Self-Explaining Roads and Children’s Perceptions of Neighbourhood and Road Safety

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Children’s Voices

- “Undertaking research with children and not ‘on children’” (Mitchell, Kearns, & Collins, 2007)
- “Their understanding of the world cannot be accurately filtered through the adult lens” (Loebach & Gilliland, 2010)
- To put children and young people first (Auckland Plan, 2011)
- “Both children and adults should be involved in policy making” (Chadborn et al, 2013)
- From protection to participation (Ross, 2007)

Note: the photos of children included in this presentation are not of the participants involved in the study.
Self-Explaining Roads and Pte England

• “The use of road designs that evoke correct [or desired] expectations and driving behaviours from road users.”
  (Charlton et al. 2010, p.1989)

• Average speed on local roads reduced to 30km/h
• Reduced rates of traffic crashes
• Increased pedestrians counts
Research Aims

How has a self-explaining roads intervention affected children’s perceptions of their neighbourhood environment and their experiences as pedestrians?
Methods: Participants and Ethics

- Approaching Pt England School
  - Negotiating a research project

- Ethics
  - Research with children
  - Consent

- Participants
  - Aged 10-13
  - N=16
Methods: Focus Group

- Appropriate method for children of this age group
- Set in classroom environment

- Four themes
  - Perceptions of neighbourhood safety and danger
  - SERs and neighbourhood safety
  - Walking, cycling and playing
  - Parents’ perceptions
Class Project

- Purpose: to feed into the focus group discussion
- “Pt England Investigates”
- Class instructions
- Observation
Results: Safety and Danger

• Happiness, respect for one another, trust
• “Less parties”
• When kids are safe
• “Less speeding cars”
• “Less traffic”
• Driving on the correct side of the road
**Results: SERs and Neighbourhoods**

- **Traffic islands**
  - “A place to play”
  - Slows cars down

- Creates traffic vs reduces traffic
- Makes crossing the road easier, but can reduce driver’s visibility of children
- On-street parking
Results: Walk, Cycle and Play

- Crossing roads
- Dodging islands
- Playing rugby
- Less traffic
Results: Parents’ Perceptions

- Annoyed
  - Slows them down; time consuming
  - Less parking
- Like them
  - Makes it easier for their children to cross the streets

Awareness of different perspectives
Key Findings

• Self-explaining roads make it easier for children to cross roads, and therefore increase road safety for pedestrians.
• Self-explaining roads increase a sense of safety by reducing traffic and vehicle speeds.
• Children have different priorities from their parents (and from other age groups)
Strengths and Limitations

- Filled a gap in the literature – children’s voices
- Engagement with school – win-win
- Appropriate participant selection
- Small number of participants and one focus group
- Would have been good to use class project data
Applications

- Future Streets Research
- Auckland Transport
  - Engagement with school
Future Research

• Learning from our engagement with the school, and the development of a class project where children become the researchers.

• Opportunities to use photovoice and other creative methods to answer the same, or similar research questions.
Thank You
References

• Auckland Plan 2011


• Mackie, H., Charlton, S., Baas, P., & Villasenor, P. (2013). Road user behaviour changes following a self-explaining roads intervention. Accident Analysis & Prevention, 50, 742-750.
