop awareness amongst individuals and groups to enable them to combat complacency, and go beyond simple obedient cosmopolitan ways of thinking-acting-and-being” (WynneSculley, 2012). Critical pedagogues argue that “If children’s citizenship is to be taken seriously education for and into education must have at its core the development of political literacy among children through active decision making and participation in all aspects of scholarly life. “ (Devine, 2002)(p. 318)

Critical citizenship aims to provide the capacity and opportunity for citizens to challenge the status quo in order to achieve social justice, based on the belief that collective action can raise the consciousness of communities to overthrow oppression. Critical citizens understand that challenging the operation of power structures is central to the maintenance of genuine democracy.

The need and urgency for critical citizenship can be understood more fully when it is juxtaposed against the growth of neo liberalism across much of the world. Neo liberalism is a form of economic Darwinism that promotes privatization, commodification, free trade, and deregulation. In its celebration of the individual, all forms of solidarity are proscribed and “citizens are treated by the political and economic elite as restless children and are invited daily to convert the practice of citizenship into the art of shopping” (Giroux, 2014).

The social construction of childhood and young people has shifted under neo liberalism into what Henry Giroux describes as a war on youth (Giroux, 2004). He suggests that their freedoms and opportunities are increasingly under threat.

Rather than being cherished as a symbol of the future, [youth] are now seen as a threat to be feared and a problem to be contained. Youth now constitute a crisis that has less to do with improving the future than denying it. Consequently their voices and needs are almost completely absent from the debates, policies and legislative practices that are constructed in terms of their needs (p187).

Neoliberalism acts to create young people as consumer citizens rather than critical citizens and restricts and contains participatory democracy to ensure unfettered access to markets and profit. The war on youth makes it increasingly difficult for children and young people to engage politically, with a sense of stake and purpose in the world in which they live. In a disaster zone this ability for young people to be active participants in decision-making becomes even more difficult as government policies regularly diminish the democratic powers of local citizens.

#### Case study: Freeville School

*A neoliberal education agenda imposed the closures of the schools which had served as centres for the recovery in the eastern suburbs. The University of Canterbury's Place in Time's Freeville Project was a collaborative undertaking between Tim Veling and David Cook, involving school students from Freeville School.*

*At the time of the project, there were plans to close Freeville School and integrate classes and staff into two neighbouring schools. The plan then was to demolish Freeville School buildings and facilities, which are situated on land sold to the Ministry of Education by the Free family for the purpose of building an education facility. However, the future for the land is uncertain. The project creators argued that it was important for the local community to join the debate on the land's future ( <http://researcharchive.wintec.ac.nz/3002/>). The Time Freeville project aimed within the ambiguous space to collaborate with remaining students and staff of Freeville School and help them re-imagine and articulate their own*

*vision for the land's future. The project considered how the Freeville School's location might appear many years from now. Students were provided with basic tuition in photography and composition, documenting the school's buildings and playing fields, and enlarging the images and cutting and pasting drawings of how they imagined a future for the site, into their work. These were displayed over two adjacent walls in a local shopping mall as a public work of art. At the end of the project, the school proudly launched their billboard-sized art works. Sally Blundell writes, "the result, collaged over the school-scapes, is a joyous panoply of bouncy castles, shark pits, zombie houses, petting zoos and ice cream shops. It's a bold and optimistic series of panorama, indicative of a vital sense of agency in a school and suburb battered by two decades of economic decline, three years of earthquakes and ongoing bureaucratic zoning and insurance inertia" (Blundell, 2014). The public display was timed to coincide with a local government by-election and candidates from all parties descended on the mall and stopped to take it in. the children had an opportunity to speak directly to policy makers and the future representative of their district in parliament.*

Beyond that, the display was part of a wider project that involved creative and critical responses to the *disastrous* recovery process, rather than a *disaster* recovery process. This positioned children as people who have a right to speak about their visions for the future. Their art sat alongside other disruptive pieces of theatre, music making and visual arts creations that challenged, in its very existence the dominant narrative of neo liberalism and the dismantling of the Freeville and New Brighton communities in favour of global capital.

At a time when decisions about the future of their community had been taken away from them, Freeville Project actively engaged the community in imagining alternatives.

## THE POLITICS OF DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY IN CHRISTCHURCH

Thirty years of neo liberal reforms had created new fault lines of class across New Zealand. Christchurch had separated into two cities; an affluent white middle class and a rich landed upper class, with a poor underclass that lived mainly in the Eastern parts of the city. By 2011, the East was suffering debilitating poverty. High rates of unemployment, domestic violence, and high crime were to be expected markers of a nation that had embraced a particularly virulent form of neoliberalism since the 1980s. These social fault lines were severely tested in the series of ongoing quakes. As Hawkins and Maurer suggest, disasters exacerbate and create further vulnerabilities within communities (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010).

The experience of the earthquake was felt very differently across the city. Although many, regardless of class, suffered from badly damaged homes and significant personal and economic costs, the distinction between the rich and poor became apparent afterward. The rich were able to pack up and go elsewhere, either nationally or internationally, short term or long term. Of course, the poorest rarely had this opportunity. They were there for the duration. As Gould suggests, 'even in developed countries, disasters have a knack of finding the poor and vulnerable' (Gould, 2008)(p 169). The neoliberal shaking and shaping of Christchurch had contributed to the disaster of the earthquake but the class fault lines were to be further deepened by government policy following the disaster.

Naomi Klein defines 'disaster capitalism' as 'orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatments of disasters, as exciting market opportunities' (Klein, 2007)(p 231) She documents how the combination of social disorientation, and the justification of disaster response, created ideal conditions for right-wing economic reform and a reduction in civil rights in New Orleans post Hurricane Katrina. Klein's argument is that there is a growing, worldwide trend to use the disaster to accelerate the undemocratic transfer of public wealth and resources to private hands. Not surprisingly, given New Zealand's deep and long-term commitment to neoliberal policies, the

earthquakes in Christchurch provided a similar opportunity. The great financial crisis had already been used to justify austerity measures and had sharpened the class divide in Christchurch. Sweeping law changes then opened up the region to disaster capitalism, which subsequently has had an even more radical impact on the landscape of Christchurch than the initial quakes. While the public faces of the disaster recovery spoke of 'leaving no one behind' and a united and unified country, in the weeks following the February quake, New Zealand Prime Minister, John Key, met with fifty corporation CEOs to devise a plan for rebuilding Christchurch. Sweeping laws to create the government quango Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) soon followed. The legislation, enacted in great haste, allowed CERA to obtain information from any source; enter and demolish, remove or build land or structures; "require co-operation" between adjoining landowners; and suspend, amend or revoke plans, policies, resource consents, existing use rights or Certificates of Compliance (Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act 2011). The NZ Human Rights Commission has since reported that the legislation demonstrated a fundamental disregard for Cantabrians' right to political participation. (Joint Submission EQ Impacts [EQI] 2013).

For Klein, Christchurch is simply the latest battleground for what she calls frontier capitalism "What we have been living for three decades is frontier capitalism, with the frontier constantly shifting location from crisis to crisis, moving on as soon as the law catches up"(Klein, 2007).

The suspension of democratic process in the Christchurch context saw children positioned alongside much of its adult citizens "as at risk". As adults had little or no agency themselves, it made it even harder for children to have agency. The need to manage the response phase of the disaster is perfectly understandable where the primary focus of government is to ensure the safety of the population. Adults are positioned as helpless, needing government protection. Children are positioned as needing adult protection. A neo

liberal response to Christchurch ensured this phase extended to six years beyond the initial response phase where notions of citizenship, especially for children, became increasingly difficult. The continuing suspension of agency for children and adults allows government policy to rewrite the landscape of a city in its rebuild without the consent or active participation of its citizenry.

The failure of government policy to address the social justice issues facing communities in the Eastern suburbs saw residents moving beyond individual resilience to developing a resistance to government attempts to shape and manage the disaster with minimal local input. The model suggested here is that individual resilience is useful but perhaps resistance to agendas which further dismantle social services and support is the more appropriate and necessary response to recovery. There are clearly times when children need to be protected and kept safe following disaster, but the end goal must be that they are involved in local and democratic resistance to neo liberal agendas which marginalise and disenfranchise communities. The most democratic and appropriate role of children in disaster recovery is as critical citizens engaged and questioning, challenging and resisting.

## **CONCLUSION**

The creation of positive, supportive environments can promote resilience to increase the capacity of children to adapt to or respond to disaster risk. This requires an understanding of how the three representations of childhood shape our efforts to support children. The strategies employed to combine the elements of protecting the child at risk, supporting the developing child, and enabling the citizen child, may vary according to the stage of the disaster cycle. There is emerging recognition of and commitment to a rights-based approach which promotes inclusive child citizenship in disaster risk and affected environments. A citizenship and rights based approach, derived from the UNCRC, also

requires adults to protect children from risk and support their development. This becomes crucial in relation to resilience and disasters, where there will always be a mix of risk-based, developmental and rights-based strategies. By contrast, a singular focus on a child at risk representation is unlikely to set the scene for a rights-based approach-especially one advocating critical citizenship models.

Adult power is critical in the lives of children, so much so that citizen-child aspirations can only be realised when adults also have rights. The political reality is that disasters can result in reduced citizens' rights and can exacerbate existing social injustices. This may require children to join others as critical citizens, not just participating in local disaster preparedness and recovery efforts but challenging and resisting any government and corporate actions which are impacting negatively on their lives.

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**TABLE 1**  
**THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (PLAIN LANGUAGE**  
**VERSION)<sup>2</sup>**

<p>1 All children have the right to what follows, no matter what their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, or where they were born or who they were born to.</p> <p>2 You have the special right to grow up and to develop physically and spiritually in a healthy and normal way, free and with dignity.</p> <p>3 You have a right to a name and to be a member of a country.</p> <p>4 You have a right to special care and protection and to good food, housing and medical services.</p> <p>5 You have the right to special care if handicapped in any way.</p> <p>6 You have the right to love and understanding, preferably from parents and family, but from the government where these cannot help.</p> <p>7 You have the right to go to school for free, to play, and to have an equal chance to develop yourself and to learn to be responsible and useful.</p> <p>8 Your parents have special responsibilities for your education and guidance.</p> <p>9 You have the right always to be among the first to get help.</p> <p>10 You have the right to be protected against cruel acts or exploitation, e.g. you shall not be obliged to do work which hinders your development both physically and mentally.</p> <p>11 You should not work before a minimum age and never when that would hinder your health, and your moral and physical development.</p> <p>12 You should be taught peace, understanding, tolerance and friendship among all people.</p>
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<sup>2</sup> Source: [www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plainchild.asp](http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plainchild.asp).

Table 2: A continuum of citizenship

<b>Conceptions of childhood</b>	<b><i>Child at risk</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable</li> <li>• Needs protecting</li> <li>• Passive</li> <li>• Adults make decisions</li> </ul>	<b><i>Developing child</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining independence</li> <li>• Less adult supervision</li> <li>• Ideas are considered</li> <li>• Joint decision-making</li> </ul>	<b><i>Citizen child</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraged to explore and take risks</li> <li>• Views are taken seriously by adults</li> <li>• Can make own decisions with care</li> </ul>
<b>Conceptions of citizenship</b>	<b><i>Personally responsible</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualistic</li> <li>• Law-abiding</li> <li>• Compliant</li> </ul>	<b><i>Participatory</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looks outward to others</li> <li>• Works collaboratively</li> <li>• Co-operative</li> </ul>	<b><i>Justice-oriented</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sees the bigger picture</li> <li>• Understands ideas of equity, disadvantage and privilege</li> <li>• Critical</li> </ul>
<b>Continuum of citizenship</b>			
<b>Disaster case studies</b>	<b><i>Hillview</i></b>	<b><i>Riverside</i></b>	<b><i>Freeville</i></b>