

## Different approaches to framing research with children and young people

Thinking about approaches to participatory research as a **SPECTRUM** of approaches helps researchers to focus upon the right model for their particular research project. There are a number of different frameworks to help researchers create the right approach for their research.

Most models look at different approaches from lesser to greater empowerment of children and young people. For instance, the Lees et.al. (2017) example on the website, was developed in the field of clinical trials and feasibility studies. It sets out to identify innovative ways of engaging children in studies from taking a leadership role in research to being participants in adult led research. The framework highlights an important point. In some areas of children's lives such as aspects of health care adult experts can legitimately claim greater knowledge and understanding, just as they might over adults' health care. However there remain opportunities to engage children and young people even in these areas of research and doing so can bring benefits to the research process and outcomes.

Lees, A. *et al.* (2017) 'Positioning Children's Voice in Clinical Trials Research: A New Model for Planning, Collaboration, and Reflection', *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(14), pp. 2162–2176. doi: 10.1177/1049732317726760.

## Model of Children's Participation by Mason and Urquhart (2001)

	Adult	Children's Rights	Children's Movement
<b>Children's position in relation to the research approach</b>	Research 'on' children; children as objects / subjects of research	Research 'with' children; children as co-researchers and collaborative participants	Child-led research; children as the initiators of research; children engaged in all research stages
<b>Objectives of research</b>	To care for children's best interests	To provide children with the opportunity to have a voice in matters that affect them	To enable children to highlight matters which are important to them; to set the research agenda.
<b>Children viewed as</b>	Passive, incompetent, developmentally incomplete 'becomings'	Actors, competent, 'beings', oppressed	Actors, competent, human beings
<b>Locus of power</b>	Adults through governance and 'best interests', asymmetrical	Questions the generational order, symmetrical	Children empowered
<b>Method of decision making</b>	Adults structure procedures	Negotiation between stakeholders	Children dominated
<b>Knowledge</b>	Adult authority	Opportunity for children to shape and contribute	Children experts on own lives, recognises and challenges adults' power over children
<b>Professionals</b>	Superiority of expertise used for empowering	Facilitate through alliances	Provide resources
<b>Children's voices</b>	Filtered	Reflexivity by adults and children facilitates children's voices being heard	Challenge and unsettle adults
<b>Increasing empowerment of children and young people in research</b>  <i>Adapted from Mason and Urquhart's (2001) Models of children's participation</i>			

Mason, J. and Urquhart, R. (2001) 'Developing a model for participation by children in research on decision making', *Children Australia*, 26(4), pp. 16–21.

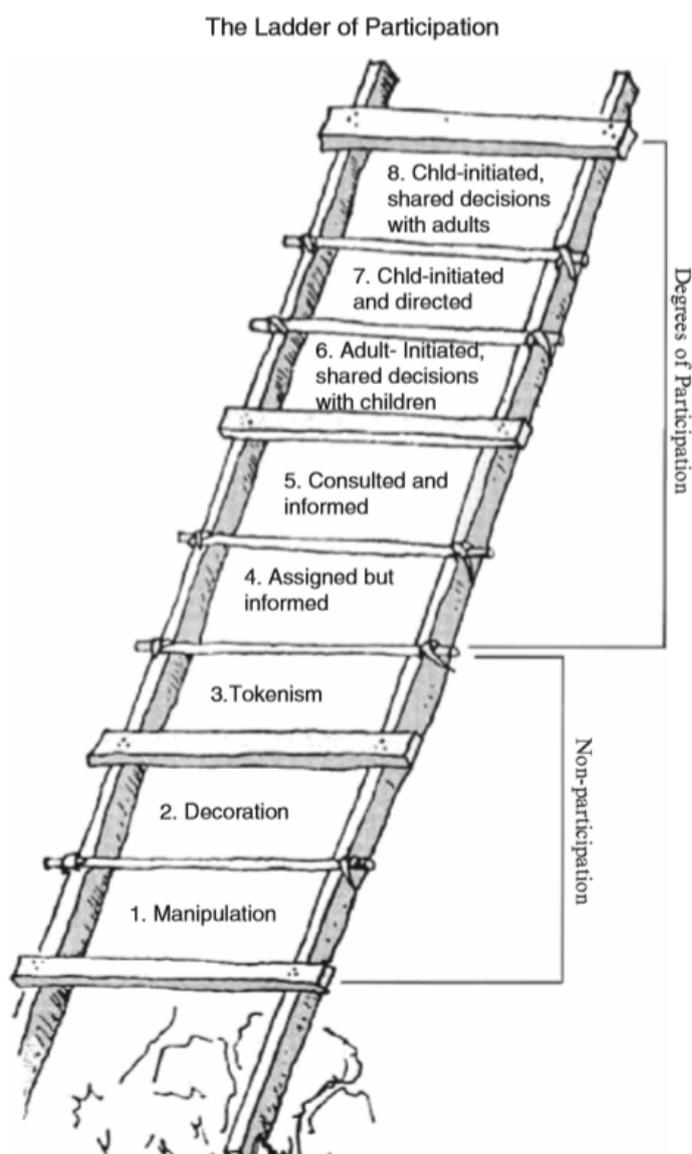
**'Adult' models of research** are often used by researchers from agencies providing services for children and young people. It reflects a view of children as not yet fully formed beings whose best interests have to be cared for by adults. This can result in adults making all research decisions from a position that adults have better knowledge than the children they are researching. As the research professional adults decide upon the agency children and young people have to influence the way research is conducted and as a result children's voices can often be filtered and reported by adults rather than children and young people themselves.

**'Children's Rights' models** are also often used by researchers from agencies providing services for children and young people. However, this model understands children to be competent in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Furthermore, they characterise children and their views as being generally oppressed placing a responsibility upon researchers to redress the power imbalance and enable children's voices to be heard by empowering them to shape research methods.

**Children's Movement models** of research go further in recognising the rights of children to lead their own research. Adults have responsibility to enable children and young people, often with training, to choose research topics and the way they carry out the research identify and carry out their own research.

## Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation

Hart's Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992) provides an uncomfortable reminder that even if unintentional, 'manipulating' children and young people in research and 'tokenistic' approaches are actually NON-participatory.

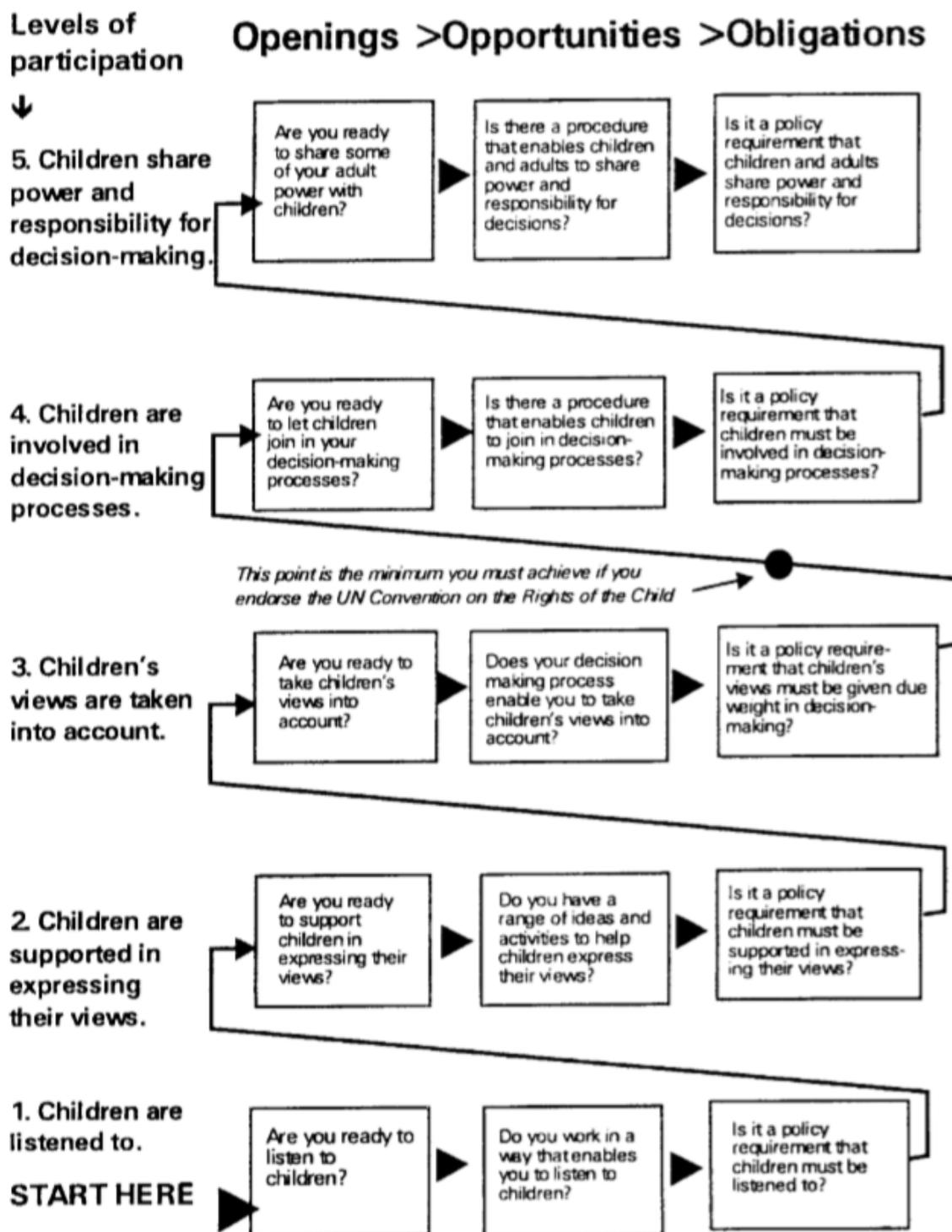


**Figure 2.1** Eight levels of young people's participation in projects (the ladder metaphor is borrowed from the well-known essay on adult participation by Arnstein (1969), the categories are new) (Hart 1992:8.)

Hart, R. A. (1992) Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship. UNICEF.

## Shier's (2001) Pathways to Participation

Shier's Pathways to Participation (2001) meanwhile demonstrates clear and simple steps along a journey from preparing to listen to children and young people to establishing organisational policies for shared power and responsibility over decision making.



Shier, H. (2001) 'Pathways to participation: Openings, opportunities and obligations', *Children and Society*, 15(2), pp. 107-117. doi: 10.1002/chi.6