

Encouraging Cultural Diversity and Sense of Community in Aotearoa New Zealand: Community Participation Processes in Public Open Space Planning

Yiwen CUI, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Morten GJERDE, Norwegian University of Science & Technology, Norway

Bruno MARQUES, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Abstract

In the island nation of Aotearoa New Zealand, the history of migration and increased globalisation is exerting pressure on existing social and cultural frameworks and creating challenges and opportunities for how public open space can be created and used. This pressure is influencing Māori, the Indigenous people of New Zealand, through a combination of cultural beliefs and values, with a diverse set of contemporary cultural practices and through interactions with a non-Māori world. The challenges are from the progressively widespread nature of migrants who have multiple national backgrounds and also consider themselves as both members of their country of origin and New Zealand society. To accommodate this increasing cultural diversity, a psychological sense of community provides a tool for understanding community and community change, while participatory planning can provide opportunities to integrate public perspectives into these processes. Public open spaces have the potential to be socially sustainable and promote values of cultural diversity. This research aims to understand whether taking part in the community participation processes for public open space planning and design can encourage a sense of community amongst the major ethnic groups in New Zealand, including New Zealand European, Māori, Chinese and Pasifika. It does that by adopting the lens of the Sense of Community Index based on the theory presented by McMillan and Chavis. Results suggest that participatory planning allows the integration of public perspectives into the planning process, fostering the communities' sense of place while creating places that promote cultural diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Keywords

Sense of Community, Participatory Planning, Public Open Space, Cultural Diversity

1. Introduction

In the island nation of Aotearoa New Zealand, there have been several waves of migration, beginning with Māori, who arrived from the Polynesian islands 1000 years ago. The next stage of migration started in the 1840s, following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between Māori and the British Crown. These migrants, whom the Māori referred to as Pākehā, were mainly from the British Isles. In the 1860s, discoveries in the Otago goldfields attracted Chinese immigrants who established themselves as gold miners and traders. From 1910 onward, people from the Pacific Islands began to migrate to New Zealand (Thompson, 2000).

With this history of colonisation and increased globalisation, Indigenous Māori have witnessed a decline in the quality of natural ecosystems, which has led to significant challenges for their way of life (Harmsworth and Awatere, 2013). For instance, Māori well-being is influenced by a combination of cultural beliefs and values, with a diverse set of contemporary cultural practices and by interactions with a non-Māori world, which is primarily based on western values. Moreover, this reality is exerting pressure on existing social and cultural frameworks. These challenges are from the progressively widespread nature of migrants with multiple national backgrounds who consider themselves both members of their country of origin and of New Zealand society (Velden, 2010). On the other hand, immigrant adaptation can be construed as a process of community-making that involves the negotiation and the integration of cultures from the original context to a new context and the development of connections with the new country (Sonn, 2002). New Zealand's metropolitan areas are becoming more culturally diverse as people from Europe, Asia, and the Pacific islands are migrating to New Zealand.

In the 21st century, we are facing new threats to public open space - not of disuse, but of patterns of design and management that exclude some people and serve to reduce cultural diversity. Such exclusion can reduce the vitality and vibrancy of the space or reorganise it in a way that only one kind of person or ethnic group feels welcomed (Low, Taplin and Scheld, 2005b).

1.1. Gap and Opportunity

To deal with the increasing cultural diversity within cities from migration, a psychological sense of community provides a valuable tool for understanding community and community change, including immigration. In addition, public open spaces and their related policy and design approaches present an opportunity to help to create places that are socially sustainable and promote the values of cultural diversity. Public spaces are defined as social locations, such as streets, parks and local neighbourhoods, and are spaces where individuals or groups encounter and interact with one another. It is also an element of the built environment that may foster a sense of community by facilitating chance encounters between neighbours (Talen, 2000; Low, Taplin and Scheld, 2005a). As noted by Gehl, people rely on public open spaces for social interaction and access and connection to the surrounding communities (Gehl, 2011). Participatory planning and design provides a process for people to become actively involved, often by disseminating information to individuals or small groups who may have a vested interest or to the public more widely (Smith, 1973). Creative participatory planning, when conducted around the development of public open spaces, can contribute to the place-making process, helping to fulfil the requirements of both the users and the space (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014). Society should not only acknowledge and maintain cultural differences but also work effectively to incorporate minority groups into cultural activities, dialogues and public spaces.

In the above situations, exploring how people from different ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand can be fully integrated into the public open space is critical. Based on the hypothesis that a sense of community appears to be strongly associated with the presence of high-quality public open spaces in local neighbourhoods (Francis *et al.*, 2012) and the need for collaboration with and inclusion of Indigenous communities in participatory planning processes (Low, Taplin and Scheld, 2005a), it is essential to develop a participatory planning process that can bring people from different ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand and public open spaces consistently closer to each other.

In this context, the current study examines how community participation in the planning process engages community members with different ethnic groups and how this help to foster a sense of place and community. The activity of community participation is based on the principle that the environment works better if citizens are active and involved in its creation and management instead of being treated as passive consumers (Sanoff, 2000). The study seeks to operationalise community participation processes

within the communities that are home to people with different ethnic heritage. The research examines whether participation in the planning and/or design processes can encourage people-space engagement and usage of public open spaces and ultimately enhance the sense of place for major ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand (Figure 1).

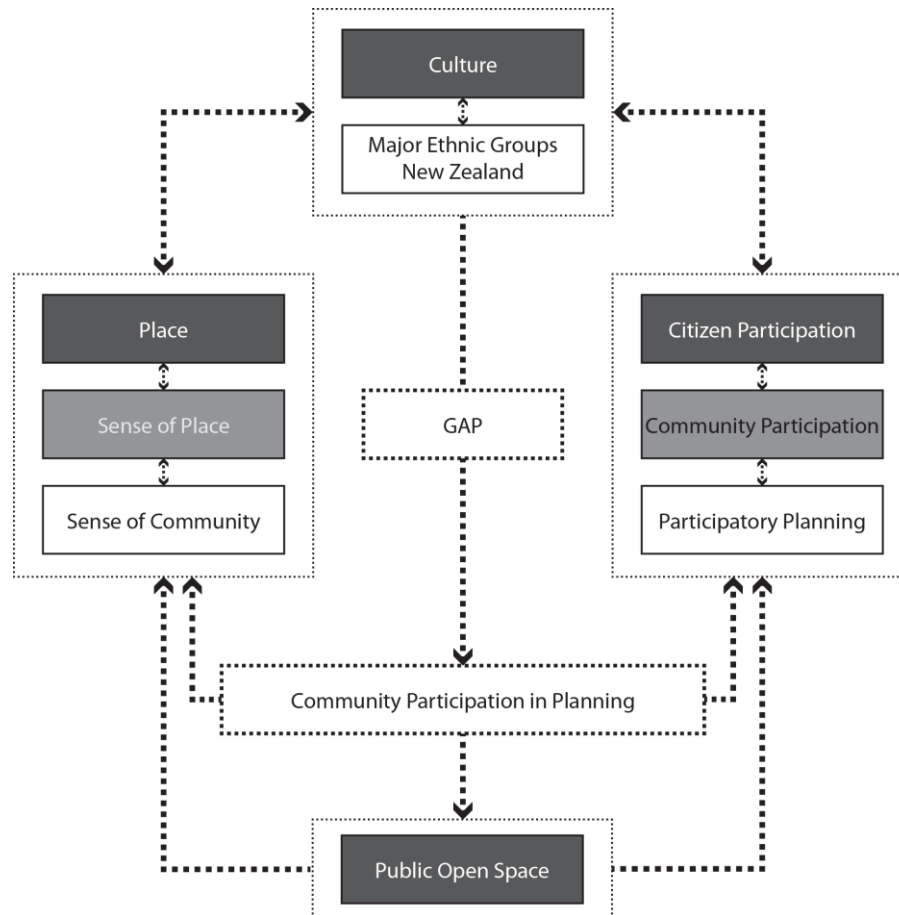


Figure 1 Gap and opportunity

2. Literature

2.1. Sense of Community and Participatory Planning Theories

From a sociological viewpoint, place is a unique spot in the universe; its physicality with people and investment of meaning and value makes a place meaningful (Gieryn, 2000). Lynch also mentions that place is an environment that can provide meanings and associations for clustering and organisation. Such a meaning of place enhances every human activity and encourages the deposit of a memory trace (Lynch, 1960). Then, a good relationship is created and developed through long-time connections between a person and place in a particular locality, which described as sense of place (Lynch, 1990).

In 1974, psychologist Seymour Sarason first introduced the concept of a psychological sense of community as *“the sense that one was part of a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships and is one of the major bases for self-definition”* (Sarason, 1974, p. 13). Building on this, McMillan and Chavis’ definition of a sense of community is the most influential and the starting point for the research on the psychological sense of community. They defined the sense of community as a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a

shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to being together (McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

In 1969, Arnstein conceived that *"citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power and citizens can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society"* (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). Citizen participation is not just for making the agreement, but about engaging people in meaningful interactions and purposive social lives (Sanoff, 2021).

Community has been a never-fading theme in planning theory and practice (Hou and Kinoshita, 2007). Its connection to planning dates to the development of regional planning theories at the turning point of the 20th century, when it is treated as an essential planning unit focusing mainly on decentralisation (Hall, 2014). Community participation in planning is centred on the principle that the community improves when its members are actively involved into the participation process of planning, rather than just being treated as the unrelated inhabitants living there (Sanoff, 2006).

2.2. Major Ethnic Groups in New Zealand

The four major ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand are considered in this research, including New Zealand European, Māori, Chinese and Pasifika (Statistics New Zealand, 2019). Each of them has a specific background and perspective.

Around 1300 AD, Māori as Polynesian settlers found their way from their native islands to the islands of Aotearoa. As the settlers set foot on the land, they developed their distinctive Māori culture and identity for more than 800 years, where the land represents its people and a strong sense of connectedness to place has allowed Māori to thrive in the rich endemic environment (Mein Smith, 2012; Marques, Grabasch and McIntosh, 2018). The traditional Māori worldview acknowledges a natural order to the universe or a balance and that when part of this system shifts, the entire system is out of balance. This world view embedded with the diversities of life through the connections with all living things as dependent on each other and Māori seek to understand the whole system (Harmsworth and Awatere, 2013).

For New Zealand Europeans, the decisive moment for a remarkable change was in 1840, when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, extending legal rights as citizens to British migrants, which also started the immigration from Europe for the next century and beyond (King, 2003). Western philosophy begins with immense faith in the human capacity to know everything. In traditional western philosophy, the relationship between man and nature seems more linear and generally characterised by man being influenced by nature, reacting to nature, and then finding ways to tame elements of nature through technology and policy. This places humans outside natural constraints and empowers them to solve problems (Chen and Wu, 2009).

As for Chinese, in 1865, the first record of Chinese immigrants to New Zealand was of a small group of gold miners from Canton (Chui, 2008). Historically, the community in China was based on a patrilineal kinship network, where extended family lived proximately within a geographic area and cared for each other in times of need. Then, before 1978, China's urban residents lived in public housing provided by their workplaces. A sense of community is rooted in traditional Chinese collectivistic values with interpersonal harmony, social ties and kinship in the workplace community. Finally, housing reform launched nationwide after 1978 transformed the welfare-oriented housing system into a market-oriented system. Instead, a sense of community must be nurtured and collective efficacy needs to be instilled so that people will want to participate to collectively address their community needs and problems (Gaubatz, 2008).

Concerning Pasifika, they left their homelands in search of a place where they hoped to find wellbeing, safety, acceptance by others, and a sense of belonging. The migration of people from the Pacific islands to Aotearoa New Zealand, and vice versa, continues (Manuela and Sibley, 2014). From the perspective of Pasifika, aspects of identity and wellbeing are generally not viewed separately but as integral parts of the overall self, which is viewed holistically, with various related components intertwined in a reciprocal relationship (Manuela and Sibley, 2014). In addition, healthy social connections are vital to Pasifika's wellbeing and a sense of purpose. The relational spaces between Pacific peoples are essential for their sense of belonging in their Pasifika communities. It is the space in which NZ-born Pasifika form their cultural identities and find ways to feel accepted in their wider Pasifika communities (Mila, 2012).

In summary, community participation for public open space planning can provide opportunities for potential interactions in decision making process so as to help stimulate sense of community. More importantly, these four New Zealand ethnic groups represent a diversity of community interests and needs, which participatory processes can respond to and draw out for representation in public space planning and design. This research grapples with the issue of how this can best be achieved in the context of this diverse cultural makeup in Aotearoa New Zealand.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

An online survey, written to incorporate the Sense of Community Index, was conducted through the Qualtrics online platform and distributed intermittently in New Zealand via web-based channels during a nine-month period in 2020-21. A snowball sampling method was utilised, leading to 172 responses. When removing incomplete and invalid responses, we were left with 145 eligible responses to analyse.

3.2. Measures

Sense of community among local residents was examined and measured using the Sense of Community Index-2 (SCI-2). The SCI-2 is the most frequently used quantitative measure of a sense of community in the social sciences, which is based on the theory of sense of community presented by McMillan and Chavis that it was a perception with four elements: sense of membership, influence, fulfilment of needs, and a shared emotional connection (McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

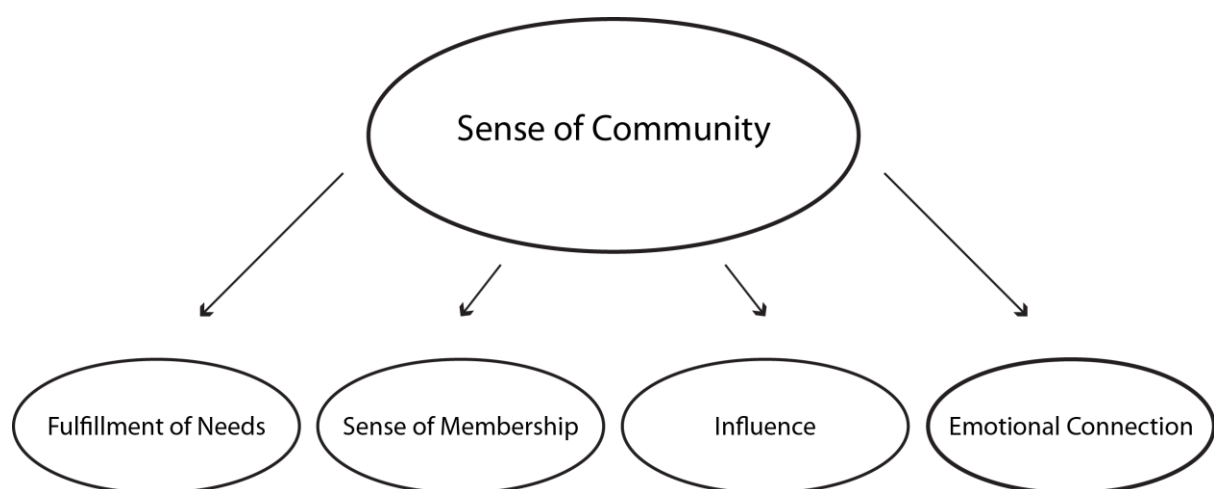


Figure 2 Sense of community four-factor model

This 24-item instrument comprised four dimensions, including fulfilment of needs, sense of membership, influence, and emotional connection, with 6 items in each dimension (Figure 2). All questions were made

in reference to the participants' own neighbourhoods. Participants gave their responses on a 4-point Likert scale, from 1 - strongly disagree to 4 - strongly agree (Chavis, Lee and Acosta, 2008).

3.3. Analysis Procedure

For this survey, the data were coded and analysed by using IBM SPSS Statistics 28.

Measurements		Data Analysis Methods
<i>Sense of Community Index</i>	<i>Reliability Analysis</i>	Cronbach's Alpha
<i>Sample Description (Age, Gender, Educational Background, Ethnicity)</i>		Descriptive Analysis
<i>Sense of Community Index</i>	1) <i>Comparison of Means</i>	Multifactor ANOVA
	2) <i>Comparison of Means</i>	Descriptive Analysis
	3) <i>Comparison of Means</i>	Independent Sample T Test

Table 1 Measurements and analysis methods

The first step was to check the reliability of the sample in a Cronbach's Alpha test. After preparing a descriptive analysis of demography and community participation conditions, multiple detailed comparisons of means of sense of community index were carried out for the targeting ethnic groups. Finally, the analysis and discussion revolved around the key findings from the collected data, which is also relevant and foreshadows future research (Table 1).

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha value for SCI-2 in relation to its elements are listed in Table 2.

Reliability	Cronbach's α	
	Number of elements	Cronbach Alpha values
<i>Fulfilment of Needs</i>	6	.911
<i>Sense of Membership</i>	6	.898
<i>Influence</i>	6	.895
<i>Shared Emotional Connection</i>	6	.904

Table 2 Reliability values for SCI-2

From the reliability value as Cronbach's Alpha shown in Table 2, the value for all element and variables in this sample are excellent, ranging from .895 to .911. This indicates that, for the sample of subjects in this survey, the data are highly acceptable for future analysis.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The demographic makeup of the sample, including gender, age, educational background and ethnicity, can be seen in table 3. In the present study, the critical area of interest is ethnicity.

For ethnicity, among all participants in this sample, 85 were identified as New Zealand European, which represented 58.6% of the whole sample, 17 were identified as Māori, which took 11.7% of the entire sample, 21 were Chinese, which took 14.5%, 9 were Pasifika, which took 6.2%, and 13 were identified as others which took about 9% (Table 3). Moreover, this research mainly focuses on the major ethnic groups and does not address these other ethnicities in detail through interpretation and analysis. For each ethnic group, participants in the sample are further divided into two groups: people who participated in a participatory planning process and those who did not (Table 3).

Demographics	N=145		
	Whether or not	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Ethnicity			
NZ European	Took part in	41	58.6%
	Not took part in	44	
Māori	Took part in	4	11.7%
	Not took part in	13	
Chinese	Took part in	9	14.5%
	Not took part in	12	
Pasifika	Took part in	4	6.2%
	Not took part in	5	
Others	Took part in	3	9.0%
	Not took part in	10	
Gender			
Male		69	47.6%
Female		73	50.3%
Others		3	2.1%
Age			
18-25		16	11%
26-35		20	13.8%
36-45		28	19.3%
46-55		25	17.2%
56-65		34	23.4%
Over 65		22	15.2%
Education			
Primary		2	1.4%
Secondary		17	11.7%
Professional		77	53.1%
Masters or Higher		49	33.8%
Whether or not			
Took part in		61	42.1%
Not took part in		84	57.9%

Table 3 Demographic distribution of the sample

4.3. Multifactor ANOVA Analysis

The multifactor ANOVA analysis has been applied to the mean comparison of the subjects' sense of community index scores. The sense of community index is the outcome that can be measured. Whether or not a person has taken part in planning of a local open space, their ethnicity, age, gender and education are the five categorical variables, or independent variables in this multifactor ANOVA test.

Moreover, this multifactor ANOVA test is adopted to find out which independent variable mentioned above has a statistically significant impact on the level of the sense of community. A p value of less than .05 was required for significance.

Multifactor ANOVA Analysis					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(p)
Whether or not participated	2795.626	1	2795.626	28.389	<.001
Ethnicity	200.949	4	50.237	.510	.729
Gender	341.159	3	113.720	1.155	.337
Age	335.563	5	67.113	.682	.640
Educational Background	237.627	3	79.209	.804	.498

Dependent Variable: Sense of Community Index

Table 4 Multifactor ANOVA analysis for SCI-2

As shown in table 4, for all independent variables except “whether or not participated”, p values are considerably higher than .05, being in the range of .337 to .729. This means that there is a non-statistically significant trend on sense of community index. It implies that compared to all other variables which was proved to be of nonstatistical significance, the variable of whether or not a person took part in an open space planning process has a statistically significant effect on the person’s sense of community. Furthermore, this result from the ANOVA test helps us narrow down the range of independent variables and focus on comparisons inside this variable in the next stages of analysis.

4.4. General Comparison of Means

The independent variable of “whether or not participated” is the focus for the next stage of analysis. As this research is focused on the four major ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand, comparisons of the scores (mean) for sense of community and its four elements are conducted in relation to the respondent’s ethnicity (Table 5).

Ethnicity		Means				
		Needs	Membership	Influence	Connection	SOC Index
NZ European	Took Part in	16.10	15.39	15.76	16.68	63.93
	Not Took Part in	11.89	10.75	10.91	12.02	45.57
Māori	Took Part in	15.50	15.75	15.75	15.25	62.25
	Not Took Part in	12.31	12.00	11.85	12.08	48.24
Chinese	Took Part in	15.44	15.11	15.78	17.11	63.44
	Not Took Part in	12.17	10.08	10.08	11.33	43.67
Pasifika	Took Part in	16.50	14.25	16.75	15.75	63.25
	Not Took Part in	11.60	11.20	10.80	10.80	44.40

Table 5 Means of sense of community and its four elements by ethnicity

As shown in table 5, no matter which ethnic group people belonged to, the mean scores for the sense of community index and for each of the four separate elements are all higher for people who participated in community open space planning processes than the scores of those who did not participate.

On the other hand, merely relying on this simple and basic comparison of means is not convincing enough to help demonstrate the relationship between “whether or not participated” and their ethnicity towards the sense of community index. An independent sample T test is necessary to be adopted and utilised for the following part to help analyse this relationship.

4.5. Independent Sample T Test Analysis

For this test, the test variables are the scores (mean) of sense of community index. Moreover, for each ethnic group, samples are divided into two groups: people who took part in the participatory planning process and those who did not, which will be the group variables for this test. Therefore, this independent sample T test is used as another statistical method to help examine and compare whether or not there is a significant difference (at the significance level of p less than .05) in the mean sense of community index scores between people who took part in and those who did not.

Independent Sample T Test							
N=145	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
<i>NZEU</i>	.304	.583	8.971	83	<.001	18.359	2.046
<i>Māori</i>	.003	.958	4.190	15	<.001	14.942	3.566
<i>Chinese</i>	.448	.511	6.580	19	<.001	19.778	3.006
<i>Pasifika</i>	.888	.377	11.762	7	<.001	18.850	1.603
<i>All Groups</i>	.307	.581	13.056	143	<.001	18.644	1.428

Table 6 Independent sample T test by ethnicity

As table 6 shows, it is found that for SCI by ethnicity, people who took part in are significantly higher than people who did not with all Sig. 2-tailed of less than .05. In addition, for the separate ethnic groups and all groups together, there is a significant difference in the mean scores for SOC between people who took part in and did not. This difference is further translated as people who participated in the participation process have a higher sense of community than those who did not.

This independent sample T test examines the efficacy of community participation on sense of community index scores by analysing the differences in the separate ethnic groups and the differences in the whole sample targeting people who took part in and those who did not.

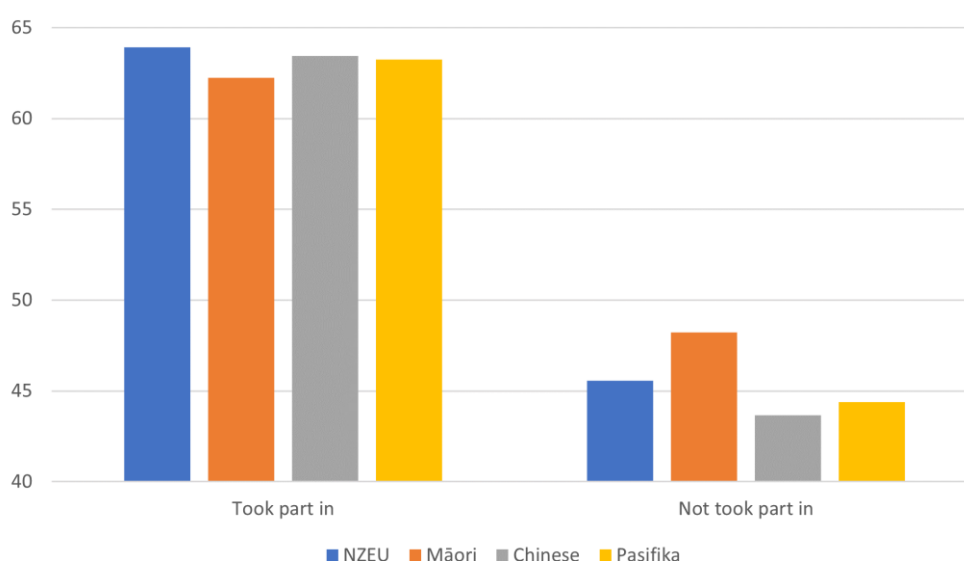


Figure 3 Between-Group comparisons of mean SCI scores

The data and analysis from the independent sample T test results mentioned in this section suggest that participation in the design and planning process for a local open space had a significant effect and increased sense of community, no matter which ethnic group people belonged to (Figure 3). The result also supports the hypothesis in this research.

5. Discussion

This study investigates the sense of community index scores for four New Zealand ethnic groups concerning their participation in community planning of public open spaces. The key findings from this research are summarised below with discussions of each.

In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, the analysis above provides strong evidence that people's sense of community is significantly higher for those who participated in the participatory planning process of community public open spaces, than for those who did not participate in it. It is consistent with the literature based on other contexts; that the residents of the focused communities developed with significant participatory planning have a stronger sense of community, which is attributed to the participatory planning process (Valle, 2008). Similarly, it is consistent with the previous finding that involvement in more neighbouring activities (comprised of local residents' associations, community action groups and community planning) was significantly and positively associated with sense of community (Francis *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, aligned with the previous study findings, each ethnic group of people has unique histories and world views. Understandably, these differences affect their sense of community and lead to differences in the level of sense of community amongst different ethnic groups (Kenyon and Carter, 2011).

The findings from the first phase of research confirm the importance and contribution of participatory planning processes in the formation of positive sense of community amongst the four ethnic groups of interest. Moreover, there will be a challenge for planners and community leaders to find ways to include as many people as possible during these community participation processes without making them inefficient. For instance, from the demographic statistics in table 3, for the targeting four ethnic groups, the number of community members who have participated in community open space planning are all relatively lower than those who have not participated. At least based on the data collected in this research, these statistics points out the reality of insufficient numbers of community participation for the finished projects. The possible contributing factor would be the low effectiveness of recruitment or participation processes, leading the potential participants to be reluctant to participate. On the other hand, this provides the platform and opportunity for this research to be extended into a second phase, where the intention is to explore and discover a series of community participation methods with each of the four ethnic groups, aiming to evaluate their effectiveness.

6. Conclusion

This research supports the notion that cultivating a deeper connection to community through participatory planning processes is a fundamental approach to encouraging a higher sense of community with different ethnic groups. High-quality participatory planning in local neighbourhoods is vital for enhancing the sense of community in different ethnic groups. Regarding this importance and the encouraging effect of a sense of community through participatory planning process, future focus groups could be utilised to explore and discover the exact implementation strategies of participation processes for those different ethnic groups to strengthen their sense of community.

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