

**Children's participation and participating children  
- factors influencing attendance to child societies,  
and justifications for children's participation in Sri  
Lanka**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The aim of the research was to find the justifications for children's participation used by children and workers at World Vision Finland's programs in Sri Lanka, the childhood images of the justifications and the factors influencing children's attendance to children's clubs.

Ten children and ten adults were interviewed in 2015. From the data, 14 justifications for participation were found through phenomenographic data analysis. These were divided into four head categories. Data based content analysis resulted in 13 factors influencing children's attendance. These were divided into six head categories. The theoretical framework for participation justifications and childhood images consisted of participation in development cooperation, children's participation and conceptualizations on childhood. Participation was mainly justified through benefits for children, society and various topics instead of being a right or a way to gain rights. Adult's images of children varied from children being vulnerable and of lower status compared to adults to children's being or becoming equal with adults. Children valued unity, relationships and collaboration with adults, and viewed themselves as competent and usually as equal with adults. Children were commonly portrayed as competent, but the type of competence varied from physically to mentally competent.

Factors influencing children's attendance to clubs were interpreted using the Personal Investment theory. Involvement was mostly affected by potential extrinsic gains or losses, valuation of the clubs and the social and concrete availability of those. Many of the influencing factors were interlinked. People other than the child had surprisingly strong impact for children's attendance as well as in justifications for participation.

Key words: Children's participation, justifications, factors influencing attendance, sociology of childhood

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

From 1990's onwards participation of the people targeted by development actions has been considered as one of the most important factors of ensuring the success of development cooperation (Cornwall 2006, 62-63). Despite this and the formation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 it seems that children's role and rights as participators have not received a similar status than those of adults. In addition to being a right of every child, children's participation is considered to offer multiple benefits for the children themselves as well as to their communities (Sinclair 2000, 2). Children's participation is believed to benefit children at present as well as the future communities. Therefore, making sure that children are given opportunities to learn about their right to participate, that they are given opportunities to participate and that they practice participation is very important. To be able to understand and to evaluate participation it is also important to know why people participate (Mohan 2008, 135).

Knowing the kinds of perceptions people have on participation is important since what people think about participation guides how they act. In this study I approach the theme of children's participation from two points of view: what affects children's attendance to child societies and what are the justifications for children's participation. The research was done with a development organization, World Vision Finland, in two World Vision Finland supported programs in Sri Lanka. The research questions of this study were mainly planned together with World Vision Finland so that they would benefit World Vision's work in supporting children's participation in Sri Lanka.

## 2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter I introduce four different theoretical discussions relevant for understanding the phenomenon of children's participation. The first part of this chapter is dedicated to discussions on the different forms and the development of "participation" in development cooperation after which I focus on the idea of children's participation particularly. In the third section I introduce different conceptions that exist about children and childhood and the chapter will finish with the Personal Investment theory, a model explaining action-decisions.

### 2.1. Participation in development cooperation

Since the 1990's when participation came to be increasingly viewed as the right of people, getting the beneficiaries of development cooperation to participate has become an important part of development cooperation. Both before and after its becoming mainstreamed in development cooperation, participation has been used to refer to several different types of action. (Cornwall 2006, 62-63 & Hickey & Mohan 2004, 9.) Gaventa and Valderrama (1999, 1-2) suggest that within development cooperation, participation can be divided into four different concepts according to how it has been used and understood. They state that participation can be divided into social and project participation, political participation, citizenship participation which is the combination of the former two, and to participatory methods that are used within the different concepts of participation (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 2-3). Participation as a method can include actions such as being part of planning or monitoring, awareness raising and education. It can also be about direct action as well as holding others responsible on their actions. (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 4 and Mansuri & Rao 2012, 59.)

Social and community participation are probably the oldest forms of participation. Initially participation was used to imply to people being active in

their communities or societies or in development projects. In social and community participation people participate either as beneficiaries of government actions or as excluded groups, trying to gain power over resources and decisions concerning themselves. (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 1-2.) A similar view is also presented by Cornwall as she states that participation has been understood either as something done for people or, as something owned by people. In “for people” thinking people would make the results of the work better for themselves through their participation while in “owned by people” thinking formerly excluded people have the opportunity to claim equal distribution of resources and benefits. (Cornwall 2000, 20-22.) According to Hickey and Mohan (2004, 6) community participation was initially linked to the development cooperation trend of the 1940’s and 1950’s that focused on community or rural development. As part of community development, participation was seen as the obligation of community members, that is, the citizens.

In project participation, participation is primarily linked to making people who are the “beneficiaries” of development projects, also included to project work through for example monitoring or being consulted (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 2). Around the 1960’s, political participation gained more importance in participation in development cooperation (Hickey & Mohan 2004, 6). Political participation is about participating on political matters, in form of for example voting, lobbying or joining a political party (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 1, 3). Political participation is mostly indirect. Instead of being active in the decision-making processes, people try to influence the decision-makers. (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 1, 3.) Participation has also been used to help people in adjusting to new policies and political decisions as well as to restrain political resistance (Rahman 1995 in Cornwall 2000, 25).

The most recent form of participation was initially created in the 1990’s as a solution to problems of the top-down style of doing development cooperation. In this newest form, participation is a tool for citizenship formation. (Hickey & Mohan 2004, 6-8.) The top-down version of development had not produced

expected result and it was assumed that giving power to aid workers and other actors than the beneficiaries was the reason for this (Mohan 2008, 46). In the new form, supporting beneficiaries' participation to their own matters is believed to produce most relevant results and solutions (Mansuri and Rao 2012, 23). In addition to this, citizenship participation is a form of rights-based development. Asking for one's rights and monitoring their execution is considered to be the right of everyone. (Cornwall 2000, 17.) Citizenship participation evolves around the themes of citizenship, civil society and good governance (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 1 & Hickey & Mohan 2004, 6-8). Unlike in community participation where participation was the citizens' obligation, in citizenship participation, participation is a right of the citizens and a way of being a citizen (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 2 and Hickey & Mohan 2004, 28-29). It is believed that development requires democracy and democratic practices and that participation as a way for the civil society to monitor government's execution of rights can lead to that development (Hickey & Mohan 2004, 6-8). Participation is used as a tool to transform and to maintain structures so that they are inclusive (Hickey & Mohan 2004, 3, 13). Making those in power accountable for their actions and negotiating new ways of action and divisions in power are at the core of citizenship participation (Stiefel & Wolfe 1994 in Cornwall 2000, 24).

How participation has been understood over the years has also varied according to the level at which issues are dealt with, who is at the focus of or engaged in the action, and the ideology or the purpose that participation is used for. Also the development theories of participation, and the role of citizenship have varied in the different approaches to participation within development cooperation. (Hickey & Mohan 2004, 9.) Oakley (1995,1) has made a summary of the different usages of participation in development cooperation, stating that participation can either be understood as people investing their resources such as their skills etc. to create better results, or it can be used as a tool to combat the reasons behind the injustice or the difficulties in people's circumstances. Mansuri and Rao (2012, 35-36) state that participation can be either organic or induced. Organic participation refers to participation and initiatives coming naturally from people

themselves when they are trying to claim their rights from those in power. In induced participation peoples participation has been supported by organizations or policies.

It is interesting that the justifications used for participation throughout the years have been very similar disregarding the participation conceptions at hand. The same actions might produce several different positive outcomes for the people participating as well as for the matter itself. For example, inclusion of local or indigenous knowledge as a way of participation is linked to more sustainable results as well as creating better service delivery, gaining equal resources, good governance and empowerment (Hickey & Mohan 2004, 6-8 and Mansuri & Rao 2012, 23). The different justifications used for participation can be divided into those where participation is a question of pragmatism and to those where it is a matter of principle. While participation as principle is a right in itself, participation as practical solution is used to gain different positive effects. These practical solutions include justifications such as efficiency. In the 1980's the emergence of neoliberalism affected the conceptions of participation. Although efficiency is used as a motive for participation in multiple different conceptions, neoliberalism presented the idea of participation serving cost-efficiency by giving over some of the service production and provision from the government to the citizens (Cornwall 2000, 25). Participation can also result to efficiency in development projects by saving time and resources of the project workers, as less time needs to be spent in making beneficiaries understand and value the project at hand. (Finsterbusch & Van Wicklin 1987, 4 and Oakley 1991 in Oakley 1995, 9.)

Effectiveness is another frequently used justification and outcome for participation. It is thought, that by letting the beneficiaries of the action also to form the objectives of the work, the results of the actions will be achieved in more likelihood and the results will also be more fitting (Oakley 1991 in Oakley 1995, 9). In short, it is believed that participation ensures that the needs of the people are taken into consideration and thus the participation of the beneficiaries will shape the project to answer to the real needs of the people (Finsterbusch & Van

Wicklin 1987, 4). Participation is said to be important for the sustainability of the projects or work done since when people are involved in planning and realizing a project, they will also know how to manage the work by themselves (Firstenbusch & Van Wicklin 1987, 21). Again, it has been found that the activities, about which people are inwardly motivated, succeed better than those about which people are externally motivated. Participation is believed to create the sense of ownership and inner motivation the sustainability of work needs (Oakley 1991 in Oakley 1995, 10). Also, participation is believed to affect for example the coverage of projects, and to support the beneficiaries to do further development in their own areas (Oakley 1991 in Oakley 1995, 9-10 and Finsterbusch & Van Wicklin 1987, 4). According to Cornwall, participation can also be understood as a mutual learning process where people and communities learn and develop through participating together with other partners such as development workers. Understanding other people and their realities is seen as the only way for people to learn and to grow. (Cornwall 2000, 22.)

From the different participation conceptions, citizenship participation in particular has been connected to empowerment. Empowerment is a term that can be understood in several different ways. Regarding participation, empowerment has been understood for example as the development of skills and abilities that would enable a person to manage their life better in the future. Empowerment can also be considered as people taking charge of matters contributing to their development and wellbeing. (Oakley 1995, 5.) According to Mayo and Craig, at its core, empowerment is about power. Because of this, the way empowerment is understood depends on how power is understood. For example, if there is a limitless amount of power, empowerment is about increasing the power of those who lack it without affecting the power of others. If on the other hand there is only a limited amount of power, empowerment is about transferring power to marginalized people. (Mayo & Craig 2004, 5.) The outcomes of participation can also concern people rather than power structures. Participation can increase self-reliance when people begin to feel more in control of their lives. Further, this develops self-confidence and can help to break the feeling of dependency.

(Oakley 1991 in Oakley 1995, 9.) Participation can also create new competence, awareness and capacity (Finsterbusch & Van Wicklin 1987, 4).

When participation as the right of people became mainstreamed in development, it was also increasingly criticized over the lack of proof on the arguments used to justify it. Participation has also been accused on falsely giving the idea that people participating form a homogenous group with similar interest, problems and perceptions. This is thought to exclude those who in the society have a moral minority role or a representational minority role, such as women and children in some cases. (Guijit and Shah 1998 in Cornwall 2000, 27-28.) Participation can also harm people through economic and social burdens (Mansuri and Rao 2004 in Mansuri and Rao 2012, 25). One risk connected to participation becoming popular is that more organizations use tokenistic participation or participation dialogue without actually practicing participation (Mohan 2008, 48).

## **2.2. Children's participation**

Children's participation was first brought into international light by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989 (Hart 1999, 11). It is also worth noticing that the declaration of the CRC occurred at the same time with the popularization of participation in development cooperation. Although children's participation is for the most part based on similar ideas with participation in development cooperation, there are some differences in justifications and themes highlighted in the discussions.

One of the frequent themes is the intergenerational relationships, meaning especially the relationships between children and their parents (Sévon, Böök and Perälä-Littunen 2014, 308). The role of intergenerational relationships is highlighted because adults, especially parents, traditionally have an important role in children's lives. Intergenerational relationships are also important because of the various possible impacts of the imbalance of power in those relationships. For example, adults might feel threatened by the increased power of children gained through their participation. It is also important to notice the role of power and power division in intergenerational decision-making situations. Indeed, it is

considered important that children have the possibility to be heard and to share thoughts on issues important to them, even if the same interest are not shared by adults. (Sévon, Böök and Perälä-Littunen 2014, 307-308 & Hart 1999, 11, 16.) What parents think and how they value children's participation is important, since it affects how they let their children participate (Sévon, Böök and Perälä-Littunen 2014, 308). One way of perceiving children's participation is radical empowerment where the intergenerational imbalance of power is affected for the good of children through children's participation (Farthing 2012, 75-76). This kind of idea of empowerment of the marginalized was also presented in the development cooperation discussions in the previous chapter. According to Hart (1999, 16), instead of a loss of adult's authority, children's participation aims at "openness to listen and to communicate with children according to their maximum capacity". Children are dependent on adults but while growing, should be supported in their development by giving them increasing responsibility over their lives (Hart 1999, 16). Therefore, participation is perceived as a way for children to grow and to develop.

The discussion of power in the parent-child relationships is also linked to the perceived roles and abilities of children and adults in societies and families (Sevón, Böök and Perälä-Littunen 2014, 308-309). Children's participation is considered to improve intergenerational relationships through decrease in adult-child conflicts (Warshak 2003 in Farthing 2012, 75). Participation is also believed to affect generational relationships when children share their opinions, instruct and learn from each other, learn to value different abilities and try out different roles (Hart 1999, 35-36). Another theme highlighted in children's participation discourse is the right to information and knowledge. It is important that children can access information about the world in appropriate ways, for them to better engage in it. Knowing about decisions made and the reasons behind decisions is important, too (Sevón, Böök and Perälä-Littunen 2014, 308-309). Protection is a theme that is only mentioned in children's participation discussions. Sinclair (2000, 2) points out that participation can be used to enhance children's protection as it has been found out that in cases where children have been abused,

others have failed to listen to children. Sometimes, children's participation is justified by the need to create activities for children, especially boys, so that they would be protected from any bad habits or relationships that might harm their future lives and opportunities. (Hart 1999, 36.)

Similar to the justifications in participation in development cooperation, children's participation also covers themes such as rights-based thinking, personal development and enhanced effectiveness (Farthing 2012, 75-76). Based on studies on different justifications, Farthing concludes that rights-based justification is one of the main ones used for children's participation. The rights-based view to children's participation has its base in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and "it suggests that young people are full, rights bearing citizens, and as such have the right to participate in decision-making that affects them". (Farthing 2012, 75.) In addition to decision-making, children also have the right to participate in social and cultural life and gaining information (Office of the High Commissioner n.d., para.50, 53-56, 142-143). Although popular, the rights-based view to children's participation is criticized for its "thinness", meaning that rights-based justifications can lead into forwarding participation just to fulfil international or national legislations (Farthing 2012, 76). In a matter of fact, according to Sinclair (2000, 1) participation can be understood as being based on the fundamental right to do so, as well as fulfilling legal responsibilities such as CRC. These in my opinion are two quite different things, as in the latter justification participation is merely a fulfilment of legislation without any particular belief or commitment to the matter itself, while in the former participation is connected with the intrinsic rights of humans.

Enhanced effectiveness in policy or services is also used as a justification for children's participation. Children are believed to have the best knowledge on their lives, and through participation, they can share their knowledge to adults (Warshak 2003 in Farthing 2012, 76). Adults can then improve policies and practices to better match with the needs and lives of children (Farthing 2012, 76). Children's participation can result into improved and adapted services through

their input and varying views. Participation can also help children to better identify their own needs. (Sinclair 2000, 2.) Another way of justifying participation, that is similar in both children's participation and participation in development cooperation, is personal development. The difference is that in children's participation, development is not only linked to increased self-esteem or better self-confidence, but also to social and emotional skills important in growing up. (Farthing 2012, 76.) As a matter of fact, Farthing claims that justifying participation through personal development implies that the aim of participation is to create well-developed citizens to any society, rather than to use people's participation to make a better society (Farthing 2012, 77). Therefore, citizenship is not only linked to acting as a citizen but also to becoming a certain kind of one.

Warshak (2003 in Farthing 2012, 75) and Sinclair (2000, 1-2) both point out that children's participation is about both children using their citizenship as well as becoming active members of their community. Hart (1999, 11) states that the CRC paints a picture of children's participation where children develop as citizens with a right to voice their opinions. Hart also claims that especially children's direct participation is needed for them to develop their understanding and appreciation of democracy, and their confidence on their responsibility and competence to participate (Hart 1999, 30). Sinclair (2000, 2) identifies that through participation, children can gain skills that will help them with debating, communicating, negotiating and decision-making. Although competence in one's skills and a sense of responsibility are expected outcomes of children's participation, children's level of self-esteem and sense of their own skills also affect how well and how willing they are to participate (Hart 1999, 30). Within the discussion about children's participation, children's participation is not only about realizing one's right to participate, but also about gaining skills to participate even better in the future.

Several models have been created for measuring the level of children's participation within different participatory activities. Roger Hart's ladder of

children's participation is the most famous model of those. Hart has created an eight-staged ladder of participation, which indicates "the different degrees of initiation and collaboration children can have when working on projects with adults". The first three rungs, manipulation, decoration and tokenism, are all forms of non-participation. Outside of these three, the number of the rung is not a sign of superiority of the particular form of participation (Hart 1999, 40-41.) Instead, the number of the rung indicates the level of initiation required from the children participating. For Hart, being able to choose the level in which the children themselves operate, is more important than working at the highest point of one's abilities (Hart 1999, 40-42.) It is also important that children are given the opportunity to participate at the level of their maximum capacities (Hart 1999, 42). Additionally, children's developmental stage and their cultural background should be taken into consideration, when choosing the levels or ways of their participation (Hart 1999, 11 & Shier 2001, 115).

### **2.3. Different definitions of childhood**

In psychological and physiological terms, childhood is usually understood as the early stage of each person's life. Childhood can also stand for the institutionally separated "structural space" owned by children in societies. (James & James 2012, 14.) As a stage of life, childhood is traditionally connected to ideas of biological and psychological growth and development, and as such is common for all people around the world. According to Woodhead (1996), the meaning given to human development and descriptions of maturity vary between different cultures. (James & James 2012, 15.) This means that in addition to the biological point of view, childhood can also be understood from socio-cultural point of view. Different cultural surroundings influence how childhood is experienced and conceptualized. Different ways of treating children and the different expectations that children globally face, prove the impact and existence of the socio-cultural context. These different conceptualizations of childhood are studied in sociology of childhood. (James & James 2012, 15, 117.)

The existing conceptualizations of childhood have some common features, as well as differences. The most significant point of difference concerns children's

competence and status in comparison to adults. The conceptualizations are divided between pre-sociological and post-sociological approaches. In the post-sociological approaches children are considered more competent and more equal to adults in their status. In addition to conceptualizations about children, I will also introduce four different approaches to children's rights from Hanson (2011) in this chapter. The four approaches, liberation, patronization, emancipation and welfare, differ in which rights are highlighted, how competent children are believed to be, the status that children have in comparison to adults, and what is the purpose of childhood as a stage of life (Hanson 2011, 4-9).

In all the pre-sociological approaches, childhood is primarily based on biological processes, and believed to be universally shared. Traditional knowledge and wisdom, development psychology and discipline are emphasized instead of the social contexts (James, Jenks & Prout 1999, 9). In the evil child conceptualization, children are considered inclined to be immoral, corrupted and evil. Adults can make children safe for the children themselves and for the society by education and discipline. (James, Jenks & Prout 1999, 10.) The innocent child is an opposite of the evil child conceptualization. In this, children are seen as innocent and uncorrupted and the task of the educators is to maintain that purity. In the immanent child view, children are understood as "tabula rasa", blank canvases full of potential. (James, Jenks & Prout 1999, 13-16.) The developing child view on childhood is based on development psychology and the natural processes of maturation. In this view, children have to achieve development goals in order to enter into adulthood. (James, Jenks & Prout 1999, 17-19.) If childhood is primarily about developing and growing, then children are automatically less competent in comparison to adults (James 1999, 233-234). Childhood is a stage of becoming adults rather than being children in all of the pre-sociological approaches. In the paternalistic approach to children's rights, children are considered vulnerable and in the process of maturation (Hanson 2011, 73). Therefore, the most important right of the children is their right to be protected by adults. Also, adults have a higher status than children, as adulthood is perceived as the goal of development. (Hanson 2011, 73.) The final pre-sociological approach is the

unconscious child. This approach is based on Freud's idea on the influence of childhood events on adult's behavior. Childhood is primarily seen as every adult's past. (James, Jenks & Prout 1999, 19-20.)

The post-sociological approaches emphasize children's agency in shaping their own environments, and the impact of socio-cultural context in shaping childhood (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 6). Childhood is a stage of being a child instead of becoming an adult. James, Jenks and Prout (1999, 27) introduce four different post-sociological approaches to childhood, the first of which is the socially constructed child. The socially constructed approach emphasizes the impact of culture on children. Every child lives in a world of meaning that the children have created by themselves in interaction with adults. There are no universal or shared aspects in childhood but every child has a unique childhood that is based on their own experiences. (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 27, 212-213.) The tribal child view states that all children have a shared reality that they live in. This reality is different from the reality of adults, and has its own rules and rituals. (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 28-29.) Although adults and children live in different realities, adults reality still affects the children's one (Opie and Opie (1977) in James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 28-29). In this approach, living in a different reality doesn't make children incompetent but instead they are competent in their own social realm (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 29). According to James (1999, 233-238), in the tribal child view children have a different status than adults, even though they are as competent.

The inequality of power between adults and children is questioned in the minority group child approach (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 30-31). Societies are structured so that children are given a marginal position concerning power. The minority group view attempts to give children the equal status and power that they are legally entitled to. (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 31, 211.) In Hanson's liberation approach to children's rights, children are seen as capable and as competent as adults, and they are demanded to have equal treatment and role with adults. (Hanson 2011, 74-75.) In the adult child approach, children have the

same status, and are competent in same ways as adults. It is believed that the world belongs primarily to adults, and therefore its rules are not natural for the children, although they learn to act in it. (James 1999, 233, 241-242.) The fourth approach of the social structural child is different from other approaches, as children are considered as stable part of social structures. The idea is that children as a social group are and always have been a part of societies. (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 32.) In this approach children possess rights and needs just like all the other groups in societies. Children are also treated in the same way as other groups, although they might possess different capacities than them. (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 32-33.) For example, in Western societies children are encouraged to express themselves through art, which can be thought of as their field of competence in comparison to adults (James 1999, 233, 244-245). If compared to the tribal child view where children had their own reality, here children are thought to share the same reality with the adults but have different competences in it.

Hanson also mentions welfare and emancipation approaches to children's rights. In the welfare approach, children are both becoming adults and being children, although children are considered incompetent rather than competent actors. As the welfare view is more inclined to see children as still developing, more emphasis is put on children's right to be protected than to their other rights. (Hanson 2011, 75.) The difference to the paternalistic view is that the aim of protecting children in this view is to enable them to have the best possible future. In the emancipation approach children are primarily considered to be children but also as becoming adults. The emancipation approach values all three rights of protection, participation and provision, but emphasizes the right to participate more than the others. (Hanson 2011, 77.) The different childhood conceptions are summarized in table 1.

TABLE 1. Childhood images in theories

Name	Description
<b>Pre-sociological images</b>	
The evil child	Children need to be corrected by adults

The innocent child	Children's innocence needs to be protected
The immanent child	Children are full of potential
The developing child	Children are learning and growing
The unconscious child	Childhood impacts adulthood
<b>Post-sociological images</b>	
The socially developing child	Childhood is a time of socialization
The socially constructed child	All children create their own unique childhoods
The tribal child	Children have their own reality
The minority group child	Children are marginalized in the society
The adult child	Children are competent in adult's world
The social child	Children are always part of the society
Liberation view	Children should be treated like adults
Paternalistic view	Children need protection
Welfare view	Children competent but need protection
Emancipation view	Children are competent, but need protection

There is also one conceptualization that is situated in between the pre-sociological and the post-sociological categories. The socially developing child combines both the social context and the child's biological development by approaching childhood from the point of view of socialization. Childhood is about incompetent children becoming competent through their socialization to adults' world and culture. (James, Jensen & Prout 1999, 22- 25.)

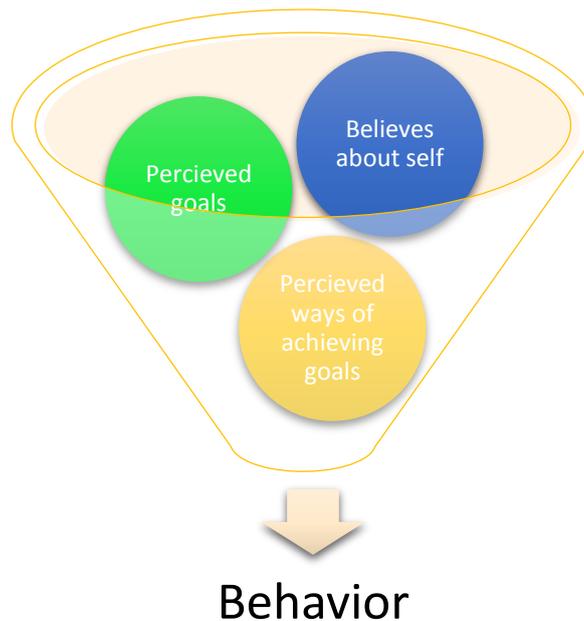
#### **2.4. Theory on Personal Investment**

In the theory on Personal Investment, motivation is a decision to invest one's resources, for example time, talents or energy, to chosen activities in specific ways (Maehr & McInerney 2004, 73). The theory claims that the meaning given to different possible forms of action guide how people choose to act (Maehr 1984, 122). The theory on Personal Investment (PI) derives from many other theories and studies in motivation, especially on choice and decision theories (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 243). The PI has borrowed much from Atkinson's decision theory,

although the Personal Investment theory highlights the role of people's sociocultural context on motivation more (Maehr & McInerney 2004, 62-64, 73.)

Motivation is mostly described through, the direction of behavior, persistence, continuing motivation, activity and performance. Direction means that motivation plays a part when a person makes a decision between many courses of action. Persistence means that the amount of time one gives for a task or an activity shows the level of motivation one has for that task or activity. (Maehr 1984, 118.) Persistence can also refer to engaging in a similar activity for a longer period of time. Motivation is illustrated by a person returning to a task or an activity after a pause or an interruption. (Maehr 1984, 118-119.) Activity, as how much a person does, is also an aspect of motivation. However, activity doesn't only indicate motivation as person's psychological characteristics can also affect activity. (Maehr 1984, 119-120.) Lastly, performance is about changes in performance rates that cannot be explained by psychological factors, skill or competence, and that are therefore caused by motivation. Maehr (1984, 118, 120-121) uses these descriptions to state that motivation is more about action than fulfilling needs, goals or expectations. In the Personal Investment theory, meanings attached to different options on action guide how people act (Maehr 1984, 117-121). Further, the meanings created are influenced by one's beliefs about themselves, perceived goals of action and perceived ways of achieving goals. These three aspects of, personal investment, meanings, and influencing factors, overlap in the theory. (Maehr 1984, 124.) The Personal Investment model is portrayed in table 2.

TABLE 2. The formation of meaning (Maehr 1984, 134).



Perceived ways of achieving goals, or action possibilities, consist of a person's knowledge on their opportunities, what is considered acceptable behavior for them, and the real opportunities that they are offered (Maehr 1984, 124-125). Maehr (1984, 124-125) states that beliefs and ideas about one's personality also have a role in the acceptability of different options. In Braskamp and Hager's (2005, 248-249) model, the real opportunities and knowledge about them are under the Sense of self category. The real opportunities that a person thinks s/he has are very important in guiding action, as before one can choose to act in a certain way s/he needs to know about the options s/he has. The category of Sense of self, or Believes about self, is about a person's feelings, beliefs and perceptions about who s/he is and what s/he can do. (Maehr 1984, 126-127.) The difference between Believes of self and Perceived ways of achieving goals is that in the former, possible actions depend on perceptions about one's skills and talents. On the other hand, in Perceived goals action possibilities depend on what is offered and the knowledge on those, as well as what a person is allowed to do in their sociocultural position.

Perceived goals indicate the expected outcomes of different actions. The expected goals are either conscious or unconscious ideas on what a person will gain or lose through investing their resources in a specific way. (Maehr 1984, 127.)

Goals also reflect people's personal values (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 245). Instead of treating goals as a separate category, Braskamp and Hager (2005, 245) place Personal or Perceived goals under the category of Sense of self. For them goals are a way for people to express who they are (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 245). There are four types of goals. In task goals, being involved in the task itself is the goal, while in ego goals the goal is to perform better in comparison to other people or standards. In solidarity, the goal is to gain social approval by pleasing others or showing appreciation, while extrinsic rewards are about the benefits gained through the actual task, such as money or prizes. (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 245 & Maehr 1984, 129-130.)

In addition to the three categories, Maehr has also indicated other factors affecting the formation of meaning. For example, person's previous experiences affect their Sense of self and the outcomes that they expect. (Maehr 1984, 133-134.) Perceived ways of achieving goals are also affected by previous situations where there are expectations on the behavior of groups of people or individuals (Maehr 1984, 136). These role-expectations affect motivation, as they also guide what people think they are allowed to do. Some tasks are also more interesting in themselves than others are. (Maehr 1984, 137.) A sense of purpose, or the meaning of life, has a strong impact on the meaning given to action possibilities. The meaning of life is here understood as a person's vocation - how their personality can answer to the world's need and the environment they live in (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 246-247). In this research, the Personal Investment theory is used to understand what kind of factors are important in making the decision to attend or not to attend children's societies in Sri Lanka.

To conclude, for the second research question on the justifications on children's participation, the different justifications found from the data are compared with justifications used in the theoretical discussions on participation. Further, justifications are read from the point of view of what kind of childhood images can be found from them. The Personal Investment theory will be used for the first research question on factors influencing children's attendance to child societies.

Personal Investment theory is used to understand what kind of factors are meaningful for choosing whether to attend or not to attend to child societies. The analysis process is data based in both of the research questions.

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions are:

1. What factors are believed to influence children's participation to child societies?
2. In what ways is children's participation justified?
  - a. What kind of childhood images are related to the different justifications?

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter I introduce the context, the progress and the realization of this research. I will go through the analysis methods used, the interview process, as well as selection and description of interviewees and the data that was gathered.

#### **4.1. Context of the study**

The data of this research was gathered from children and adults who were connected to child societies in two rural village areas in Sri Lanka. The child societies were conducted by two area development programs supported by World Vision Finland. World Vision is an international Christian humanitarian and development organization founded in 1950 that works in nearly 100 countries all over the world. World Vision is a child-centered organization, whose aim is to enhance children's well-being. (Suomen World Vision, n.d.) World Vision Finland was founded in 1983 and in the year 2015 it managed area development programs in Uganda, Kenya, Sri Lanka, India, Colombia and Peru. World Vision Finland started their work in the two areas in Sri Lanka in 2008 and in 2007 (Suomen World Vision, n.d.). The two main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka are Tamil and Sinhalese. In area X, around 49% of the people were Christians, 34

% Muslims, 9 % Hindus, and 8 % Buddhists. (X program design document 2009-2013, 10, 13.) Sinhalese is the predominant language in both areas. In area Y 96% of the people were Buddhist Sinhalese, 3 % Muslims, and 1 % Christians (Y program design document 2010-2014, 10-16). The two areas where the research was conducted will be named X and Y in this research for protecting the anonymity of the interviewees.

Child societies are one of the work forms used by World Vision to support children's participation to community life, and to capacitate children through teachings about rights and life-skills. The child societies are places where children can practice decision-making, voicing their opinions, and where they learn about leadership skills. (Y program design document 2010-2014, 65- 66 & Y program design document 2015-2019, 47.) In the year 2015 there were 20 child societies in area X and 18 in area Y. The age of the children participating in the societies varies from 4 to 18. I gained access to the child societies by being an intern at the World Vision Finland during summer 2015. When considering the subject for my master thesis I was from the start interested in children's participation. After searching for different Non-governmental organizations that focused on children's participation, I was connected with World Vision Finland by my master thesis supervisor. In discussions with World Vision it was discovered that they had a need for a research on the hindering factors on children's attendance to child societies in their locations in Sri Lanka. It was decided that I would do my internship with World Vision during the months of June-August, and spent half of the time in Sri Lanka gathering material for the thesis. I spent my first week in Sri Lanka getting to know World Vision's work, after which I spent approximately a week in both target areas conducting interviews.

#### **4.1.1. Convention on the Rights of the Child on children's right to participation**

United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was opened for ratification on November 20th in 1989 and came into effect in September 2nd in 1990 (Office of the High Commissioner n.d.). The CRC is the most notable

international contract on child rights and by far it has been ratified by all countries except the United States of America, South Sudan and Somalia (Human Rights Watch 2014, para. 3 and Karns & Gerschutz 2005, 12). The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first international treaty that aims to enable the realization of political, social, cultural and economic rights of children. The CRC differs from the earlier attempts for global children's right treaties, as children are treated as subjects possessing rights instead of objects of adult action. (Karns & Gerschutz 2005, 14.) This means that the children's agency is recognized as well as their right for protection and provision.

The CRC is formed of 54 articles, 41 of which deal with children's right to participation, protection and provision. In CRC, child is every human being under the age of eighteen unless some other definition is mentioned in the national law of the ratifying country. Articles 12-15, 17, 31 and 23 concentrate on the child's right to participate with article 23 dealing more specifically with rights of differently abled children. (Office of the High Commissioner n.d.) Article 12 states that every child that is capable of forming an opinion has the right to express those opinions freely on all matters that concern the child and that those views of the child should be taken into account "in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (Office of the High Commissioner n.d., para. 50). The article more specifically continues to mention that the child should be given opportunity to be heard or represented in any judicial or administrative incidences concerning the child him or herself.

Article 13 presents the child's right to freedom of expression that includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any and every media of the child's choice. (Office of the High Commissioner n.d., para.53-56.) Further, article 17 concerns with children's access to national and international information and material through mass media and especially aims to guarantee every child's right to information and material that has to do with the his or hers social, moral and spiritual well-being as well as physical and mental health. The article also obligates mass media parties to produce and

spread information and material from different national, cultural and international origins that will benefit the child socially or culturally. (Office of the High Commissioner n.d., para.69-75.) Having accurate and adequate information is important for forming informed opinions and sharing them, both of which are forms of participation.

Article 14 is about the freedom of thought, conscience and religion of children. In addition, article 15 states that children have the freedom of association and of peaceful assembly. (Office of the High Commissioner n.d., para. 53, 58, 62.) Although the Convention has a separate article for the rights of differently abled children, all the other rights in the Convention apply to differently abled children, too (Office of the High Commissioner n.d., para. 19.) Article 31 grants children the right to participate in cultural and artistic life (Office of the High Commissioner n.d., para. 142-143). If summarized, the right to participation in the CRC is about children's right to opinion and action. In the CRC the child's age and maturity affect how children take part in decision-making, while children have the right to give their opinion on matters concerning themselves.

#### **4.1.2. World Vision on children's participation**

World Vision's views on children and youth's participation are stated in two online publications: "World Vision's guidelines for child participation" and "World Vision's child and youth participation strategic direction 2015-2020" (World Vision 2015 & World Vision 2013). As World Vision acknowledges the Convention on the Rights of the Child its outtake on participation resembles that of the CRC in many ways (World Vision 2015, 22). Based on the CRC World Vision sees that participation is a right on its own for every child, and that participation as a tool or mechanism will also contribute to children achieving their other rights (World Vision 2013, 2). Children and youth are seen by World Vision as a separate stakeholder group in the society that should also have a representation in the society's life and decision-making (World Vision 2015, 22). Participation is understood as children acting as agents of transformation, being listened to, freedom to express oneself, freedom to think, freedom to associate, access to information and carrying responsibility (World Vision 2013, 1).

Children should also be included into decision-making and be allowed to share their opinions on issues that are relevant to and concern them (World Vision 2013, 3 & World Vision 2015, 4). What is meant by this is that children should participate on issues that they have first-hand knowledge and experience on and that the issues are ones that affect the children's well-being and are relevant to their daily lives (World Vision 2013, 1,3,5 & World Vision 2015, 4, 8,9). It is also stated that children should not only be supplied with places and spaces to participate but that they should also be given proper knowledge about the matters and given the skills and knowledge how to and where to participate.

Children should also be given the space and time to participate in ways that are child-friendly and children should be free to choose themselves the ways of participation as well as the issues that they would wish to address. (World Vision 2015, 4, 8-9 & World Vision 2013, 5.) Children should have the opportunity to participate at local, national and international levels. Further, families, schools, local communities, public services, institutions, government policy and judicial procedures are mentioned as spaces where children have the right to participate. (World Vision 2013, 1 & World Vision 2015, 4.) World Vision's understanding of participation also links to Hart's ladder of participation by stating that participation should never be tokenistic or manipulative but voluntary and relevant for the children (World Vision 2013, 1). World Vision's view of child participation highlights in many places the idea of meaningful participation as well as children participating in order to contribute to their well-being (World Vision 2013, 1 & World Vision 2015, 8-9). It is also stated that the format of participation needs to reflect the age, gender, maturity, religion, and differing abilities of the children as well as the context (World Vision 2013, 2).

The outcomes of children's participation are improved academic performance and the good citizenship of children, empowered children and transformed communities, healthy relationships between boys and girls as well as between adults and children, and improved self-esteem and self-confidence. Participation also contributes to life-skills and helps the children to identify their own talents

and ways to contribute to the society, as well as creative and positive ways to express oneself and ones' opinions. (World Vision 2013, 3,6 & World Vision 2015, 5.) These expected outcomes are in line with the outcomes presented in the general children's participation discourse. In addition, participation can create a sense of belonging, justice, responsibility and solidarity in the children. Also, participation in itself and as a tool to claim other rights helps children to reach their full potential, fullness of life and well-being. (World Vision 2015, 4-5.) With regard to the adult-child relationship respect for the elder's roles and responsibilities from the part of the children are mentioned as well as the importance of maintaining intergenerational links (World Vision 2013, 1 & World Vision 2015, 21-22). Including children does not mean excluding adults. But on the other hand elders are also expected to value and seek children's participation and respect children as partners. In fact, children's participation should lead into a situation where children and adults share responsibilities and respect each other as partners (World Vision 2013, 2).

World Vision also highlights the importance of the participation of the most vulnerable children. Their participation should not happen at the cost of other children's participation but special attention should be paid to their participation. (World Vision 2015, 20.) World Vision also states that one of the biggest obstacles that children face all over the world in regard to their participation is the lack of accountability of those with power over children's well-being to the children themselves (World Vision 2015, 15). To conclude, children's participation is not merely about stating ones' opinion, and taking just one view into account is not the same as being heard. World Vision states that being a part of child societies helps children to act as change-makers and to advocate, as groups have a bigger impact than individuals. Coming together as a group also gives the children an opportunity to voice their opinions publicly, helps them to develop their leadership skills and to act as social actors and advocates for themselves as well as for their partners and peers. (World Vision 2015, 13, 8, 9, 15.) A good summary of World Vision's view on child participation is: "Child participation is when children under 18 years of age contribute to decisions and take action on issues

that affect their lives. This is best done through empowering children and nurturing positive relationships between children, adults and communities based on mutual respect and partnership at familial, local, national and international levels” (World Vision 2015, 29).

#### **4.2. Description of data**

The data of this study consists of 20 interviews. The shortest interview lasted for 10 minutes and the longest one for 1 hour 14 minutes. The average length of an interview was 35 minutes. The 20 interviews produced altogether 142 pages of transcribed material. Half of the interviewees were adults volunteering or working for World Vision, and half of them were children who attended the child societies. In area X four children were interviewed from two different child societies -one boy and one girl from each society. Seven adults were also interviewed. One of them was a World Vision worker responsible for all the child societies within the area development program (ADP), two were World Vision’s field workers working with child societies, and four were volunteers who facilitated child societies. Three of the interviewed child society facilitators were women and rest of the interviewed adults were men.

In area Y six children from three child societies were interviewed, one boy and one girl from each society. I also interviewed a World Vision worker responsible of the child societies in this ADP, and two child society facilitators. Both the facilitators here were women and the World Vision worker was a man. Altogether, 10 of the interviewees were women or girls and 10 were men or boys. The initial plan was to interview children between the ages 9 and 12, but as it was more important that the interviewees volunteered than were the correct age, the age of the children turned out to vary from 12 to 17. In addition to the interviews, I also gathered background details from 58 child society members, 30 from area Y and 28 from area X. The background details are presented in the following subchapter. All the interviews were recorded to an mp3 player and later transcribed into digital form. Some of the surveys were likewise recorded but most of them were written down to a notebook and later copied to digital form.

#### 4.2.1. Description of the child society participants

As I wanted to gain a wider knowledge of the kind of children that attended the child societies, I asked background questions from some of the children in the societies. Below are summaries of the demographics of some the children that attend the child societies in both of the target areas.

##### Area X

**Number of children:** 28

**Number of societies:** 3

**Average age of the children:** 11,4

**Average time in the society:** 3, 5 years

**Number of siblings:** All had siblings. Each had in average 2,1 siblings. 5 out of 28 had siblings in the child society.

15 of the children interviewed were boys and 13 were girls. 23 of the children lived with both their mother and father while three lived with one or more of their grandparents. One child was living with their mother, and one with only one parent while the other parent was working abroad. Further details on the children's religion, their guardian's occupation and how they got to know about the society are presented in charts 1, 2 and 3.

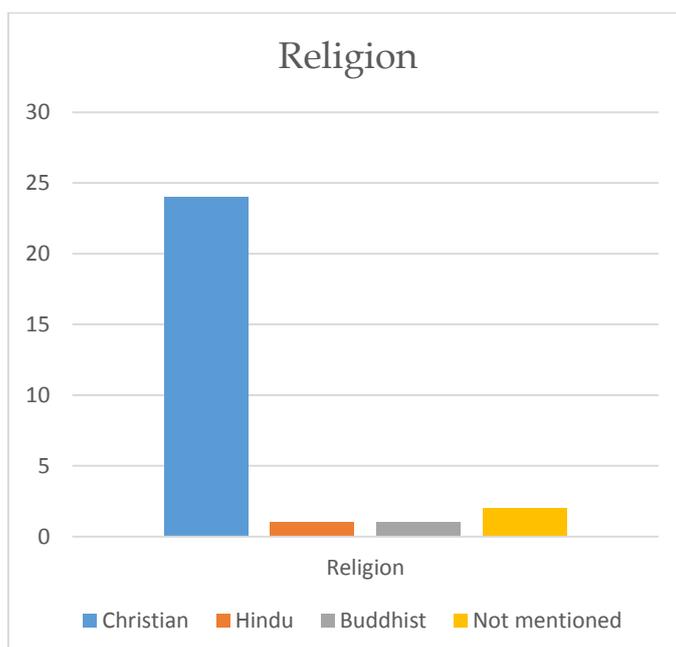


CHART 1. Religion of the children

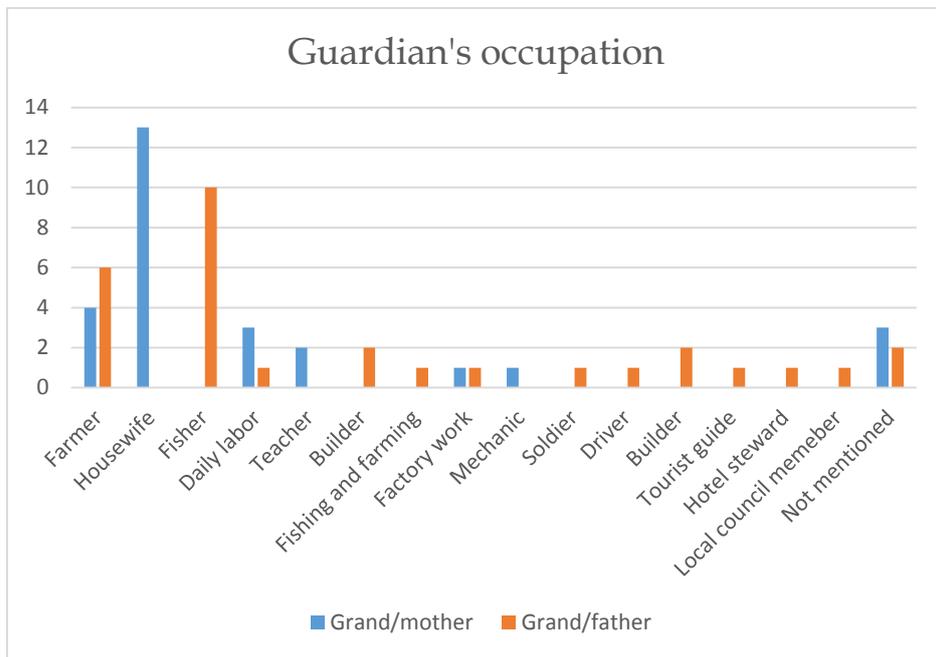


CHART 2. Occupation of the children's guardian.

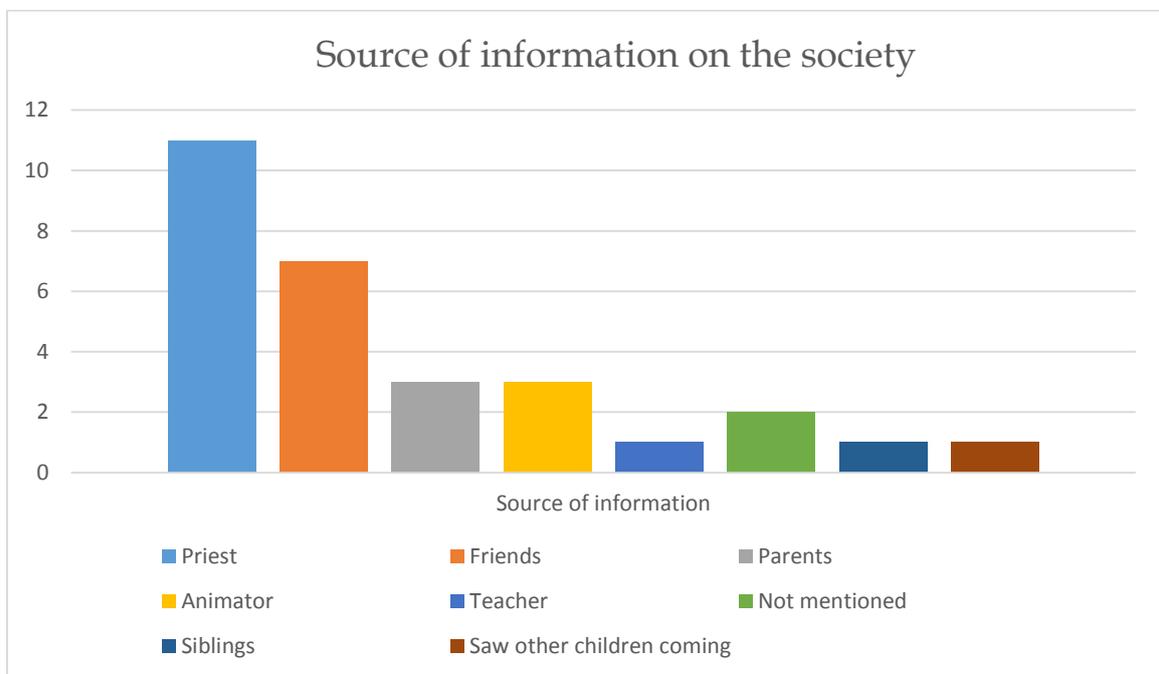


CHART 3. Who told the children about the society.

**Area Y**

**Number of children:** 30

**Number of societies:** 3

**Average time in the society:** 8 years

**Average age of children:** 14,8 years

**Number of siblings:** All children had siblings. In average each had 3.8 siblings. 16 out of the 30 had siblings attending the child society.

**Religion:** All children were Buddhists.

50 % of the children interviewed were girls. 18 of the interviewed lived with both of their parents (mother and father), three lived with their mothers only, two lived with just one of their parents while the other was working abroad. Seven of the children lived together with both their parents and one or more of their grandparents. Further details on the children's guardian's occupations and what was the source of information on the societies for children are presented in charts 4 and 5.

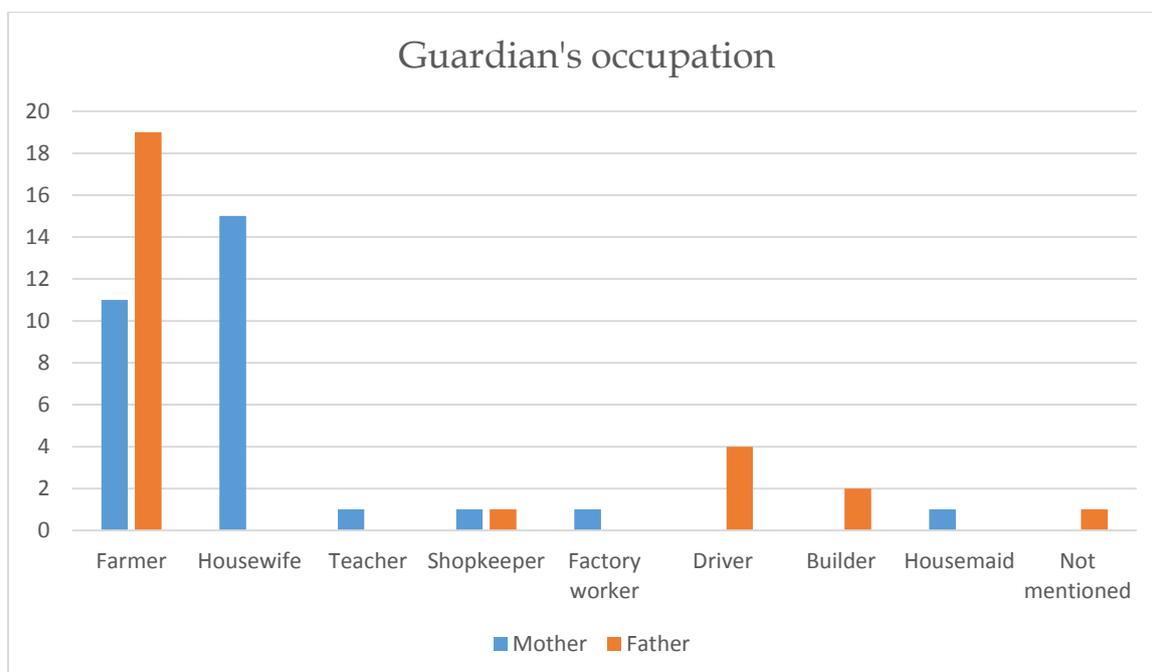


CHART 4. The occupation of the children's guardians

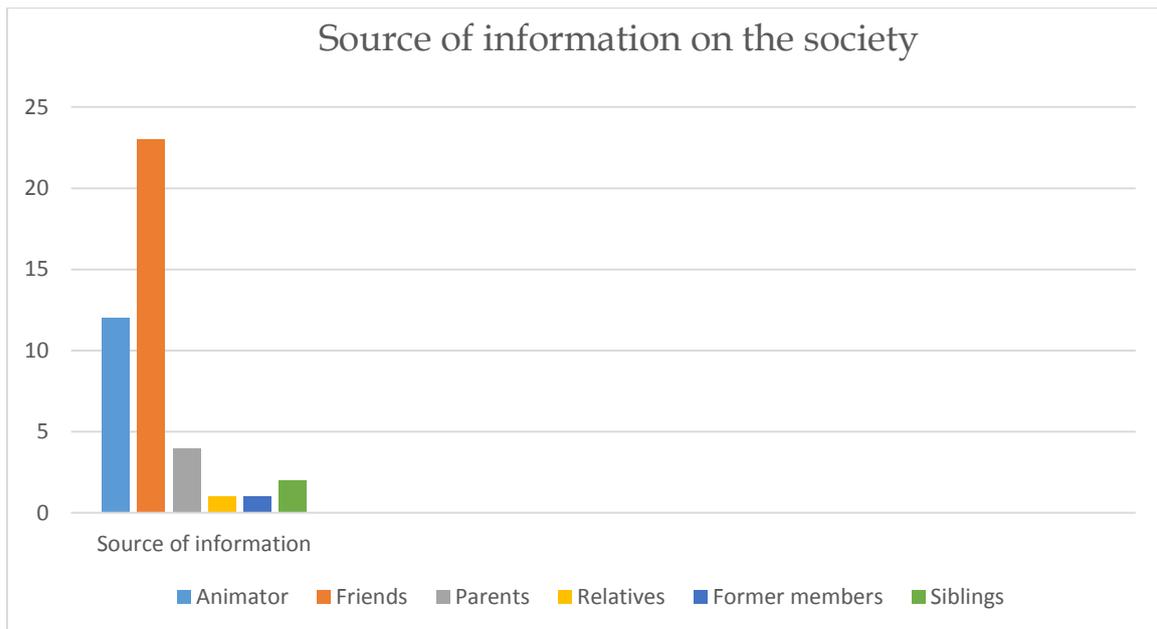


CHART 5. How children found out about the society.

### 4.3. Selection of the interviewees and the interview place

Initially my plan was to interview 12 children, two from each area development program, two World Vision workers in charge of the child societies and six adult facilitators of each of the societies. The ADP personnel were in charge of selecting child societies and arranging meetings with them. Decisions about which child societies I should meet were made after my arrival to Sri Lanka, as the societies were selected according to the schedules of the interpreters and the child societies. Visits to child societies had to be made after the children had come back from school (after 2 or 3) but before it was dark (sunset at 6:30 pm). There were also two adult interviews in particular that had to be kept very short by the schedule of the interviewee. In one child society I was not able to interview any of the children but instead interviewed four adult facilitators due to miscommunications. In two of the chosen child societies their facilitators were not present and couldn't be reached during my stay. One of my interpreters happened to be a child society facilitator, so I also interviewed him for the study. Because of these reasons I ended up interviewing altogether 10 children and 10 adults, instead of 12 children and six adults.

I wanted to interview adults working with child societies as I believed they would have a good general understanding of the factors influencing children's attendance to the child societies. Also, because of their role in the child societies, their justifications for children's participation and their childhood image have a great impact on the kind of approaches taken to participation. For the interviews with children I chose to only interview children participating in the child societies. I thought that children who were part of the societies would have good knowledge both on what affected their own attendance to the child societies as well as having some insight to why other children did not come to the societies. Also, as children's rights are talked about in the societies, there was a bigger chance that the children had some knowledge about children's participation. Interviewing children attending the child societies was also a practical choice, as the child societies were an easy way to get into contact with a number of children.

Both World Vision offices had been informed about my want to interview the World Vision workers as well as the child society members before my visit to Sri Lanka. The child interviews themselves took place at the child society meeting places. In all except one of the child societies the interviews were done outside, and there were usually other children playing around or listening to the interviews. Three of the adult interviews were done within World Vision office spaces behind closed doors. Three other adult interviews were done in the houses of some of the interviewees with other people being present as well. The rest of the adult interviews were conducted outside the child society meeting places with most of the children having already left home.

Before the child interviews I spent from 30 minutes to an hour introducing myself and my study to the children, and playing different games with them. When asking for interviewees, I always highlighted that participation in the interview was voluntary. An interpreter was used in all but three interviews. There were also two child interviews in area Y where the interpreter translated only in part. Altogether I had three different interpreters who all were World Vision workers and whom all I also interviewed. One interviewee spoke Tamil, and the rest

spoke Sinhalese. The translation happened between English and Sinhalese. It was important for the reliability of the results, that the interviewees were able to speak their native language. Although, having an interpreter might have altered some of the interviewee's meanings, especially as the interpreters were not professional.

#### **4.4. Data collection method**

This is a qualitative research and I used semi-structured interviews in collecting the data. The main interest of the research was to find out the perspectives and opinions of children and adults. It is interesting to study people's perceptions about reality rather than the reality itself, as conceptions of reality guide action perhaps more than the reality itself. Interviewing is a good way of gaining knowledge about the beliefs and the opinions of people, because of this I chose to use interviews as a method of gathering information (Patton 2002, 341).

In qualitative interviews, the interview questions are open-ended. This means that the interviewees are not given options to choose answers from. Nevertheless, there are different types of qualitative interviews. (Patton 2002, 342.) In structured interviews, preplanned questions are asked from each interviewee in the same way to minimize the impact of the interviewer. Conversational or open-ended interviews resemble normal conversation, and both parties are allowed to introduce new subjects and viewpoints. (Tiittula & Ruusuvaori 2005, 11-12.) In this research I used thematic interviews. In thematic interviews, beforehand decided topics are discussed with the interviewees. The order and method in which themes are introduced and discussed varies according to each interview. (Patton 2002, 343.) Thematic interview is flexible, as it leaves room for differences in the personal experiences and thoughts of the interviewees (Patton 2002, 343).

Interviews can produce knowledge on experiences and behavior, opinions and values, feelings, knowledge, senses and the interviewees background (Patton 2002, 348- 351). Although interview as a research method resembles in many ways everyday conversations, the different roles of the interviewee and the

interviewer in the situation make it unlike normal conversation. (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 22-23.) The interviewer has chosen a subject that s/he wants to discuss, and guides the interview according to that theme (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 23, 44-45). The interviewer is not usually allowed to share or indicate their own opinions on the subject, but should encourage the interviewee to share their ideas and opinions (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 27). The interviewer can contribute to the interview by prompting. Showing interest to what the interviewee has been saying, helps to build an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality. (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 30-31, 41-42.)

Interviews are used to find out about peoples own views, experiences or values, and relating any of these personal matters to a stranger acquires trust. It has been claimed that the first task of the researcher is to build a good relationship to the interviewee (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 41). Creating trust in the interviewees is important for the reliability of the results. The interviewer can build trust by being open and truthful about the aim of the study, and by not pressuring the interviewee to participate in the interview (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 17). It is also important that the interviewees knows the agenda of the interview, what takes place in the interview, why it is conducted, and what the respectful roles of the interviewee and the interviewer are in the interview. Explaining the meaning of the interview is especially important if the interviewee has a different cultural background to the interviewer to minimize any misunderstandings about the interview. (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 17.) I explained the subject of my research, its objectives, and who would know about the results at the beginning of the interviews, and when introducing the research for potential interviewees.

Culture and cultural differences have a part in building trust as well as in the reliability of the results. Mutual knowledge about communication, behavior, culture and values, form the basis of the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Ratas 2005, 79 and Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 22). Different cultural backgrounds can increase the likelihood of misunderstandings. The interviewer can try to avoid misinterpretations by familiarizing themselves with

the culture and customs of the people they are interviewing (Ratas 2005, 83). The interviewer should always reflect on any unattended impacts on the interviewees answers.

Writing down observations and thoughts about the interviews can help to notice any issues that might have affected the content of the interviews (Ratas 2005, 95-97). Recording interviews can also increase the reliability of the interview, as the interviewer can always go back to the interviews and try to trace any influences that they themselves might have had on the interviewee (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2005, 15). In my research I attempted to diminish the effects of cultural and other differences by using a local translator, as well as recording the interviews. As the interviewees knew the interpreter, this can have influenced the interviews both positively and negatively. The presence of a familiar person might make the interviewees restrict their answers, or helped them to feel more comfortable in the situation.

Interviewing children raises questions about the reliability of the results as well as about ethical conduct. For example, children might feel more uncomfortable about the interview situations, and attempt to please the interviewer by their answers. Although, children might be used to answering adults' questions about their life. (Alasuutari 2005, 152-153.) It is important to use terminology that is understood by children. It might also help, if the discussed subjects could be linked to the lives and experiences of the children, to support their understanding about them (Alasuutari 2005, 156-159).

## **4.5. Data analysis**

In this chapter I introduce the different data analysis methods and procedures used in this research. I have used data based analysis for both of the research questions.

### **4.5.1. Content analysis**

Content analysis is a method of analysis that is used to produce general and compressed information on any written data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 105). Content analysis is about finding the different meanings that are present in the

text (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 106). I have used content analysis in this research to answer to the first research question of the different factors that are believed to influence children's participation to child societies. The process of content analysis includes separating relevant units from the data and combining them as one. This reduced data is analyzed by forming thematic categories either on the basis of theory or data, and finally conclusions are drawn from the categories found. (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, Zilber 1998, 112-114.) In this research, I continued to analyze the data based subcategories by searching for linkages to the Personal Investment theory. The number of categories created depend on the data and the research question. A bigger variety of categories captures the quality of data better. (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber 1998, 113.) The units of analysis used in this research varied from individual sentences to short paragraphs. All in all the reduced data consisted of 118 quotes that added up into 22 pages of transcribed text. After the text has been reduced into one document, the quotes are went through and the theme of each is marked down. Similar themes are combined as subcategories. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 112-113.) The subcategories are in turn combined to head categories. The point of formulating bigger groups is to create theoretical concepts and models out of the otherwise complex data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 114-115).

After I had reduced the data, I read through it several times while marking down all the different influencing factors mentioned in each quote. I then proceeded to combine similar themes together to form 13 different subcategories that were further gone through to form five head categories. The head categories and subcategories are presented in table 3. The idea in creating the head categories was to find wider themes between the subcategories that tied them together.

TABLE 3. The final head categories and subcategories.

Head category	Subcategory	Number of quotes
The value and outcome of attendance	Perceived values	22
	Gifts and punishments	7
	Examples and role models	3
Other people & relationships	Sense of belonging	12
	Relationship quality	10
	Authority figures	5
Access to child societies	Time and location	5
	Logistics	10
Availability of options	Social norms	7
	Other activities	26
	Information	5
Risks for wellbeing	Outside risks	4
	Risk from interaction	2

In some cases it was easier to create first the head category, and start searching for the subcategories only after that. This was for example the case with the head category of “Risks for wellbeing”. I first recognized that different fears prevented children from participating in the societies, after which I started to search for more specific sources of fear.

#### **4.5.2. Phenomenography**

I used phenomenography as the data analysis method for the second research question. Phenomenography is a qualitative methodological study approach that is used to study the different conceptions that exist regarding a specific subject. Ference Marton's studies on conceptions and the role of conceptions on teaching and learning have contributed to the approach most (Huusko & Paloniemi 2006, 164.) Phenomenography's aim is to "describe the major features of the different ways a group of people relate to a phenomenon" (Bowden 1996, 64). Whether phenomenography should be understood as a methodology or as a research approach, has been debated. A methodology requires more commitment to its ontological and epistemological standpoints, than a research method. (Niikko 2003, 7 & Huusko & Paloniemi 2006, 165.) In this study phenomenography is used as a method of analysis, to analyze the different justifications that children and adults have for children's participation. The data for the first research question included 65 quotes which added up to 41 pages of transcribed material. All of the child interviews did not include justifications for children's participation, and therefore there are more quotes from adults in the reduced data.

The ontological assumption of phenomenography is that there is only one reality, that people perceive in different ways. This means that a person's experiences, although real for themselves, are only a part of reality and not the reality itself. (Huusko & Paloniemi 2006, 165, 166 & Niikko 2003, 14, 25.) The main reason for studying people's perceptions of reality rather than reality is, that perceptions influence people's action more than the reality. For example, all future learning is based on previous perceptions on the matter at hand (Ahonen 1994, 117). In the ontology, people are considered rational beings who try to create explanations to beings and subjects that they encounter (Ahonen 1994, 116 & 121). The meaning and explanation that is given to different objects further depend on each individual's experiences and understanding (Niikko 2003, 15). To summarize, perception is a picture that a person has created to understand the world around them. Perceptions differ from opinions as although both can

change, perceptions are more stable, comprehensive, and fundamental (Ahonen 1994, 117).

First-order and second-order perspectives are used in phenomenography to describe the focus of the analysis. First-order perspective is about the actual reality while second-order perspective, which is at the focus of phenomenographic research, is about the existing ways of perceiving parts of the reality. (Niikko 2003, 24-25.) In order to study the second-order perspective the researcher needs to be aware of and to indicate their own perspectives clearly in the research to prevent his/her own perceptions from changing the nature of the data. This is due to the influence of the researcher's conceptions on the conclusions that are drawn from the data (Ahonen 1994, 136.) The justifications that I as a researcher had on participation, are written in the discussion chapter (7) of this paper. Qualitative data such as open interviews and texts are usually the data used in phenomenographic analysis. Within the data, different lines of thought are the focus of the analysis (Ahonen 1994, 143). In the analysis, the idea is to consider the data as a whole and not to find the perceptions of individual people. At the initial stage of analysis the conceptions are interpreted in their original context, produced by a specific person in a specific moment, after which all the data and its perceptions are considered as one. The ideas presented in individual interviews or writings can then come to form a part of one major conception, and different interviews can help to understand other interviews better. (Huusko & Paloniemi 2006, 166 & Niikko 2003, 33 & Marton (1986) in Bowden 1996, 60-60.) It is very important that all the different conceptions are found in the analysis (Marton & Booth (1997) in Huusko & Paloniemi 2006, 169.)

I started the analysis by reading through the transcribed interviews. After this, I created a separate document of all the units of analysis that seemed to answer the interview question. While reading through the interviews I had already formed some ideas on the different justifications used in the data. After separating the actual research data, I went over the selected quotes several times connecting quotes that seemed to discuss similar themes and comparing different quotes and

ideas of categories together. As a result of this I created the initial 12 categories of: Freedom from adults, Children are different than adults, Children are competent, Acquiring skills and developing as a person, Competence as a key, Everyone is an expert of their own lives, Adults need to guide children, All children are equal, Children are people, Children are possessors of rights, Children bring value with them and Belonging.

In addition to finding different conceptions, the aim of the analysis is also to distinguish the characteristics of the conceptions found (Francis 1996, 45). The data analysis is multistage as well as data based meaning that the categories are derived from the data and not from previous theories or studies (Niikko 2003, 34 & Ahonen 1994, 123). According to Larsson (1986) and Marton (1988) in the first stage of the analysis the extracts from the data are chosen according to their relevance to the study question and the data is read though several times to comprehend and to find the different concepts that are present in the data (Niikko 2003, 33). The data is analyzed by comparing what one person has said about different things, as well as by comparing what all interviewees have said about the same things (Marton 1996, 182). In the second phase of the analysis the different meanings are divided into groups according to their similarity or dissimilarity (Niikko 2003, 34). According to Marton and Booth (1997) the size of the categories can vary as it is more important to capture the nature of the different concepts than to have similar sized groups (Niikko 2003, 35). In the third stage of analysis the different categories are compared to one another, to distinguish the defining characteristics of each. Lastly, in the fourth part those categories and their distinguishing features are compared to chosen theories and previous researches on the subject. (Niikko 2003, 36-37.) The final categories can be presented either horizontally, if the concepts seem to be equal in content and in importance, vertically, if they differ in either importance or popularity, or hierarchically, if some of the concepts seem more advanced in their content or in their structure (Niikko 2003, 38-39).

After creating the 12 first categories I went through the theoretical background as well as World Vision's documents on children's participation, and compared them to the data. This led me to recognize six categories more: Children's participation is cost-effective, Creating something new in collaboration, Building healthy relationships, Recognizing own skills and competences, Advising others and Need protection. After this I went through the categories one more time to see if there were any overlapping categories, and ended up with the final 14 categories that are presented in table 4. These I continued to place under head categories of "For the best of children as a social group", "For the best of individual children", "For the best of others" and "For the best of the matter". The results are presented in chapter 6 according to the popularity of the head categories and subcategories starting with the most popular ones. While I went through the different justifications that were present in the data I noticed that many of the categories seemed to include different perception about children. Therefore, I decided to add a new research question that would allow me to analyze those perceptions. I compared my own findings on the childhood images with the images presented in theories to create the final descriptions on childhood for each justification.

TABLE 4. Subcategories according to the number of quotes

Name of the category	Adult quote	Child quote	Total
Children develop through participation	9	4	13
Children should have freedom to act	8	0	8
Those with good ideas participate	4	3	7
Children proving their competence	5	1	6
Children want to be good people	2	4	6
Children have a right to their rights	5	0	5
Children are vulnerable	4	0	4
Participation creates better relationships	1	3	4
Children are different from adults	3	0	3
Children can be of help	3	0	3
Children are taken seriously	0	2	2
Children's skills differ from adults'	2	0	2

Innovation is possible with children	0	1	1
Children are experts of their lives	1	0	1

The validity of the final results that have been produced by phenomenography depends on how well the created categories have captured the actual perceptions of the subjects, how well the data answers to the research question and on how well the results are linked to the theoretical aspect of the conceptions (Ahonen 1994, 129-130). Ahonen claims that when using the phenomenographic method, the parts of the study that are most relevant for the reliability of the results are the collection of the data, and the formation of the categories (1994, 130). The validity and relevance of the categories can be measured by presenting the subjects of the research the categories create by the researcher, to let them give feedback on the accuracy of those categories. Another recommended way is to let other researchers to divide the data to categories to see if the results can be replicated. It is also important that the researcher continuously explains in the study the decisions s/he has made concerning the data and the categories. It is also important, that there is a lot of extracts from the data in the text to help the reader to understand the decisions made regarding each category, and to help the reader to judge the validity of the categories. (Ahonen 1994, 131.)

Sandbergh has stated that because of their context dependency, the results of phenomenographic studies are not replicable or reliable. Sandbergh has also said that using other researchers to test the reliability of the categories found, is in fact not in line with the main idea of phenomenography, of everyone having their own perception of reality. (Sandbergh 1997, 204-205, 208.) Another problem of using other researchers to proof the reliability of the research, is that the researchers are only invited to consider the categories and not the reliability of the process itself. Sandbergh suggests that the best way to show the reliability of phenomenographic results is for the researcher to write down their own perceptions and motives on all stages of the process. (1997, 206, 209.) Hasselgren and Beach (192-193) have stated that in phenomenographic research, not enough

attention is paid on whether the perceptions found are those of the interviewees and not the researchers, or the results of the interview situation.

#### **4.6. Ethical considerations**

Ethicalness in a research can cover issues such as how ethical the actual research question is, the ethicalness of sources of information, and the methods of gathering them (Haaparanta & Niiniluoto 1991 in Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 123). It is also important to acknowledge who will benefit from the results of the research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 126). Ethical questions such as not using the interviewees' names or the names of the interview places, and keeping the interview material in a web file that was sealed by password, were considered during this research. One ethically problematic point about this research is that I did not ask permissions for the interviews from the children's guardians. The interviewees and the interview locations were decided usually on the day before the interview, and there was not enough time to ask for written permissions from the children's guardians. The selected child societies were asked to gather for the sake of the interviews. As I did not arrange the meetings with the child societies myself, I do not know if the children's guardians were also informed about the interviews beforehand. I should have taken more initiative and responsibility to ascertain that the guardians were also informed and asked about the research. Permissions for interviewing the children were asked from the children themselves as well as from World Vision organizations in Sri Lanka and Finland. Voluntary participation to the interviews was highlighted when searching for the interviewees, as well as during the interviews. I ended one interview with a child, because I thought the child did not feel comfortable in the interview situation.

All the interviewees were told that they would appear in the research anonymous. Three different interpreters were used in the interviews, who all worked with child societies. Using an interpreter who was familiar with the interviewees can weaken the anonymity of the interviewees. On the other hand, it was a requirement from World Vision's part to have World Vision's own workers present in the interviews to ensure child protection. The anonymity of the interviews might also have suffered from having other people around during

most of the interviews. For example, there people coming to talk or calling to the interpreter, children playing or moving around the interview place. The interview situations were rarely as calm as I had wished. Although, being in a familiar surrounding might have made the interview situation easier for the children.

## **5. RESULTS: Factors influencing attendance**

This chapter answers to the first research question of the factors that are believed to influence children's attendance to World Vision's child societies. There were several different factors that were believed to influence children's attendance, many of which seemed to be connected to each other. Some factors concerned all children while others concerned children from specific groups.

### **5.1. The value and outcome of the attendance**

This head category consists of the subcategories of perceived values, gifts and punishments and examples and role models. The latter two deal more with the idea of concrete as well as abstract outcomes of attendance, while the first is about the value given to different actions. All three subcategories have in common the impact which perceived outcomes have on child society attendance.

#### **5.1.1. Perceived value**

In this subcategory children's participation to societies was affected by the perceived value of the societies. The value of societies depended on what the children could gain from the societies. This subcategory was the second biggest according to the number of quotes. Values play a part in decisions about action. If an activity is not considered valuable, it is unlikely that it is chosen. It was stated in the data that children did not participate because they were either "not interested" or because they thought they "had nothing to gain" from the child societies. According to Maehr (1984, 137) some activities are in themselves more appealing than others.

Further, it was mentioned in many interviews that children would attend if they were offered special activities or benefits. For example, when a society organized journeys, participated in community celebrations or if the children were given

gifts, even children who usually did not attend would come to the societies. In these cases, children had been prevented by other activities such as attending after school tutoring. This shows that the perceived value of activities is an important factor in getting children involved to societies, also when deciding between multiple choices. In addition, children were interested about other child society activities such as playing with other children and teachings on children's rights. One adult also stated that if children's suggestions on what should be done in societies were not followed, they would stop coming. This further proves the importance of having activities that the children liked and valued.

There are some sort of people, children, they come in a way if they get some benefit only. They are going on for picnic, something special and they will come, otherwise they will not come. *Area Y Child 3*

And of course they have plan of course, all plans for the child society. They are normally following those things and of course, and there are some children that they want to change them, the plans and the agenda here of course. Then she, of course when the majority likes the agenda, there are some people, some children who don't like to the, the schedules of course, they actually then the other time, the next time they will not come. *Area X Adult 7*

In Personal Investment theory, Perceived goals are what a person will either gain or lose by different decisions (Maehr 1984, 127). In this subcategory, both appreciating the outcomes of attendance as well as not valuing the society, affected children's decisions to participate. From the four goals that are presented in the Personal Investment theory, the task goals seem to be the most important for the children in this subcategory. In the task goals, the reason for action is in the task itself, instead of in anything that could be gained through the action (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 245 & Maehr 1984, 129-130).

### **5.1.2. Gifts and punishments**

One of the factors said to influence children's attendance, was the punishments or rewards that the children or their parents would receive because of their choice to attend or not to attend the societies. For example, one society had started a procedure where government officials monitored children's attendance to the child societies and were allowed to take away benefits from the families whose

children did not attend regularly. This was said to have influenced the attendance of the children positively. In another quote, it was stated that making participation mandatory would increase the involvement of children. On the other hand, children's attendance was also supported by promising gifts or other benefits if they would come to the societies or would bring friends with them. Children who attended regularly were also rewarded.

They are having some kind of set targets given to the children. If you are maintaining a good number of participation they will be taken to some visits or child trips so they will, those who are not coming are also attracted. (...) and also from the last six or seven months we were having the partnership with the government officers. They are the official ones who has the authority over the child societies. (...) And they have the authority if the parents, children, are not participating in the society some benefits to the parents will be cut off if the children are not participating. This is a good thing because they can influence the parents to send the children for the child society, so that kind of mechanism is being tried out. *Area Y Adult 2*

Children's attendance to child societies was said to be influenced by gifts and punishments. Influencing children's participation through punishments and benefits is the same as Perceived positive or negative outcomes in the Personal Investment theory. There the action decision are influenced by the consequences of different actions on the person him or herself (Maehr 1984, 127). Further, the gifts or punishments were extrinsic to the actual child societies. In extrinsic goals, a person values something that they can gain through different actions, instead of valuing the action or activity itself (Braskamp and Hager 2005, 245). The gifts and punishments that were introduced by the interviewees were not about the core activities of the child society as such.

### **5.1.3. Examples and role models**

The positive and negative examples given by other child society children were also said to influence children's attendance to child societies. Former child society members were believed to act as good examples for other children. It was believed that seeing former child society members who were successful in their work or studies would encourage children to attend the societies. On the other

hand, parents also feared that their children would learn bad habits from other, strange, children in societies.

She is telling that those who were in the child society earlier said that this is a very good program and that they will be given lot of chances and also awareness's on child rights and violations and also leadership so that is why she has joined. *Area Y Child 6*

What children could become by attending the child societies was important in the decision about attendance. The perceived goals, and more over extrinsic goals, seem to fit this subcategory well (Maehr 1984, 127, 129-130, Braskamp & Hager 2005, 245). By their own "testimonies" and their behavior, the former child society members showed that the societies had been useful in their lives. On the other hand, the good examples of former child society members were also said to make children value the child societies more. As such, other children would help potential members to value the societies themselves. On the other hand, parents feared that other children would have a bad influence on their children's behavior if they would join the societies. Again, the expected gains or losses concerned what would happen through attendance, instead of concerning the core meaning or activities of the society.

## **5.2. Other people and relationships**

This head category is about the role that other people and relationships were said to have for children's attendance to child societies. The head category consists of three subcategories: the sense of belonging, the quality of relationships and authority figures.

### **5.2.1. Sense of belonging**

The want of connection as well as experiences and fears of exclusion were said to affect children's attendance to child societies. For example, children stated that they had joined the child societies because they wanted to be with other children. It was also said that people from religious minorities, such as Buddhists in an area inhabited mostly by Christians, did not want to join the societies. This was both because they did not have a connection with the people in the societies, and

because they did not relate to Catholic Church, which had a strong presence in the society nearest to them.

Other than the family...Other than family... He can with the children and play with them and share his ideas, the same age people are there. Sometimes he can not negotiate with his parents umm but umm in child society as is his opinion...umm he can easily move with the children.. and be happy. *Area X Child 2*

You know the, her Buddhist friends of course are not attending the...society. The others of course are coming, the... children known to her of course are coming. (...) The barrier is of course the um... the mass of course. Actually the child society so conducted after the mass, so it is a prior... ritual. Then of course then the other, the friends from the other religion, they have their own opinions regarding the religion and then of course they will not come. *Area X Child 3*

The impact that the sense of belonging (or not belonging) to a group has for decisions on attendance is described in the Sense of self category in the Personal Investment theory. The Sense of self includes ideas about one's talents as well as who one is (Maehr 1984, 124-127). Indeed, the sense of not belonging to the child societies was said to result from differences between who the children were and what the society or its participants were like. Sense of belonging or not belonging can also be an example of the Perceived goals category in the Personal Investment theory (Maehr 1984, 127). Wanting a connection with other children could be a perceived gain of attending the societies while differently abled children feared that they would be left out by other children. The fear of the differently abled children being left out of the group had to do with the skills and talents of the differently abled children especially in comparison to other children. Again, the differently abled children did not participate because the differences between them and other children in the societies. All in all, feeling that the child societies were places that (all) children could belong to and find connections in, seemed to be important for the attendance of children.

### **5.2.2. Relationships**

The relationships that children and their parents had with other children or adults who were connected to the societies were said to influence children's attendance. Both knowing people in the societies as well as the quality of

relationships with the people, were important. For example, parents would not let their children go to child societies if the parents themselves had disagreements with the parents of other child society members or with the child society facilitators. Knowing the World Vision workers was also said to help children's attendance because the parents felt safer to send their children to a place with familiar adults. In addition, it was easier for the children to attend the societies if they had siblings or friends who attended to them as well. The impact of siblings and friends was also shown in the children's answers about how they had heard about the society and about their siblings' attendance to the societies in chapter 4.2.1.

(...) we have a very good understanding of the families those who are poor and those who are vulnerable and also the family status and they are very close with us because we are associating them very close, we know them name. So we ask them: "OK you did not come last week what is the problem?" So parents are also willing to send because we know them by name and they know us very well (...) *Area Y Adult 1*

Knowing people from the child societies and the kind of relationship with them, relates to two categories in Personal Investment theory: the Sense of self and Perceived goals (Maehr 1984, 124-127). From the point of view of the Perceived goals or the Perceived gains and losses, the importance of knowing the World Vision workers as well as other children in the societies can be a question of trust and safety. If the parents did not know the workers, they did not trust them and saw more risks than benefits in letting their children attend the societies. Knowing people from the child societies could also help in making the child societies more relatable for the children and their parents. For example, it was said that seeing older children going to the child societies made parents think that they could send their children to the societies as well. Witnessing the attendance of other relatable children might make the participation to the child societies seem more probable from the point of view of the children's Sense of self as well as from their sociocultural context.

### 5.2.3. Authority figures

All of the children interviewed in this study were underage and living at home. Therefore, it is not surprising that their decisions about attending the child societies were strongly influenced by their parents. Parents were said to influence children's decisions by what they considered as valuable activities. This also included the parents' opinions on the child societies, as well as what they considered as socially acceptable behavior. In addition, parents sometimes feared for the wellbeing of their children if they would join the child societies. Respecting authorities was shown in the data on the impact the opinions of other authorities such as priests had on parents, as well as on the impact the opinions of parents had on their children's actions. In one quote, parents were said to send their children to societies only because the local priest had asked them to. On the other hand, it was stated that some of the children dropped out of the societies because they did not like the child society leaders telling them what to do. Some of the children were also afraid of being questioned by the local priest in the societies. Authority figures either supported or hindered participation through their opinions and demands, as well as hindered participation through the negative reactions that their behavior generated.

She is telling there are some parents, children, those who are being encouraged by the parents to come to the child society, and there are some category of parents they do not encourage the children to come for the child society because the tuition and other extra study purposes. *Area Y Child 2*

Obeying authority figures can be an example of Perceived ways of achieving goals, and the impact of sociocultural context. Especially in regard to children, obeying parents or adults can be part of the expected social norms of being a child. Therefore, the availability of different activities for the children depended on how their parents felt about those different activities. As such, the role of authorities would reflect the category of Perceived ways of achieving goals, as well as what is considered to be acceptable behavior according to one's sociocultural norms as they are described in Maehr 1984, 124-125.

### 5.3. Access to child societies

Access to societies was one of the influencing factors that both children and adults named in the interviews. The findings in this head category are divided into two subcategories: the influence of the location and time of the child societies, and the influence of person related matters on the accessibility of the societies.

#### 5.3.1. Time and location

The time and location of the child societies were said to prevent some of the children from attending the child societies. Having no child society in one's village, as well as having one far away prevented children's attendance. The child societies were considered far away if the distance was more than one kilometer. Long distances were said to hinder girl's participation especially. Shorter distances supported the attendance of all the children. The time when the societies met varied, although most of the societies met during the week around four or five o'clock. The time of the societies was a problem because of the movements of elephants as well as of other activities that the children had at the same time. In one society that met on Saturday mornings, the time of the society was problematic because children told they were too lazy to attend the society so early in the morning during weekends.

*In certain villages they do not have child societies (...) Area Y Child 6*

One factor that influences any decisions is the actual opportunity that people have. Actual opportunities are the kind of activities that exist and are known to a person. (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 248-249.) For some children, attendance to the child societies was not physically possible because of the distance or the lack of societies. On the other hand, the time of the society was problematic because of having to choose between many activities and because the risks caused by elephants. The latter are both connected to the category of Perceived goals, as the reasons for not attending the child societies were the possible negative consequences of participation. Perceived goals guide decisions on action through the expected outcomes of different choices (Maehr 1984, 127). The different risks

that prevented children's attendance to child societies will be discussed in another subcategory.

### **5.3.2. Logistics**

Children's abilities and resources were said to affect their attendance to the child societies. These factors were such as the children being physically disabled so that they could not walk to the society, as well as not knowing how to ride a bicycle or not owning a bicycle. In all of these, the children's nonattendance was connected to the children rather than for example the location or time of the society.

*And those who cannot move normally they are not coming. They are not coming in the sense that there is no one to take them out. Area Y Adult 1*

In Maehr's model, Sense of self or the Beliefs about self are about a person's thoughts on what they are capable or not capable of doing because of who they are and the skills they have (Maehr 1984, 126-127). In this subcategory, the nonattendance was believed to be caused by the lack of skills or abilities of the children, as well as their lack of resources.

## **5.4. Available options**

This head category consists of the three subcategories of social norms, information, and other activities. In all three subcategories, the activities or actions children and their parents considered available for children were said to influence attendance. The availability of actions depended on what was considered acceptable behavior as well as on the actual existence of and knowledge on different options.

### **5.4.1. Social norms**

Children's attendance to child societies was influenced by what was considered to be socially acceptable behavior. The acceptable behavior depended rather on the rules of smaller demographic groups such as religious minorities, social classes and different gender and age groups, than on the rules of the wider society. In this data, acting according to social norms was a factor that prevented children's attendance instead of supporting it. For example, children from rich

families had problems attending as their parents did not want their children to interact with children from poor families. Rich parents were also said to think that they did not need help from others to provide for their children, which was why they did not see any need for the child societies. Being independent might be part of the wealthy families' social norms.

There are some cast issues, no? So earlier there were some families those who do not wanted to be mixed. (...) No the high cast do not want to...They do not want them to come. And also these lower cast people they are not going to interact with them. *Area Y Adult 2*

The impact of social norms on decisions on action is also mentioned in Maher's model of Personal Investment. Part of the Perceived ways of achieving goals are the boundaries set by social and cultural contexts. (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 248-249 & Maehr 1984, 124-125.) In this subcategory the impact of social norms is well exemplified, as the reason for nonattendance was to maintain one's status or to otherwise act according to expectations of one's social or other class.

#### **5.4.2. Information**

Having correct information and knowledge about the child societies and their activities were mentioned to affect children's attendance. In the quotes, it was stated that children living further away from child societies did not know about the societies. In addition, some parents believed the child societies were only meant for families that were involved with World Vision through other activities. Therefore, not having information or having wrong information affected the children's participation through what activities were known to be available for them.

Some children are there they do not know actually about this society. (...) That means they do not know what is happening here. (...) According to his opinion.. Ideas, more activities must be conducted outside the village. Outside this village to inform them that there is something is happening actually. Happening, that there is useful happening here. *Area X Child 2*

The Perceived action possibilities consist of the activities one knows of, as well as what is allowed within one's social and cultural context (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 248-249). In this subcategory, attending child societies was not even a

possibility, as the parents and children did not know about the societies and some thought that the societies were not meant for them.

#### 5.4.3. Other activities

Attending other activities that clashed with the child society was the most often mentioned reason for not attending the child society. Choosing between many options is closely linked to perceived value, as choice is guided by personal values, and the value given to different options. In fact, the most common reasons for children not to attend the child societies were, responsibilities and duties such as going for after school tuition, preparing for examinations, and working or taking care of siblings. Only a few of the children mentioned not coming to the society because of other leisure activities such as playing or attending social events or visiting relatives. Attending school tuition was the most popular reason for not coming to the child societies. The tuitions affected especially children around the ages of 13 to 16. The impact on attendance, of having to choose between many options, was clearly visible in an interview where it was said that the children would come to the child society if it didn't overlap with anything else.

*Actually because of the classes and other things they are not coming. Every...problem is..every day.. they have classes as usual then fifteen year, sixteen year then they are fifteen, sixteen then they have everyday classes. Area X Adult 2*

Of course now you know little far away from this place of course there are a lot of children not attending to the society because you know they use the children for their work, own work.....because of that they are not coming to the... The parents are using their, you know children for their fishing and farming kind of things, because of that they are not coming. *Area X Adult 7*

In addition to valuating activities differently, being able to attend societies is also a question of time as a resource. If the children already had some other engagements, they did not have enough time for the child society, too. The value of the activities is about the gains or losses of different courses of action (Maehr 1984, 127). What the children might lose by attending the child societies was considered more significant than what they would gain by attending. The impact

that the consequences of different choices had on the decisions was evident, as children declined the child societies to perform their duties at home or at school. On the other hand, the lack of time has to do with the real opportunities that the children have. In the Personal Investment theory the Perceived ways of achieving goals are about the real courses of action that people can choose from (Maehr 1984, 124-125). In this subcategory, attendance to child society was said to be impossible because of the lack of time.

## **5.5. Risks for wellbeing**

This head category consists solely of adult quotes. Attending child societies was connected to different kinds of harms, and this was the reason not to attend the societies. This category is divided into two subcategories, risks coming from the environs and risks connected to the children themselves. The factors in these subcategories only hindered attendance, while most of the previous factors have either supported or hindered attendance.

### **5.5.1. Outside risks**

This subcategory is about the potential risk that other people or the environment could cause for the children's wellbeing if they would attend the child society. The risks mentioned were such as the children being hurt on their way to the society by being raped, or being attacked by elephants. The time and the location of the society were connected to the above mentioned risks, too.

*And parents when they come to know that there are elephants nearby they will not send the children. Area Y Adult 3*

This subcategory seems to reflect Perceived losses in Personal Investment theory, as attendance was considered through the harms it could render (Maehr 1984, 127). Further, the perceived losses concerned children's physical and their mental wellbeing, instead of losses to their status, character or material things, like in other subcategories. Again, it is what Braskamp and Hager (2005, 245) called extrinsic goals (or in fact losses) that are said to impact attendance, as the loss happened through attendance to the society and not because of the society itself.

### 5.5.2. Risks from interaction

Another risk that was said to keep children away from the child societies, concerned the social situations in the societies. These risks were about the disabled children hurting other children, and themselves being hurt in the societies, because enough attention was not paid to their special needs.

They cannot, these...they cannot control them (the disabled children). Normally parents are not sending because there is a risk, dangerous. Those who are mentally out they are doing several things, they cannot understand what is wrong and what is right the difference things. The difference, they can't. Then they can't control them. *Area X Adult 1*

Like the previous subcategory, this is about the Perceived goals in Personal Investment theory, too. Attendance was seen as a loss for differently abled children, as they could either hurt other children or be neglected themselves. In addition to this, there is also a connection to what the children were believed to be able to do or what they were believed to require. Differently abled children were believed to require special care and not to be able to control themselves properly. This in turn is linked to the Sense of self category in Maehr's model of Personal Investment, as there people's choices are affected by what they are believed or believe themselves to be capable of being or doing (Maehr 1984, 124-125). On the other hand, the lack of correct attention to the needs of differently abled children as well as the description on the capabilities of differently abled children was mentioned by other people than the children themselves. Therefore, the attendance of differently abled children was impacted also by the Believes about self of people organizing the societies as well as the children's parents.

## 6. RESULTS: Justification for children's participation and images of childhood

In this chapter I will present the different justifications of children's participation that were found from the data, as an answer to the second research question. I will also present the childhood images that are connected to each of the justifications.

The table 5 presents all the head categories and their subcategories in the same order, as they will be presented in the following text.

TABLE 5. The subcategories and head categories for 1<sup>st</sup> research question.

Name of the subcategory	Name of the head category
Children should have freedom to act	For the best of the social group of children
Children can prove their competence	
Children have a right to their rights	
Children are different from adults	
Children develop through participation	For the best of individual children
Children are vulnerable	
Children are experts of their lives	
Children want to be good people	For the best of others
Participation builds relationships	
Children can be of help	
Children's skills differ from adults'	
Those with good ideas participate	For the best of the matter
Children are taken seriously	
Innovation is possible with children	

It was common for the data that participation was explained through benefits, although the objects of benefits varied. The head categories are divided according to who or what were considered to benefit from children's participation.

### **6.1. For the best of the social group of children**

This head category consists of five different subcategories. In these subcategories, children's participation was seen to benefit the cause of children as one of the groups in the society. Children were perceived as a coherent group instead of individuals. In this head category children were believed to be as competent as adults. Children were also expected to have a similar status to adults. Participation was either the means of showing that status to others, or the consequence of the status that they had and were expected to have.

### 6.1.1. Children should have freedom to act

This subcategory was one of the most popular ones in the data, and all the quotes came from adults. Participation was described as children having the freedom of choice and action. Children's participation was justified through judging any adult interference as well as through saying that being controlled by adults hindered the children from being themselves. Although the freedom of children from adults' control was emphasized in this category, adults were still said to have some degree of influence over children's decisions. In a matter of fact, adults' control and determination of the sphere within which children were free to act and to decide, was treated as a given fact. Adults were described to present the children with options from which to choose from, or to limit children's decision-making only to specific topics or arenas, such as child societies. In this category, children were treated as a group instead of as individual children. It was always children as a social group who had the power and freedom to do as they wanted, not individuals. In this category children's participation was based on the idea of the intrinsic value of freedom, the belief that freedom itself is valuable enough to be a reason for participation. Although adults still affected children's actions in the quotes, the interviewees themselves did not emphasize this, but instead emphasized the importance of children being free of adult control.

So in our activities related to children, child society they will have a very big role in playing, so they will be the one to decide and also in the schools as she said especially, they are going on annual picnic in the schools, so that time the principle and the parent they will decide where to go and again they will ask from children: "OK this year where we should go? Last year we went to Colombo Port, something like that. So what is your preference?" So the parents will give some guidelines: "So these places we visited earlier and these places are very far away so what are the places, these are the possible places and what are the.. guidelines". They will give some instructions so children will decide: "OK we will go there" (--) Area X Adult 1

*If we try to bombard them, if we try to control them, if we try to curtail them they are not coming now, they just exist. Area Y Adult 2*

According to Cornwall, one of the justifications for participation in the 60's and 70's was that people would gain equal access to benefits by gaining power and control over important decisions that they hadn't had the power over before (Cornwall 2000, 20-22). Again, Farthing (2012, 75-76) has suggested that children's participation can be used as a way to empower the children, by restructuring the power in intergenerational relationships. The goal would be for children to gain more power in comparison their previous positions (Farthing 2012, 75-76). This kind of empowerment is based on children's marginalization in societies in comparison to adults, and that participation could help to change that situation. In this subcategory, instead of children, adults are the ones trying to give children power over decisions. This shows that adults thought the imbalance in power unfair, and tried to change the situation by modifying their own behavior. Further, the latter quote gives the idea that if controlled, children do not really "live" but merely exist. As human rights are essentially about what is required for a life worth living, here participation as a freedom to express would be understood as part of being a human and a right of the children.

The minority group child of James, Jenks and Prout criticizes the minority status that children have in the society in relation to adults. The minority group child also states that children as a social group have the right to similar power and status with adults. (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 30-31, 211.) This childhood image seems to be reflected in this subcategory particularly well. Adults wished that children would be freed from under adult's control, and this freedom was believed to be part of being a human. Therefore, children were entitled to similar or same kind of status and treatment as adults, although adults remained with some control over children's lives in the data. How this control is justified at the same time when adults control is being limited, is unclear as well as how the two are to be distinguished from one another. Perhaps this dilemma reveals that although children have the same rights as adults, they are considered to be less developed and competent, and remain in need of adult's guidance.

### **6.1.2. Children proving their competence**

*(--)* so those places if they (children) can fit into they think that, they are also doing something they (adults) realize. Area Y Child 6

*And also the parents, they have to understand and they will realize that these children will do something responsible for the community and the people. Area Y Adult 3*

In this subcategory, participation was understood as actively doing or contributing something good for the community. Children's participation was justified through making adults comprehend children's competence. Again, children did not participate because they were competent but for adults to realize this competence. Children doing something that was traditionally thought to belong to adults, showed children's competence. The below quote about a campaign that children had arranged, indicates how children's the participation was not justified by children's freedom of speech or by the matter of the campaign itself, but by proving children's competence.

*But in.. they are giving message that they are aware of those things. Though we are children, we are aware of those things. Area X Adult 2*

Moreover, in emphasizing children's competence, it is clear from the quotes of this subcategory that adults did not generally consider children competent. The kind of competence discussed in the quotes was mainly about what children could do. This means that competence was about people's skills, not about their mental or intellectual abilities. Citizenship participation is based on rights. In citizenship participation people possess rights as citizens, in addition to participation being a way for the citizens to realize their citizenship. (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 2 and Hickey & Mohan 2004, 28-29 and Cornwall 2000, 17.) Justifying participation through proving children's competence is a twist of citizenship or rights-based participation. Children participated so that they would be acknowledged citizens, and not because they were citizens. In a matter of fact, Farthing (2012, 75-76) has claimed that children's participation can be used to restructure intergenerational power relationship for the benefit of the children. Justifying children's participation by changing the role that children

have in the society is also linked to Mayo's and Craig's (2004, 5) description of empowerment. They state that empowerment is about a group gaining power over decisions or more influence, without it decreasing the power or influence of others. Here it was not necessarily the status of children that was influenced, but their perceived competences.

In this justification, children were believed to be competent, and to be competent in a similar way than adults. Because there was a need to validate children's competence, it is probable that children were not thought competent by most people. The idea that children are competent in the same ways as adults is shared by the liberationist approach into child rights. This view presents children as fully capable and competent as adults, and expects that they be treated in the same way as other members of the society. (Hanson 2011, 74-75). In this subcategory, children were said to contribute to the society in same way as adults. Although as children's competences are considered mainly in the light of their skills, the liberationist view on children is not fully applicable. The liberationists consider children to be equal in other competences and in their status to adults, too (Hanson 2011, 74-75). Here children are considered to be as capable as adults in some matters, but nothing is said about their equal status to adults in the present, or as an effect of participation.

### **6.1.3. Children have a right to their rights**

The reason for children to participate in this subcategory is that children have a right to ask for the realization of their rights.

*(--)* if the child is asking for right and (unclear) of course he or she should be answered of course. Area X Adult 6

World Vision states in their strategy for children's participation that coming together with other children helps children to act as social advocators for themselves (World Vision 2015, 22). Hart (1999, 11) claims that according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, participation is about making children aware that they have rights and that they are allowed to claim those rights. This idea of using participation to claim rights is exemplified in the quote above. The

idea that participation can be used to have rights also reflects the newer discussions of participation in development cooperation. The new type of participation is more closely linked to citizenship and the right of citizens to participate and to monitor the realization of their rights, as well as to ask for their own rights (Hickey and Mohan 2004, 6-8 & Cornwall 2000, 17).

The idea of rights in itself is based on the inborn equality of all people (Griffin 2008, 14). As children's participation is justified through acting for children's rights, the childhood view in this category is one that is based on the equal value of all people. It could be said that the rights-based approach in relation to childhood image is a narrow one as children are only perceived as possessors of rights and nothing else. Although, being perceived as a possessor of rights rather than the object of rights, is liberating for the children as it entitles them the same status in the society at least when it comes to their rights. The total equality of competence and status is the goal of the liberation view into child rights (Hanson 2011, 74-75). Although possessing rights makes children equal with other groups in the society, it doesn't follow that they are treated in the exact same way. How children's competence is viewed affects the way their status is lived out.

#### **6.1.4. Children are different from adults**

Children were also believed to have a different knowledge and different experiences about the world than adults. The different realities of children and adults were used to justify children's participation. Participation in this category was seen as sharing opinions and ideas with adults. Children as a social group were believed to experience and live life in a different way than adults did. Therefore, different things were valuable and important for these groups. Children's participation was justified by the uniqueness of the information that children could give in comparison to other social groups. The similar justification is made in the subcategory of "children's skills differ from adults". The difference is that in this subcategory children's mental abilities and living in their own reality made them different from adults, not their skills.

(--) so we can ask even the idea of the children “OK what do you think? How should this be done?” They think “OK we can not go from here because this is very far, if we can go” they might have several options, several opinions because we think as elders only, they think differently which will be suited for them, so it will be a good thing. So it is good as a whole for the children because that road can be used for the children to go to school very quickly so..which we do not see, we see only the commercial gains(--). *Area Y Adult 2*

(--) they (children) have different views of the things and it is on the part of them so how this something is related so children will think "how this will be suited for us?". So if we will construct a ground, playground, so if we get together and do it we will think it from our perspective but if we consult children they will see it on their perspective so she is telling that it is good if that can be achieved, it is good. *Area Y Adult 1*

This justification can be linked to the effectiveness of results by listening to local and indigenous knowledges, which is used in participation in development cooperation discussions. The point is that the more the people whom the development actions concern can themselves be involved in the decision-making process, the more relevant the outcomes of the efforts will be for them (Mansuri and Rao 2012, 23 & Hart 1999, 34). Also, the idea is that the people have unique knowledge on their own lives, societies and surroundings, which are important to know for the suitability of the results (Hickey and Mohan 2004, 6-8). In this subcategory, the different approaches of children and adults to the building projects indicate the idea of indigenous knowledge. In World Vision’s strategy paper for children’s participation, children are stated to be a separate stakeholder group in society, and as such should have a representation in community life decision-making (World Vision 2015, 22). This statement also includes the idea of justifying children’s participation through their unique position in societies.

This participation justification seems to portray “the tribal child” childhood image. This image states that the way children portray the world can not be captured by any other social group. (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 28-29.) It is further stated by Opie and Opie (1977) that children have their own reality or “world” which can not be visited or shared by others, although other people can influence the reality of the children (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 28-29). This separateness of

children and adults is shown particularly well in the latter quote, where children are said to perceive matters from their point of view and adults from their own point of view. According to James (1999, 233-238) “the tribal child” view presents children as having a different status than adults, while both groups are competent in their own worlds. In this subcategory competence is about intelligence and mental abilities instead of physical skills.

## **6.2. For the best of individual children**

In the three subcategories belonging to this head category, participation was justified by being for the best of children as individuals. Although children were considered to be similar in their characteristics, here participation benefitted all children separately, instead of benefitting the social group of children.

### **6.2.1. Children develop through participation**

In the subcategory “children develop through participation”, children participated to gain life-skills, learn important communication skills, and develop their personal skills such as self-confidence. The interviewees further said that learning decision-making and leadership skills was important as those skills would help the children to become good citizens and members of the society in the future.

Because they are the ones who directly go to the community, they will be the ones who are holding the responsibilities in the campus, university maybe, in the vocational training center so it must be strengthened. Because if they are developed, their confidence, their skills regarding leadership and personality they will be no having any hesitations to take decisions, even to take some difficult decisions. *Area Y Adult 2*

*(--)* so by doing that they (children) can improve their leadership qualities and also they can be developed as good social or social world people. *Area Y Child 6*

The idea of participating to develop into good citizens is connected to the citizenship discussions in participation in development cooperation. In the history of participation in development cooperation, participation has been seen as an obligation of citizens and later as their right (Mansuri and Rao 2012, 23 & Hickey and Mohan 2004, 28-29). On the other hand, being a (good) citizen is a result of participation and not the starting point for it in this subcategory. This

point is brought up in children's participation discourse by Hart, too. Hart (1999, 11) says that for children, participation is not just about being a citizen but also about gaining skills for citizenship. Hart (1999, 15) also states that though self-confidence and competence are results of participation, those qualities are also needed in order to participate. From this point of view, children would need to engage in participation in order to participate better in the future. The idea of using participation to build a better future for individuals through learned skills and abilities is also understood as empowering people. People are capacitated so that they can manage their own lives successfully in the future. (Oakley 1995, 5) It is worth noticing that in this subcategory, the increased capacities of the children were meant to benefit also others, and not just the children themselves.

In some quotes, children's need to practice their inborn skills was emphasized. It was stated that through participation children could learn about themselves and would be able to recognize the skills that others had. World Vision's documents on children's participation also mention the idea of using participation as a tool for children to learn about their own skills. According to World Vision, children's participation can "help the children to identify their own talents" (World Vision 2015, 5).

*So all should if all children should participate even themselves they will identify themselves, they will know "OK he is very good in singing, he is very good in dancing"*  
Area Y Adult 2

It is interesting that in the quotes children spoke about learning *from someone* while adults only talked about children's skills *developing*. The children spoke about being taught by other children and adults, and learning from their actions, while adults indicated to self-reflection and learning by doing.

*(--)* also if there are some things to be rectified and recorrected and also the parents can educate them "This is the way to do and this is good in terms of future". Area Y Child 5

*(--)* also by listening to others (children) by sharing with the others their experience can be drawn out as a learning method to her. Area Y Child 1

Learning and developing is thought to be the outcome of participation both in participation in development as well as in children's participation discourses. Participation is believed to support the development of self-confidence and self-esteem as well as different skills needed in social life. In World Vision's own documents participation is also said to develop personal skills such as self-confidence and life-skills, and to help in becoming a good citizen (World Vision 2013, 7 & World Vision 2015, 4).

The childhood image that this kind of participation justification indicates is one where childhood is a stage of becoming an adult rather than being a child. Children were said to learn skills that they would need in the future, and their present competences were not mentioned. Therefore, developing and growing was seen more important than the children's capabilities in the here and now. This childhood image is what James, Jenks and Prout call a "developing child". In "the developing child" childhood is part of the psychological and biological processes of being a human. (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 9, 17-19.) Childhood is compared to the ultimate state of human development, adulthood. Children are then perceived to be less competent and to have a lower status in the society than adults.

### **6.2.2. Children are vulnerable**

Protecting children was used as a justification for children's participation. The interviewees believed children were unable to protect themselves from harm, but by sharing about their lives with adults, those adults would know how to protect the children. Adults could also make children aware of the different dangers that children might face.

He is telling that always parents need to listen to these children because they are vulnerable sometimes. Vulnerable. And they do not know some issues. They are not.. though they are educated they do not have experiences. They do not have experiences and umm as parents are experienced, these parents must, must listen to these children when they are in need of protection, anything. *Area X Adult 3*

She says that first we have to encultivate the habit of listening to the children. Listen to children. Then we are of course able to give solutions.

Without listening we can not give answers to the problems that they are having. *Area X Adult 7*

It is interesting that in the CRC it is the children's right to be protected from harm when in rights-based participation people are supported to take control over their own rights and to protect themselves. One way of perceiving empowerment is that people are given skills and resources to manage their own lives better in the future (Oakley 1995, 5). Although adult's protection seems to "patronize" children rather than to empower them, children can also be empowered if adults teach children how to protect themselves. Protection is a justification in children's participation discussions. Adults can protect children both through receiving information from children on their lives, and by getting children involved in activities that prevent them from engaging in bad company or practices. (Sinclair 2000, 2 and Hart 1999, 36.)

Although being protected is not an outcome of participation in the development cooperation discourses, in children's participation discussions it is a used theme. In development cooperation discourses freedom from harm is discussed as a right that can be monitored and asked by people for themselves. In children's participation, other people than the children themselves take the active role in keeping the children protected. This is interesting from the point of view of childhood images, as children are thought to be less competent in acting for themselves than adults are. This idea was stated in the first quote, too. In the paternalistic approach to children's rights, children are believed to be immature and unaware, unlike adults, and thus in need of adults' protection. The paternalistic approach sees children only through their maturation process so that they are "becoming" a person rather than "being". (Hanson 2011, 73.) As in the quotes children are not yet competent to protect themselves, it is clear that children are only in the process of becoming competent.

### **6.2.3. Children are experts of their own lives**

In this subcategory, children's participation is justified through all children having unique knowledge on their own lives. The unique knowledge that

everyone has on their feelings and experiences, gives them the right to be heard and to affect decisions concerning their lives.

According to my opinion, I have experienced, according to my opinion I am telling, if we have problem, they must listen to us, because we will, our problem... this is our problem, they do not know the context, how do we feel. They are just being out of the scene and looking from outside. Then we felt it umm gravity, actually, we know. Sometimes the problems, difficulties we experience but they are looking outside. Then they must listen. "Father this is happening to me, because of this...Mother this is happening to me because of this." *Area X Adult 1*

Justifying children's participation by the knowledge that they had on themselves and their lives is similar to the ideas of using local or indigenous knowledge in development cooperation. Listening to local knowledge means that the people in the center of development are the ones whose opinions and knowledge is taken into consideration. This based on the idea, that the people themselves have the best knowledge on the lives of their communities and of themselves (Mansuri and Rao 2004, 23). The same justification was also used in the subcategory of "children are different than adults". The difference is that here all people have unique knowledge on their lives that justifies their participation on matters concerning them, while in the previous subcategory children as a social group possessed special knowledge on the life of children. As such, this justification is not just about children's participation but participation of people in general.

In the socially constructed child image, childhood is believed to be a creation of socio-cultural context in its whole. This means, that there is nothing universal about childhood but each child has their own unique experience as a child. (James, Jenks, Prout 1999, 27, 212-213.) Although on the basis of this subcategory it can not be said whether there is anything universal about childhood, it is clear that childhood is portrayed primarily as an individual experience. Children are competent in their own life, with their own emotions, values and opinions. Further, every person has the highest status on matters concerning their own lives because of the unique knowledge that they have about it.

### **6.3. For the best of others**

This head category consists of four subcategories where children's participation is justified through its positive impact on other people, communities and relationships.

#### **6.3.1. Children want to be good people**

In this subcategory participation is understood as helping, advising and guiding other people or other children. The reason why children acted in this way was that this behavior was perceived valuable and as a way of being a good person. The children stated that when other people behaved inappropriately it was right to interfere for the sake of other people. The interviewees also stated that children should become people who could advise others. Therefore, children did not participate to help or advise others, but because they wanted to be good people.

*She is telling for the good of the more it is better to do the correct advise and to prevent somebody from doing some bad thing. Area Y Child 1*

So he is telling in the, among the friends there are some friends who need personal assistance, in terms of studies or personal guidance so he wants to be a man who can lead them. To come out of their situation and to lead a good life. *Area Y Child 4*

Citizenship participation in development cooperation discussions is approached from the point of view of citizens' rights and obligations. As an obligation, participation is expected from citizens (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 2 and Hickey & Mohan 2004, 28-29). In this subcategory, helping and advising others was expected of good people. Although, children participated in this way also because they wanted to become good people and not only because they already were. Farthing (2012, 76) has stated that participation can be approached either as developing good citizens for any kind of society or as creating a good society for citizens. Here, instead of developing as a person through participation like in the subcategory of "children develop through participation", the goal of participation was to act as a specific kind of person. Developing a sense of responsibility over issues is one of the expected outcomes of children's participation (Hart 1999, 30). Here participation was justified as socially and

morally admired way of acting, and growing sense of responsibility in children was not the outcome of participation but the reason for it.

From the point of view of childhood image, it is particularly interesting that helping and advising others happened within children's generational relationships. In some of the quotes, it was implied that children tried to impact other children's behavior in a positive way, and that other children needed this. The children helping and guiding their friends seem to perceive themselves as mature and competent, while other children lacked the same competence. Instead of a homogeneous children's group, children differed in their competences. It is especially interesting that children only wanted to guide other children. This might indicate that children were not considered as competent as adults or have a status that would allow children to advice and guide adults. Children as a group was not as competent as adults, but when compared to other children, children's competence seemed to depend on a person or a situation.

### **6.3.2. Participation creates better relationships**

In this subcategory participation was thought to help boys and girls to learn to be friends together, to bring family harmony, and to build trust and intimacy between parents and children. Participation increased the quality to existing relationships. Both acting together and sharing opinions and ideas were understood as participation.

He is having some friends whose opinion is asked in the family and they are as a family, they live very happily and in a very good way, so he also wants to be, live like that friends. To have consultative family. (--) His best friend has shared with him that they were having a problem and during that time as a family, the all ideas were considered and after that they have come to a solution, and after that they have been living very peacefully. And he was telling that that experience has strengthened their family unity, and he also wants to be like that. *Area Y Child 4*

According to the World Vision's guidelines on child participation, one of the outcomes of children's participation is that it creates "healthy relationships between boys and girls and adults and children" (World Vision 2013, 7). It is interesting that in participation in development cooperation it is the status of

different groups in comparison to others, instead of the quality of the relationships between or within groups that is focused upon. The quality of relationships is only taken into consideration in children's participation discourses. Children's participation is thought to improve the intergenerational relationships as well as the generational relationships of the children, through decreased conflicts and gained social skills (Warshak 2003 in Farthing 2012 and Hart 1999, 35-36). Here the increase in the quality of the relationships was due to deeper understanding of others, as well as learning new ways of communicating together.

In this subcategory children were primarily treated through their wants and needs of good relationships. Focusing on children's needs could mean that children are primarily seen as persons with psychosocial needs. This point of view would mean that childhood is perceived as natural part of every human being, and that as such is common for all (James, Jenks & Prout 1999, 9). Indeed, the need and want of close human relationships is usually common for all people. Further, the relationships were both generational and intergenerational, and seemed to aim at mutual respect. It seems that equality was targeted in both relationships, whether children's status in the society was equal to adults or not.

### **6.3.3. Children can be of help**

One way adults justified children's participation was that children could help adults with the tasks that they had. In this subcategory participation was doing and contributing something for the benefit of others. Adults gave some of their responsibilities to children because they believed that children could help them. Participation was also understood as contributing something for the best of society in subcategory "children can prove their competence". In that subcategory participation was justified by making adults acknowledge children's competence, and not because children could help adults or others. As can be seen from the below quote, children were not expected to help, but adults were happy to let them help for the good of the adults.

That is the responsibility of the society, the community, but also the children when they do that the society they won't oppose that, they will accept it. They think that it is a help for them the elders think. Area Y Adult 3

In addition to helping adults at the present moment, letting children participate was also seen beneficial for the future. It was said that as children would learn how to manage some of the work of the adults, the children could take over those works in the future. Enhancing sustainability is one of the justifications of participation, and it is about creating lasting results for example in the above kind of way (Oakley 1991 in Oakley 1995, 10).

(...) and it is very easy for us later on because they (children) know very well what to do and what are the criteria's and what would be the better time to held this event so they are in a good understanding of the thing and they know that their voices will be heard and according to that the things they can arrange. Area Y Adult 2

The idea that children's participation is a help for the adults reflects the cost-effective reasoning of participation of 1980's. With the rise of neoliberalist ideas in development, people were supported to take over some of government's service provision in order to cut down costs. (Cornwall 2000, 25.) In this subcategory children's participation's justification was that it decreased the demand on adult's resources. Therefore, children's participation would primarily benefit adults in a cost-effective way. From the point of view of World Vision's strategies and guidelines on participation, one of the expected outcomes of children's participation is children and adults sharing responsibilities and respecting each other as partners (World Vision, 2013, 2-3, 6 & World Vision 2015, 5). Here it is not clear if the children think they share responsibilities with adults, but adults used the same thematic of sharing and responsibilities even though this did not happen in equal partnership.

It is interesting that although children are perceived to be able to perform same tasks as adults in this justification, this is not shown in the status of children. In other subcategories such as "children are different than adults" and "children's skills differ from adults'" children's competence made them equal in their participation to adults. In this subcategory, although children are clearly

competent in the same ways as adults, children still have a different status than adults. This is shown in the data through adults not expecting children to participate. In the welfare approach to children's rights, children are believed to be competent but inferior in their status to adults (Hanson 2011, 75). In this approach children are understood both as being and becoming children, with an emphasis on children's need to be protected for a better future. The competence that children had in this subcategory was limited in the quotes to skills that children could learn by doing.

#### **6.3.4. Children's skills differ from adults'**

Children's participation was justified in this subcategory through the skills and talents that were unique for children. Participation was understood as contributing positively to the society life, like in the previous subcategory. Unlike in the previous subcategory, here the uniqueness of children's skills in comparison to adults' skills, made their participation desirable.

Because parents see something in them. (--). Though they (adults) are experienced in life matters those dancing and other things, acting they (children) do, know very well. Therefore when there is something special they actually need the help of these children. *Area X Adult 3*

Children and adults were considered to have different competences, which compensated one another. Further, children's special skills made their participation valuable and justifiable. For example, in the below quote an adult is commenting on a protest that children had organized. In the quote, the uniqueness of having such a protest was highlighted as the most important thing about the protest.

*I have not seen any time that kind of protest, here. Area X Adult 3*

In participation in development discourses, participation is often justified through improved effectiveness, or the efficiency of actions (for example Oakley 1991 in Oakley 1995, 9 Finsterbusch & Van Wicklin 1987, 4). Justifying participation through the unique positive effects of children's input can be understood as an example of effectiveness justification. The reason for involving specific (groups of) people for the sake of effectiveness, is to produce as

meaningful results for the people as possible (Cornwall 2000, 20-22). In this data, children did not participate to benefit themselves, but instead their skills were important for creating a better society life for many. Children's participation was valuable because of the certain activities that they could provide, instead of any certain knowledge. It is worth noticing that the children's specialty is only considered in regard to their skills, and not as any knowledge that they might have about living or experiencing life as children. This was the case in the subcategory of "children are different from adults".

This justification includes a childhood image, where children are considered to be competent in specific skills. Further, children were differently competent than adults, but still their competences were highly valued by adults. This childhood image is what James (1999, 233, 244-245) calls the social child. In the social child image children and adults have equal status, but different abilities. According to James, these different abilities are shown in the different ways children and adults are encouraged to express themselves. In western societies for example, children are usually encouraged to engage in different art forms such as drawing or dancing, while adult's competence is channeled differently. (James 1999, 233, 244- 245.) More than any differences between children and adults, different abilities are the result of socialization. In this subcategory, the equality of children's and adults' status is shown in the need and valuation of children's competences, even though they are different than those of adults'.

#### **6.4. For the best of the matter**

This last head category consisting of three subcategories that justify children's participation through its benefits to the matter or subject that they address. In this head category participation was understood as voicing opinions and ideas.

##### **6.4.1. Those with good ideas participate**

In this subcategory adults and children justified children's participation by stating that children could participate if they had something relevant or valuable to contribute. Adults gave children the permission to participate, if they judged their input important enough. Children's competence and participation was a

matter of intelligence, opinions and ideas. Adult interviewees stated that adults rarely let children participate because adults think they are more competent than children. Adults and children were also said to be competent in different ways. Adults were considered experienced and children educated.

Some children they are not experienced but they are educated. They are telling: "No father this is not like this, you have to do like this". But then then father will say: "No puta (son in Sinhalese), I have the experience. I did once this as you are telling my but nothing happened. To do this this must be changed. *Area X Adult 1*

*She says of course the good things, the good opinions from them should be heard by the elders. Area X Child 5*

Children's participation was evaluated and justified through the quality of their opinions and ideas. In development cooperation, effectiveness has been linked to creating relevant solutions by letting the people concerned participate on solving and identifying matters (Mansuri and Rao 2012, 23 & Hart 1999, 34). In this subcategory, people were chosen to participate because of their perceived superior knowledge, instead of choosing people whom the matter concerned. In top-down development, participation of relevant people or beneficiaries was not supported. Instead, decisions on development efforts and activities were made by professionals from developed countries (Mohan 2008, 46). Likewise, in this subcategory effectiveness was not about involving relevant people for the decision-making, but about involving people whose knowledge was appreciated for other reasons. The goal of participation was to create good results, and this was achieved by including only those opinions that adults perceived valuable.

In this justification, children and adults have different competences as was stated in the first quote. Also children's competence and children's status were believed to be inferior to adults' competence and status. Although children were inferior to adults in competence, they still sometimes showed competence in their opinions and ideas. This competence seemed to concern the children's knowledge of the world, and not the knowledge related to childhood or a person. Adult's competence was learned as well as children's, but it was more valuable

than the type of competence that children had through education. As adult's competence was about the insight that they had gained to matters through their own experiences, there are some similarities to the idea of supporting the participation of those who have most knowledge and experiences on the matter (Finsterbusch & Van Wicklin 1987, 4). Although, in this subcategory adults' experiences were preferred, even if the matter didn't concern the adults.

#### **6.4.2. Children are taken seriously**

This subcategory claims that children should participate because they can have more impact than adults. Children are considered to be more trustworthy than adults, and because of this they are believed in the society more.

She tells that children they do not....tell unwanted things. So the society believes what they say. (--) She tells there will be a lot of impact if this goes through the channel of children. So that there will be a very big effect, impact. *Area Y Child 6*

*She is telling that children do not lie... (--)Do not tell false so therefore parents they will believe them, that will encourage them. Area Y Child 1*

Participation in this subcategory was about being listened to and making a change. Justifying children's participation because of the greater impact on the matter itself, is an example of using efficiency as a justification for participation. Efficiency in development cooperation is about the amount of impact that is achieved with given resources (Finsterbusch & Van Wicklin 1987, 4 and Oakley 1991 in Oakley 5, 9). Here children were thought to have a status in the society that would create bigger impacts than the participation of adults. In subcategories such as "children are different than adults" children's specific knowledge and viewpoint to the world created results that suited them better. In this subcategory children's status helped to make an impact on any matter.

The reason for the great impact that children would have on a matter, was related to the image of children held by the society at large. Interestingly, at least in questions of moral, children were believed to have a higher status than adults. Despite of this, children's competences were not mentioned. Children's status was more important than their competence. In the innocent child viewpoint,

childhood is connected to ideas of purity and morality. Children are believed to be born innocent, which is why the role of adults is to try to maintain this innocence in children as well as possible. (James, Jenks & Prout 1999, 13-16.) Children's innocence seems to be their most important characteristic in this subcategory. Although, unlike in James', Jenks' and Prout's idea where children were objects of adults' actions, here children's innocence gave them a special position to act.

#### **6.4.3. Innovation is possible with children**

In this subcategory, children's participation was justified by innovations that it could produce. Participation was understood as sharing opinions and ideas together with adults. This category bears resemblance to "those with good ideas participate" as adults were thought to be experienced and children to have different competence than adults. Interestingly, here both competences were valued equally.

By connecting those ideas together. Parents and his ideas. Adults as the adults are telling him that he is only a school child. They are very old and they are very experienced and they have new those ideas and by collecting them together and do something new. *Area X Child 2*

The justification of this subcategory focused on the result of cooperation between adults and children - the increased quality of the outcome. In participation discourses the quality of the results is connected to the participation of the people whom the matter concerns (Mansuri and Rao 2012, 23 & Hart 1999, 34). Although, this justification was not about the participation of beneficiaries, it emphasized the increased quality of outcomes as an effect of participation. Creating better results in cooperation is not mentioned as an outcome of participation in participation discourses as such, although learning from one another is (Chambers 1997 in Mohan 2008, 132).

In this justification, children were perceived to have the same status than adults, although they had different competences. The equal status of children and adults was evident from them working together as partners. Yet adults were unwilling to acknowledge children's competence and input. By portraying children as

having equal status but different skills than adults, this category resembles the social child approach to childhood. In the social child, children have different competences than adults but despite of those children should be treated and valued in the same way as adults. (James 1999, 233, 244-245 and James, Jenks & Prout 1999, 32-33.) What is different between the childhood image presented in this subcategory and that of the social child, is that here children's competence is related to their intellectual skills rather than their practical skills.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I will discuss the results presented in chapters 5 and 6. The significance as well as the reliability of the results will be discussed followed by suggestions for further research.

### 7.1. Results revisited

In answering the first research question, it was found that children's participation to child societies was affected by risks for the children's wellbeing, the outcome and value of attendance, access to the child societies, available options and other people and relationships. Of these head categories, perceived goals, one of the elements in Personal Investment theory, was found in the two first. Another category of Perceived ways of achieving goals was found in the head categories of access and available options. On the other hand, both Sense of self and Perceived ways of achieving goals were found in the head category "Other people and relationships", as attendance was influenced both by who children were and what they identified with, as well as being obedient to authorities. Regarding Personal Investment theory, Perceived goals and Perceived ways of achieving goals were found to affect attendance to child societies the most. The Perceived ways of achieving goals consisted for example on children's sociocultural context, the information they had on the societies, as well as the resources that they or the societies had. To summarize, what people believed to influence children's attendance had mostly to do with what children could gain or lose through participation, as well as what was available and accessible to

children. As the child societies are free time activities, it is not surprising that the expected outcomes of attendance, and the availability and accessibility of the societies were thought to affect attendance the most.

The perceived positive or negative outcomes of attending the child societies were mentioned in around half of the subcategories. These subcategories belonged for example to the head categories of “risks for wellbeing” and “the value and outcome of action”. In addition, most of the expected outcomes were those called “extrinsic goals” in the Personal Investment theory. The expected outcomes were related to what could be lost or gained through attendance to child societies, instead of valuing the societies and their activities in themselves. It is worth noticing, that while most of the goals were extrinsic, the two biggest subcategories, other activities and perceived value, were about task goals. Both of these subcategories are about how the child societies are valued also in comparison to other activities. It was said that if the children valued the child society activities enough, they would attend them even if they previously hadn’t had time to join. In regard to studies on factors influencing children’s nonattendance, Nuorten vapaa-aikakysely stated that more than one third of the respondents did not think that the activities they were offered were interesting, and this was the reason for their nonattendance (Myllyniemi 2009a, 55 in Gretschel & all. 2011, 114). Although the impact of valuing the societies was widely recognized, there were also many other factors that influenced children’s participation, that were either not so universally acknowledged or that were not thought to influence participation as much. Further, some of these extrinsic factors affected some children more than others. Because of this, both how the society’s activities are valued by children and their parents, as well as the different extrinsic factors affecting attendance should be paid attention to. From the goals mentioned in the Personal Investment theory only the extrinsic and task goals were mentioned in this data. Ego goals and solidarity goals were not mentioned. Ego goals are competition oriented goals, where the point is to perform better in comparison to other people or standards, while solidarity goals

are about gaining the approval of other people through respect and obedience. (Braskamp & Hager 2005, 245 & Maehr 1984, 129-130.)

The availability of the societies was another feature that was mentioned often to affect children's attendance. Considering the society as an option for children, depended on sociocultural norms and the (lack of) information families had on the societies. Sometimes there were no child societies near the children, the children didn't have time for the societies, or they did not have any means getting into them. There were both physical factors as well as attitudinal ones that affected children's attendance. Also, the importance of social relationships was clear in the data, as other people and relationships played a role in one third of all the subcategories. Especially parents' influence was present in almost all of the subcategories. In many cases it was the children's parents to whose beliefs or actions the interviewees referred to when naming factors influencing attendance. It were the parents who feared for their children's safety and who wanted the children to act according to sociocultural norms. Further, parents' permission for the children to attend the societies as well as how parents valued the societies, also affected children's attendance. Although it was also important what the children thought about the societies. In the "Perceived value" subcategory, the interviewees referred much more to what children thought about the societies than to what the children's parents thought of them. Sévon, Böök and Perälä-Littunen's (2014, 308) remarks on the impact that parents and their opinions have on children's decision-making seem to apply to children's attendance, too. Working with parents and getting them to support the child societies for all children would thus be very important for the children's attendance.

Sense of belonging to the child societies and the type of relationships that children and adults had with other adults connected to the societies, were important. Indeed, there seemed to be a risk of some specific groups being left out of the child societies because of connections, accessibility and social norms. Differently abled children, areal religious minority groups such as Buddhists,

girls from Muslim families and children of wealthy parents were mentioned as children facing difficulties in getting into the societies. What activities are perceived as proper for children regarding their social, cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds have been found to affect participation in other studies as well. Social norms can be part of the children's family life or come from their other social circles (Gretschel & all. 2011, 115). In this study, it was the norms of children's social circles that guided their action. Although this was said to happen through the influence of parents only. Relationships with other children supported children's attendance, as they were said to come to the societies invited or inspired by other children. Good relationships with World Vision's workers and volunteers was also said to support children's participation. On other studies, having proper information about the activities available and having contacts with people or friends who are part of an activity, have also been found to influence attendance. (Laine & Dorff 2008, 120 in Gretschel & all. 2011, 123; Gretschel & all. 2011, 123.)

Many of subcategories seemed to be connected to each other, and to influence children's attendance together. For example, the proximity of the child societies was an important factor for children's safety, and for their ability to come to the society. Also, people living far away from the societies were said to lack information on the societies. The interconnectedness of some of the factors made it also hard to choose, what the final subcategories should be. As many of the subcategories seemed to depend on the time and place of the societies as well as on the parent's opinions, children's attendance would benefit most by paying attention to these factors.

Chapter 6 answered to the second research question on the justifications on children's participation and the connected childhood images. As a result of my phenomenographic analysis I found 14 justifications that were divided into four head categories: "For the best of the social group of children", "For the best of individual children", "For the best of others" and "For the best of the matter". Children's participation was justified mostly through its benefits instead of

justifying it as a right or a way to gain rights. Participation is treated as a principle when it is perceived as everyone's right and a way to gain rights. Treating participation as a principle is also connected to the equal value and status of all people. (Gaventa & Valderrama 1999, 2 and Hickey & Mohan 2004, 28-29.) In practical or benefit focused justifications, participation is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. In a way, gaining rights through participation can also be seen as justifying participation through benefits as something is received through participation. Although, because rights belong to everyone inherently, gaining them is not strictly about gaining benefits but about receiving something that one is entitled to have.

The rights-based discourse was present in two out of 14 subcategories, while the rest of the subcategories were about different benefits of children's participation. In participation in development and children's participation discourses, participation is named to have many different benefits that have to do with different benefits for the participants and the functionality of operations. Rights-based justifications are limited to justifying participation as a right, a way to gain rights and to fulfilling legislations. Therefore, the high incidence of benefits as justifications in the data reflects the theoretical discussions on participation. Also, in this data the different subcategories indicate how participation was justified by these interviewees, instead of indicating all the different ways in which participation can be justified. As development work is for the most part based on rights and children's participation being a right in itself, it is surprising that participation as a principle was not used more often as a justification. It was also surprising that all the principle based justifications were given by adults, although the children have been taught about their rights as well.

Although participation is a right and a way for rights in World Vision's statements, participation is considered to have many positive outcomes besides gaining rights. Those outcomes are the benefits for children, both as a social group and individually, and for children's relationships. (World Vision 2013, 3, 6 & World Vision 2015, 5, 22.) The justifications based on benefits found in this

research are very similar to the expected outcomes of children's participation in World Vision's official statements. Although, there were also some that are not mentioned by World Vision. In this data, children's participation was mostly said to create value for the children's own lives or to the lives and people of their communities. Participation has been justified through effectiveness in the participation in development cooperation discourses. Effectiveness is about creating better results for beneficiaries because of their own contribution for creating solutions and defining problems (Oakley 1991 in Oakley 1995, 9). Although in participation theories effectiveness is often said to create better results for the beneficiaries or the social groups they belong to, in this data children's participation made the results better for other people than just children. According to Oakley (1995, 1) participation's goal can be either to combat reasons behind injustices and difficulties, or to create better results by investing resources. Again, in this data participation was not justified through acquiring justice and rights but as a way for benefits to different people or to community matters. Other benefits mentioned in the theoretical discussions, such as sustainability, efficiency, skills improvement and protection, were each present once in the subcategories.

If the results of the second research question are divided between interviews with adults and children, it is seen that adults were much more likely to justify children's participation through empowerment type of discourses, than children. In these discourses, adults wanted children to have the same status as adults, or at least to have their competences valued in the same way. Yet, usually the status of children was still restricted in some ways by adults. All the right and empowerment justifications belonged to the head category of "For the best of social group of children". 23 of the 24 quotes that created this head category were mentioned in adults' interviews. It is interesting that only adults justified children's participation as children gaining power and status in comparison to adults. Adults also portrayed children as vulnerable or otherwise inferior to adults, which children almost never did. There were very few quotes where children mentioned the power differences between them and adults. Usually

children portrayed themselves as working together with adults, or working without adults for the good of many. Also, children didn't seem to want to change the power in the relationships with adults for their own benefit. Whether this was due to children not considering themselves different from adults or to their submission to those differences, cannot be deduced. Knowing why children did not allude to power differences would be interesting from the point of empowerment and citizenship participation. In both of them, people are supported to take control over decisions concerning their own lives (Oakley 1995, 5 & Cornwall 2000, 17). Supporting citizenship and empowerment would be different depending on whether children did not mention the differences because they did not want more power, or because they thought that they were not supposed to have more power. Maybe the reason why adults were more eager to promote children's equal status was that as working for an organization that highlights the value and the respect of children, this was a matter close to their hearts, too.

In more than one third of the subcategories, participation was seen to benefit other people than the children participating. In addition to the head category of "For the best of others", this was also shown in "Children can prove their competence", "Children can develop" and "Children are taken seriously" subcategories. Although other people benefitted from children's participation in those subcategories, participation was not justified through the benefits for others in these subcategories. It was unexpected that participation was justified through its benefits to people other than the participating children, as in participation in development discourses this is not mentioned. Usually communities or groups in the community are expected to benefit from participation, but in the development discourses, people participating belong to the groups or communities that benefit from participation. In this data, children seemed to benefit other children and adults altruistically. In children's participation discourses, acting for the best of others or for the community is not used as a justification either. On the other hand, participation has been justified by the creation of better relationships. Both children and adults mentioned this

in the data, while children only mentioned partnering and creating unity with adults. Sri Lankan culture is very community-oriented, and this might explain the differences in the data in comparison to participation theories with regard to the role of other people. The role that children were said to have in benefitting others through participation was different in adults' and in children's interviews, too. According to children, their role was to influence others, either individuals or wider groups, to act in better ways. Adults stated that children's role was to use their resources, such as different artistic talents, to create better social life in the communities or to help others in their tasks. Children's viewed themselves as change-makers. This is also a role given to children by World Vision (World Vision 2013, 1). Adults on the other hand, portrayed that children's participation complemented or assisted their own actions in the society.

In most of the subcategories, children were believed to be competent. However, the competence varied from children's physical competence, ie. what children could do, to their mental competence. The mental competence was about children's opinions, ideas and mental capacities. Overall, children perceived themselves more competent mentally, than adults. Adults talked about both mental and physical competence, while children concentrated on their mental competence. The different competence styles were not indicated in theories on childhood images. In those subcategories where children's mental competence was highlighted, children were also said to act or be treated in a similar way to adults. Likewise, in the subcategories of "Those with good ideas participate" and "Children are vulnerable" children's lack of mental competence was a reason to treat them as inferiors to adults. In the data, the style of participation varied according to the different competences. Therefore, when children were believed to be physically competent, their participation was about doing and contributing by doing, while when their competence was mental, their participation was about sharing ideas and opinions. While this is not a surprising notion, this should be remarked especially if a specific kind of participation is aimed for.

In addition to competence, children were perceived through some inborn features, such as human dignity and innocence. It is important to know the childhood images held by both children themselves as well as adults supporting children's participation, as what children are allowed to do depends on what they are thought to be like and to be capable of doing (Sevón, Böök and Perälä-Littunen 2014, 308-309). In this research, different justifications of participation were connected to different childhood images, too. It is important to notice that when children's participation is promoted, it is not just a matter of changing what children do but also changing beliefs on what children are able and allowed to do. Especially for an organization like World Vision, where many people work together for the same goals, it would be important to make sure that the paid workers and volunteers share the same childhood image and justifications for children's participation. This would help to focus the work more efficiently.

In this data, the benefits that children's participation was mostly said to have were atypical for the children's participation or participation in development discourses. Usually, participation was said to create value for the community or other people in general, instead of benefitting the children or the functionality of operations. From the children's participation and participation in development discourses, the perceived benefits were more similar with those in the former as children were believed to gain security, develop their skills as well as their self-confidence, and to benefit children's relationships. From the point of view of children's rights, treating children's participation as benefitting mainly other people is problematic as children's status as possessors of rights is neglected (Karns & Gerschutz 2005, 12). Further, this data seemed to reflect Farthing's (2012, 77) statement of participation being either a way to create well-developed citizens for a society, or to use participation to create good society for the people. It seemed that the point of children's participation was, if not to create, but to have children as citizens who would benefit other citizens and the society, in addition to influencing their own lives.

In addition, children were believed to be competent but whether they were considered competent in their actions or in their opinions and in their intelligence, varied. Equal treatment and status of adults and children, as well as children's role as agents of change was in the interviews connected to children's mental competence. Further, there was a division between how adults and children seemed to perceive children. Both children and adults stated that children were as competent as adults, but children only talked about working together with adults as their equals. Children talked about acting as change makers in the societies, and not in their own lives or in the lives of children as a social group. On the other hand, adults perceived that children were agents in matters concerning children themselves. On matters concerning the societies, adults gave children a role but this was not equal to the role of adults. In addition, adults wanted to protect children and to free them from adult's control.

It is interesting that the role of other people was highlighted in answers to both research questions. For both of the questions, other people were frequently mentioned in the data for different reasons. In addition to this, for both research questions other people were present in the data in ways that were not mentioned in the theoretical frameworks. The highlighted role of relationships, connections and community could perhaps reflect the communal culture of Sri Lanka. It is possible that there is a difference between the childhood images of the interviewees and those that have been the basis of the participation theories.

## **7.2. Reflections on the research process and suggestions for further research**

My initial idea was to research the activities considered to be "participation", in addition to researching factors that affected attendance to child societies. While the first research question has remained pretty much the same, I decided to make changes to my second research question after data collection. I found that I needed to define participation to initiate discussion especially in interviews with children. As I had given some ideas of what participation could be, it was not meaningful to continue with the original research question to find out different ways participation was understood. When I went through the interviews, I

realized that the discussions had produced information on the justifications that the interviewees had for participation. Although I am happy with the results that emerged from the data, I might have gained even more information on the justifications, if I had chosen this research question from the start.

The actual interview processes were not always straightforward, as having no prior experience on conducting interviews, there were many things I was unsure of. My technique and knowledge on conducting interviews increased along the way, and this might also show in the information produced in the interviews. Although using interpreters was necessary for many reasons, not being able to communicate directly with the interviewees made it harder to remain in control of the content and style of the interviews. Also, it was necessary to have interviewees that were known to the children, but it is possible that professional interpreters could have captured better the meanings that were intended. Recording the interviews helped to increase reliability, as I could for example exclude all information that was prompted or given by the interpreters.

In addition to outward circumstances, the researchers own ideas and attitudes influence the reliability of the results. I had read reports from the two Area Development Programs, which included analysis on what affected children's attendance to child societies. In my research, some of the same explanations were given, but there were also many that had not been mentioned in the reports. For example, the impact of sociocultural norms or belonging had not been mentioned in the reports. Also, I had studied the rights-based approach to development and participation as well as the CRC before the interviews. I understood participation primarily as a right and a way to gain and monitor rights. Also, I believed that participation was an important way to support the development of children's self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as to create a sense of belonging to communities. Although I personally prefer rights-based justifications, I emphasized the lack of these justifications in the conclusions because of the role that rights and rights-based participation have in modern development cooperation.

For further research for both research questions, it would be interesting to do a comparison research with the same research questions in other World Vision locations. This research could give more insight into the impact of culture on both issues. I was especially intrigued by the different ways adults and children portrayed intergenerational relationships in this data for the second research question. It would be interesting to research the reason behind these differences, and to concentrate on the differences more deeply. Especially interesting would be to know why children did not speak about gaining power over adults or “freeing children” from adult’s control in the way that adults did. It would also be interesting to further study, what the connection of children’s status in a society and their perceived competences is. For the first research question, it would be interesting to research the ways in which the different influencing factors are connected to each other. It would also be interesting to focus on what factors are said to affect the attendance of children from specific demographic groups.

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## 9. ANNEXES

### Annex 1. Interview frame

#### 1. In what ways is participation understood?

##### a. Children

- i. Do you have experiences of participation? (explained as influencing/changing or trying to influence/change matters at school/home/community/church/temple, sharing your opinion on matters to others, being heard by others) What kind of experiences you have of participating? Examples.
- ii. Why do you think it is important that children participate
- iii. Are you happy with the way that you can participate or would you like to participate more or to different things/in different places? Why?

##### b. WV workers

- i. Could you explain what children's participation means/what is it about for you?
- ii. How would you like children's participation to look like in the future (on the child societies or communities at wide)?
- iii. Has your understanding of what children's participation means changed during your time at World Visions- if so how?

##### c. Child club leaders

- i. Do you have children's participation (children sharing their opinions, influencing/ trying to influence) in the child society (and community)? Can you give examples?
- ii. How would you like children's participation to look like?
- iii. Why do you think children's participation (as explained by the interviewee) is important?

#### 2. What enables and what prevents participation to children's clubs?

##### a. Children

- i. How often do you come to the child society? What kind of reasons do you have for not coming?
  1. How would you solve that problem?
- ii. Do you have friends or do you know people who do not come to the societies? Do you know what is their reason for not coming?
- iii. What do you think makes it hard for other children to come to the society?
- iv. What is your favorite thing about the society/why did you want to join it?
- v. Have you noticed that there is any demographic groups that are completely absent from the child society?

**b. WV workers**

- i. What kind of reasons have you noticed for children to not come to the child society?
- ii. Have you noticed that there are any demographic groups missing from the society?
- iii. What about disabled children- are they coming? Why not?
- iv. Do you concentrate especially to get some special types of children to the child societies? Why and how?

**c. Child club leaders**

- i. What kind of reasons do you think children have for not coming to the child society? / Is it easy to get children into the child society? If not why?
  1. How would you solve those problems?
- ii. Have you noticed that there are any demographic groups missing from the society?
- iii. Do you have disabled children in the area -are they coming? Why not?
- iv. Do you concentrate especially to get some specific group of children to the child societies? Why and how?
- v. How many children usually come to the society? Is there equal amount of boys and girls? If not why?

