

Ethnic Minority Inclusion and Participation in Urban Greenspace: Good Practices of UK Friends Groups

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Preface

People from ethnic minority backgrounds are severely underrepresented in urban greenspace according to UK national statistics. EM groups visit greenspace 60% less than the rest of the adult English population (Evison et al., 2013), in spite of legislation and policies aimed at improving equality of access to urban greenspace. This puts them at greater physical and mental health risks and also results in social exclusion and decreased social cohesion (Evison et al., 2013).

How do we encourage ethnic minority participation in greenspace? How do we achieve positive results where governmental programmes have been largely ineffective? Perhaps the answer lies in community-led social change. Community organisations often have better access than local authorities to the minorities of their communities and can reach them in more effective ways. Marginalised groups are often mistrusting of official authority (Avery, 2006) and may be more receptive to outreach from people from their own wider community. Participating together in urban greenspace has been proven to bring communities together and increase social cohesion (Veen, 2015).

After the 2008 financial crisis, the austerity policies the UK government embarked on resulted in budget cuts for urban greenspace that necessitated the rise of community organisations dedicated to place-keeping their local greenspaces. These small-scale, bottom-up participatory endeavors enable community empowerment (Sara et al., 2020).

Friends Groups: a case study

One such manifestation of community organisations managing and protecting their local greenspaces are Friends of Parks Groups, or more often simply 'Friends Groups'. These groups, which astoundingly number over 7000 spread across the UK, are groups of volunteers from the local communities united by a love for their local greenspace and an ardent desire to protect it. Many recognize that to protect these spaces entails ensuring they are socially and environmentally sustainable. Goals that increasingly can only be achieved if ethnic minorities are drawn into the folds of these community groups. With ethnic diversity actually increasing in the UK, and projected to continue doing so, there are now urban areas where the national ethnic minority is in the majority. If urban greenspace needs volunteers for its maintenance and protection, the importance of improving ethnic minority participation in these spaces must be recognised and acted upon without further delay. Not only does the impending climate crisis require all hands-on deck but there is also no place for social exclusion from active society in a socially sustainable world. This aligns with several UN SDGs, most notably SDG 11 for sustainable cities.

The [National Federation of Parks and Greenspaces](#), the umbrella organization for Friends Groups, has taken on this challenge in earnest. Several Friends Groups, on the frontiers of this endeavor, have already attempted to improve ethnic minority participation in their groups and greenspaces and reported seeing success with various initiatives. They aimed to get minorities actively involved as members, as supporters of the group, as well as active users in the park.

Interviewing six such Friends Groups in my research, I found five common themes running through their successful initiatives illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Five themes in Friends Group practices that improved ethnic minority participation.

Representation of ethnic minorities, in activities and leadership positions, was reported by Friends Groups as greatly beneficial in helping ethnic communities to realise greenspace was a place they could enjoy and be actively involved in. As one Friends Group member said, it helps ethnic minorities see it is ‘not just for “other” people – it’s for everybody’.

Gaining access to minority communities was considered imperative to establish inroads and trust. Groups often did this through trusted insiders who could even provide communication in native languages. One group commendably created YouTube well-being walk videos in [Bengali](#) and [Urdu](#) which, combined, was the second-most viewed content on their channel¹.

Having a smorgasbord of *diverse activities* on offer, from mother and toddler groups, well-being walks, and cycling clubs to theatre groups, craft clubs and gardening groups increased the likelihood that there would be something for everyone to enjoy.

Similarly, Friends Groups who organized activities involving the *youth* witnessed an improvement in ethnic minority participation. This ties in well with the current campaign to [Future Proof Parks](#) Friends Groups are engaging with.



Figure 2 Youth participating in greenspace in Future Proof Parks campaign. Photo by Groundwork (shared with permission).

¹ Shared with permission from group.

Friends Groups also reported success by *facilitating* ethnic minority participation by removing barriers – sometimes through monetary compensation, other times through understanding what barriers exist and taking action like changing meeting locations to more inclusive venues.

Ethnic minority communities definitely place value on greenspace and nature (Burgess et al., 1988; Thompson et al., 2010). This is abundantly clear from the recent uptake of minority-specific groups self-mobilising to organise trips to the countryside and national parks, like [Muslim Hikers](#), [Wanderlust Women](#) and [London Caribbean Trekkers](#). While this is a wonderfully heartening trend, encouraging minorities to participate not just in isolated excursion trips but to also get actively involved in the management and governance of their own local urban greenspaces, will result in empowering them to have greater voices in society and result in creating overall social cohesion.

So where do we go from here?

To improve local, regular, and sustained participation in greenspace from minorities, I formulated a number of recommendations, based on my research findings, for other Friends Groups who are struggling to improve ethnic minority participation. Some of these are for Friends Groups to recruit more ethnic minority persons into their core active group, encourage ethnic background visitors to form activity groups, partner with local schools and youth clubs to organise activities for young people in their greenspaces, as well as make heavy use of trusted word-of-mouth communication which works wonders in communities with collective cultures (McLean & Campbell, 2003). I do underscore however, local success depends on taking into consideration local context, so it is imperative Friends Groups first assess the ethnic minority participation levels in their greenspace and then implement relevant recommendations.

Community organisations, such as Friends Groups, are well situated to drive social change. I hope my research will help provide direction to Friends Groups who do not know where to start on their ethnic participation improvements. They are truly best positioned to gain the trust of minorities in their local communities and encourage their development in the urban leisure and recreation space. As urban populations become more diverse and greenspace managers make provisions to enable participation from minority groups, greenspaces will benefit from increased care and protection while the local communities mutually gain a plethora of advantages. Not only will they collectively benefit from positive effects on physical and mental health but will also be creating socially sustainable, inclusive cities for all to thrive in.

Abstract

Research shows that ethnic minorities are severely underrepresented in urban greenspace, despite current demographic trends indicating ethnic diversity is growing in urban areas. Existing studies have sought to understand the reasons for low ethnic minority participation in greenspace. However, this dissertation focuses on understanding successful practices that have reportedly improved ethnic participation in greenspace. I do this by examining reported success of UK Friends Groups – local community groups of volunteers coming under The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS). The NFPGS hopes to make Friends Groups and their greenspaces more representative of the local community by being more ethnically diverse. I employed qualitative mixed methods with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to identify and investigate the initiatives and practices of six Friends Groups who self-reported improvement in ethnic participation. The findings of this study revealed five common themes running through different reportedly successful initiatives. These were 1) Representation, 2) Gaining Access, 3) Diverse Activities, 4) Youth, and 5) Facilitation. I discussed these themes in light of existing studies about ethnic minority participation in greenspace, as well as triangulated the themes with literature from wider contexts to establish their validity. Finally, based on the themes uncovered, I formulated recommendations for the NFPGS to disseminate to other Friends Groups to improve their ethnic participation as well, with the caveat that customising for local contexts is crucial to achieving success through the recommendations.

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List of Abbreviations

NFPGS – National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces

FG – Friends Group

EM – Ethnic Minority

UG – Urban Greenspace

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1. Introduction

According to UK national statistics, Ethnic Minority (EM)² populations in the UK are reported to be underrepresented in urban greenspace (UG)³ with EM groups visiting greenspace 60% less than the rest of the adult English population (Evison et al., 2013). Although in recent years legislation and policies have aimed to improve equality of access to UG, such as the UK Government's 'Outdoors for All' strategy⁴, the outcomes of intervention programmes have been insufficient. With ethnic diversity in UK increasing and projected to continue, it is becoming crucial to engage EM communities in greenspace. This is, firstly, because in many urban areas EMs now constitute a majority in the local community and the environment needs active citizens for its protection and maintenance. Secondly, being disconnected from greenspace has adverse effects on social inclusion, health conditions and facilitating integration that increases social cohesion (Evison et al., 2013). Therefore, it is no longer viable environmentally, socially, or economically to continue to neglect the lack of EM participation in greenspace.

My dissertation will seek to examine this issue specifically through the study of the UK Friends Groups (FGs), by qualitatively exploring how UK FGs have achieved improvements in EM participation in their groups and greenspaces⁵. The questions I aim to answer are **1) What are the common themes⁶ in initiatives reported by FGs as successful that suggest a basis for establishing good practice?** And **2) What have FGs who reported improvements in ethnic participation in their groups and greenspace done to achieve this?** The identified themes are intended to be the basis for a set of practical recommendations to be implemented by all UK FGs to improve EM participation.

1.1. Background

As populations become more urban and projected to continue, it has become increasingly important to have greenspaces in urban areas. The benefits of such spaces are multi-fold, including mitigating against urban heat effect (Oliveira et al., 2011) and preserving biodiversity. These spaces also contribute to environmental justice, public health and recreation (Fors et al., 2015). Access to UG is associated with better health, psychological restoration and lower mortality (Snaith, 2015; Van den Berg et al., 2007), which is both socially and economically beneficial.

Greenspaces are a quintessential feature of the urban landscape in the UK. The need for public urban parks in the UK was first conceptualised in the nineteenth century. The 1833

² In March 2021, the UK Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities recommended the discontinuation of the term 'BAME' (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) as it has garnered much criticism recently. Two of its major shortcomings are the exclusion of other minorities not reflected in the acronym and the assumption of homogeneity among the groups it claims to encompass. Therefore, I use the alternative term 'Ethnic Minority'. I acknowledge this term may still have limitations, namely that it still does not disaggregate different ethnicities. However, it is at least more inclusive of the ethnicities excluded from 'BAME'.

³ Urban Greenspace encompasses parks, recreation grounds, nature reserves and woodlands.

⁴ For more information - [Outdoors for All](#).

⁵ Throughout this dissertation, the term 'participation' will refer to involvement in both the Friends Groups and the greenspaces.

⁶ I will only focus on common themes related to reported success (not challenges or pitfalls) and this is what the term shall denote throughout the dissertation.

Select Committee on Public Walks was set up to address the provision of open spaces for recreation in increasingly industrialised cities. The genesis of the idea for public parks emphasised a motive to address concerns for public physical and moral health. This concept was known as ‘rational recreation’ and centred on the idea the working classes needed parks to draw them away from undesirable pursuits such as drinking and gambling (O’Reilly, 2019).

Member of Parliament Robert Slaney argued (Hansard, 21 February 1833 vol 15 cc1049-59) a lack of recreational spaces led to, not just disease, but also discontent which had the potential to fuel attacks on the government or the rich. He further bolstered his case for public parks by appealing to the Vice President of the Board of Trade with a capitalist argument that parks would increase the consumption of manufactured goods. He theorised that the lower classes would also take pride in displaying their finery, if given the space to do so. He proposed this should be encouraged because it would not only promote ‘cleanliness, decency and self-respect’ in the lower classes, but would also benefit the wealth of the country by creating consumers who would stimulate the economy and generate profits for capitalists.

This kind of rational recreation in urban parks, therefore, has been criticised by some as an attempt at social engineering, to make working class urban residents emulate the values and behaviours of the urban middle class who self-assumed their own cultural and moral superiority (Wyborn, 1995 as cited in O’Reilly, 2019). Others are not as critical, viewing the establishment of parks for rational recreation less as a concerted effort to impose moral imperialism and more of an indirect way of widening the exposure of the working class to different cultural activities (Conway, 1991 as cited in O’Reilly, 2019). While rational recreation was a defining feature of the roles of parks in the Victorian period, the Edwardian period saw the role of parks change to a place of more active citizenship including political gatherings and sports activities (O’Reilly, 2013). It can be concluded the appearance of UK public urban parks was motivated by a range of concerns for public health, morality, economic improvement and the existing social order.

Another important factor in the genesis of public parks was the demand from the people themselves which is often neglected in a retrospective look at the history of parks. The premise of rational recreation was of social engineering and control in a top-down approach from an active middle-class trying to inculcate their own values and behaviour in a passive working-class. However, some municipal local authorities established a public subscription system for their parks, and this indicates a demand for them existed within the city residents. Working class representatives actively raised money at their workplaces to fund public parks. O’Reilly (2013) is of the opinion this nineteenth century working-class activism proves parks were historically established collaboratively with the community who used the space and their ‘evolving ideas about citizenship and social responsibility’ (p. 137). She uses Heaton Park as a case study for this and highlights a key characteristic of the shift from a Victorian park to an Edwardian Park was one where citizens took on active roles in the park. The presence of community-based active citizenship roles in UG today, in the form of FGs, is only a natural continuation of that.

1.2. National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces – Friends Groups

The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS), constituted in 2010 to be the voice of Friends of Parks Groups (commonly called Friends Groups), believes in promoting benefits of UG throughout the UK and supports grassroots movement of over 7,000 local FGs. FGs are groups of local community volunteers linking the Local Authority of the park, to the broader community around that park. FGs are essentially community representatives existing to amplify their communities' voices while working with local authorities and local business partners to help manage, maintain, and protect UGs⁷.

While provision and maintenance of UG falls under the jurisdiction of the local authority in the UK, public budget and funding cuts have rendered FGs necessary, as they not only provide voluntary hours of labour but can also apply for funding to maintain their local greenspace. Groups can be constituted with a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer or they may be un-constituted. FGs typically consist of a core group of active members, and a larger supplementary network of volunteers/members/supporters that are not involved in the day-to-day activities of managing the park but can be called upon as the need arises, for organising events, litter-picking etc. To maintain this network, FGs establish links with community groups such as schools, religious groups, local businesses, and other volunteer groups. The NFPGS aims to ensure FGs are a true representation of the community, embodying inclusivity and diversity. They currently see a need for research to identify network-wide good practice employed by FGs resulting in improving diversity in their groups and local partnerships/links.

For the scope of this research, it was co-decided with my NFPGS partners the specific diversity to focus on would be ethnic diversity. Attention to cultural diversity leads to community empowerment, greater citizenship, gives citizens a sense of their rights to include their own cultures in the broader urban realm (Low et al., 2009, p. 17) and creates place attachment in people for parks can result in pro-environmental behaviour (Ramkissoon et al., 2012).

1.3. Research Aim and Questions

The purpose of this research is to explore the self-reported success⁸ of initiatives that have improved EM participation in some FGs and their greenspaces and to formulate good practice recommendations for other FGs.

The research questions are:

Primary: What are the common themes in initiatives reported by FGs as successful, that suggest a basis for establishing good practice?

⁷ <https://natfedparks.org.uk/>

⁸ Note: throughout this dissertation 'success' will refer to improvement in EM participation and their inclusion in FGs and greenspaces.

Secondary: What have FGs who reported improvements in ethnic participation in their groups and greenspace done to achieve this?

Identifying common themes running through various successful initiatives, across different kinds of FGs and greenspaces, with varying demographics will help in formulating general recommendations for improving EM participation in other FGs and their respective greenspaces.

The findings will not only help FGs across the UK, but I hope they can inform wider discussion on EM participation in Leisure and Recreation studies. I hope my research may also provide insight for attracting EMs to the general voluntary sector and into other forms of public space.

2. Literature Review

This section will first look at literature on community involvement in greenspace its positive effects on biocultural diversity and its potential to address social exclusion through social change. Second, it will look at existing research on FGs and what the findings suggest in relation to ethnicity. Lastly, it will critically engage with interdisciplinary research in the fields of landscape architecture, cultural studies, geography and leisure studies that explore the relationship between ethnicity and UG.

2.1. Reasons for Inclusive and Diverse Community Participation in UG

National austerity policies have necessitated participation from the people who use UGs, resulting in the popularising of concepts known as user participation, active citizenship, and participatory governance for greenspaces. Studies provide evidentiary support that a community-led approach to UG governance and maintenance leads to an increase in biodiversity (Dennis & James, 2016). Furthermore, incorporating an inclusive approach to UG management has positive benefits on urban biocultural diversity which links biodiversity and cultural diversity (Elands et al., 2015). The term has recently opened up to new evolving perspectives and interpretations relating to the urban context (Elands et al., 2019). Biocultural diversity is considered to account for the different ways urban residents interact with UG, incorporating the different knowledges the cultural diversity of big cities today inevitably introduces (Buizer et al., 2016). It ensures both social and environmental resilience by increasing adaptiveness and enabling transformations.

To harness such benefits, community groups, often embedded within the community and having better access than local authorities to community minorities, can form more inclusive participatory governance of local greenspaces. Additionally, participation in UG brings communities together, increasing social cohesion (Veen, 2015). Research emphasising environmental injustice and inequity shows people who are most likely to be deprived access to parks in the UK are the most income-deprived and have other social problems (GLA, 2001; Jones et al., 2009). This kind of deprivation results in social exclusion, which Burchardt et al. (1999) define as:

An individual is socially excluded if (a) he or she is geographically resident in a society but (b) for reasons beyond his or her control he or she cannot participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society and (c) he or she would like to so participate. (p. 229)

The discourse on social inclusion has been around since the Edwardian period. In 1906 municipal elections in Manchester, Progressive candidate Philip Cohen brought attention to Medlock Street Ward which had wretched living conditions with no open spaces or playgrounds. He stressed the poor residents of the area did not benefit from the large amounts of money spent on Heaton Park due to the barrier of the tram commute cost to the park the poor could not afford ("Municipal Contest," 1906). Heaton Park was therefore not a park for the people but rather only for those who lived near it or could afford to travel to it – which was mostly middle-class residents (O'Reilly, 2013).

Indeed, the earliest parks in UK, such as Sefton Park in Liverpool, abounded in ethnic, class and gender-based inequity of access. Ethnic barriers to accessibility arose based on locations parks were created - putting better parks squarely out of reach for poor citizens belonging to certain ethnicities who could not afford transportation. Class based inaccessibility arose from Sefton Park being monitored with a heavy set of regulations controlling, not only the types of leisure activities working-class park-goers could indulge in, but also creating problems of qualitative accessibility by ensuring a certain level of discomfort and a sense of not belonging (Marne, 2001). These issues have continued into contemporary debates around UG and even today the struggle to achieve environmental equity and justice persists. The groups who are deprived access to public parks may be slightly different today than in the early 1900s and for different reasons, but the fundamental effort to ensure social inclusion across UGs is unchanged.

Christens and Speer (2015), consider the presence of strong community organisations to be, not only a telling indicator of a community's wellbeing and resilience, but also a promising model to support social change. Research shows community-led partnerships and management can generate new ways of funding and reduce public cost, while also empowering local communities and increasing social returns on investment by raising civic participation (Gilmore, 2017; Sara et al., 2020). Community organisations empower local people to create change for themselves and are even said to be foundational to social change (Stoecker, 2009).

2.2. Existing Literature on Friends Groups in the UK

Current literature on FGs focuses mostly on their partnerships with local authorities, participatory management of parks, place-keeping, and community involvement (Crowe, 2018; Jones, 2002b; Mathers et al., 2015; Nam & Dempsey, 2019; Speller & Ravenscroft, 2005; Whitten, 2019). FGs in the UK have a significant position in their communities. Jones (2002a) showcases the success of the eight FGs in his study to effectively entice residents back into parks characterised by degradation.

However, pertinent to my research topic, Kim and Roe (2007) who studied FGs from an empowerment perspective, emphasise the issue of inclusiveness in FGs as one needing ‘urgent consideration because of the growing cultural mix in many urban areas’ (p. 48). They see inclusivity being so vital for FGs, it will shape whether they manage to stay relevant to their local communities in the future. Concern for community representation in FGs is echoed by Whitten (2019), as well as Mathers et al. (2015) who highlighted in their extensive study of seven FGs, that groups were highly effective and skilled in organising events creating local engagement, but observed there was underrepresentation of ethnic minorities. They also observed FG members themselves recognised they were unrepresentative of their local community. Almost all the groups in their study reported they found it difficult to attract people from EM backgrounds.

FGs rely solely on volunteers to conduct their activities and operations. Studies confirm people from EM backgrounds are less likely to volunteer than ethnically white people. This is consistent with findings from studies in the UK (Hylton et al., 2019) where FGs exist, US (Bortree & Waters, 2014) and Canada (Smith, 2012). Intersectionality also comes into play here because individuals from EM backgrounds are more likely to be from low socioeconomic backgrounds and people from low socioeconomic groups are less likely to volunteer (Hylton et al., 2019). Ethnic minorities may also face other barriers such as a lack of skills or resources (Wilson, 2000) or feel disinclined to volunteer for other reasons such as an erosion of their cultural values (Warburton & Winterton, 2010). Making volunteering accessible is essential because of the proven benefits it has on health and wellbeing (Binder & Freytag, 2013; Oman, 2007) and provides a means to address social and health inequalities for those most at risk of social exclusion (Southby & South, 2016).

2.3. Relationship Between Ethnicity and Urban Greenspace

OPENSspace Research Group for CABI published strong evidence that ethnicity is a substantial influencing factor on the use of urban parks in the UK (Thompson et al., 2010). There has been much research into why EMs are underrepresented in UG because it has also been established they value access to greenspace (Burgess et al., 1988; Thompson et al., 2010).

Notable academic contribution linking UG with EM populations includes the work of geographer Clare Rishbeth who employs a particularly Lefebvrian understanding of urban space. Her recommendations to embrace diversity and make public space appropriation easy (Ganji & Rishbeth, 2020) echoes Lefebvre’s opinion to allow residents ‘full and complete usage’ of urban space (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 179). Rishbeth highlights distinct ethnic groups perceive, relate to, and make use of UG in different ways. Her research seeks to answer the pertinent question of whether landscape architects and urban space designers should make different design decisions based on the ethnic profile of users. She has also highlighted how the design of UG can foster conviviality among diverse groups which results in social inclusion (Ganji & Rishbeth, 2020; Rishbeth, 2001). Rishbeth’s work focuses on establishing

ways to increase social inclusion, providing recommendations to landscape architects and policymakers. Rishbeth sees UG as an essential and special place that can help overcome barriers between diverse groups of people.

Landscape architect, Bridget Snaith, also contributes to this discourse by investigating the relationship between the design of urban parks and the preferences of the diverse local communities living around them. Her PhD research sought to answer whether people from EM communities were underrepresented in UGs because those charged with designing the spaces did so with the assumption their own spatial preferences were universally preferred regardless of cultures and ethnicities. She hypothesises,

there is a strong likelihood that, symbolically and functionally, the design and management of parks by dominant ethnic groups, will create spaces that reflect their tastes, preferences, practice and underlying ideologies, diminishing the ability and desire of people who are not from the majority culture to claim or practice equal rights to contested space. (Snaith, 2015, p. 18)

Drawing on the work of social theorists Pierre Bourdieu, Doreen Massey and Henri Lefebvre in her theoretical framework, she underscores the need for ‘cultural consciousness’ in the design of public spaces in order to make them socially inclusive across different ethnicities.

Snaith also highlights Rishbeth’s work as being one of few studies underlining landscape preferences may differ based on cultures and ethnicities, and that park spaces have cultural inscriptions making them less used by certain ethnic groups (Rishbeth, 2001). Both Rishbeth and Snaith agree social inclusion is deemed more likely if physical UGs are planned and designed to attract people of EM backgrounds, based on their cultural and ethnic perceptions and preferences.

However, some other researchers have contested encounters in, or mere usage of, public spaces like UG, are sufficient for the kind of engagement required to resolve conflicts arising from ethnic and cultural clashes. Ash Amin, known for his publications in urban and contemporary cultural geography, particularly criticises the approach of urban planners and designers where ‘the public domain is all too easily reduced to improvements to public spaces, with modest achievements in race and ethnic relations’ (Amin, 2002, p. 968). Gill Valentine, a geographer and social scientist whose research focus includes diversity and social inclusion, agrees with Amin. She states concerns that geographers have romanticised urban encounters and geographical writings assume mere contact with ‘others’ will lead to respect for differences. She suggests a ‘need to be careful about mistaking everyday urban etiquette (such as talking to strangers on public transport or in cafés and queues) as respect for difference’, and points out that indeed ‘spatial proximity can actually breed defensiveness’ (Valentine, 2013, p. 6).

Amin is also slightly critical of the sufficiency of large, council-supported, festival style, EM-themed events, like *Diwali* or *Asian Mela*, intended to make public space feel EM-inclusive.

He believes such events do not cultivate the intercultural dialogue that fosters understanding. Instead he argues the necessity for spaces of interdependence or micro-publics of ‘everyday social contact and encounter’ (Amin, 2002, p. 959) including music clubs, sports associations, community gardens or joint volunteer work in FGs where people from diverse backgrounds can learn new ways of relating with one another.

The concept of micro-publics Amin proposes, was cited by Rishbeth in her later work as evidence for the importance of ‘curated sociability’ (Rishbeth et al., 2019, p. 127) for marginalised communities. She investigated how refugees and asylum seekers relate to UGs and suggested as methods of engagement and supporting participation, ‘curated sociability’ approaches, such as low barrier activities like sports that allow for the co-existence of diverse users.

Geographer and leisure scientist, Edwin Gomez developed his own model called the Ethnicity and Public Recreation Participation Model (EPRP) on the basis of previous theoretical models examining recreation participation of EM groups in the US by contributors from the 1970s-90s (Gómez, 2002).

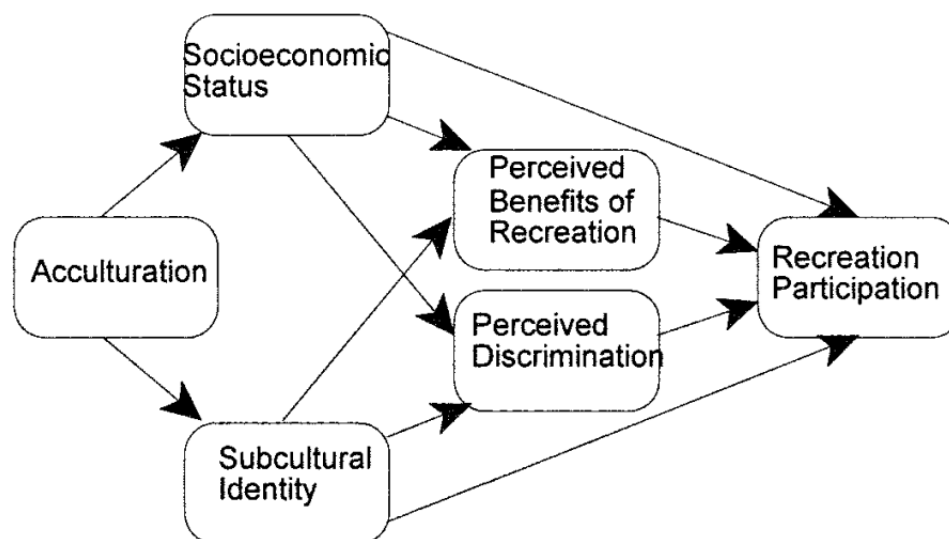


Figure 3 The EPRP Model reprinted from (Gómez, 2002, p. 132)

The main purpose of the model is to help researchers uncover **what** the factors affecting ethnic/racial participation in recreation are and **how** those factors interrelate to affect participation in recreation.

Gomez includes Acculturation in his model and defines it as ‘the process whereby diverse groups retain their own cultural norms while adopting aspects of the dominant culture’ (Gómez, 2002, p. 133). He conceptualised Acculturation as a precursor to Socioeconomic Status and Subcultural Identity.

He also incorporates West’s (1989) discrimination construct and assumes an individual’s Perceived Discrimination is related to Socioeconomic Status and Subcultural Identity. He claims if Socioeconomic Status increases and more opportunities become available, an

individual perceives less Discrimination which may increase Recreation Participation, and the stronger one identifies with a Subcultural Identity the more they perceive Discrimination which may decrease Recreation Participation.

Gomez, similar to Rishbeth (2004), concludes his study with recommendations to increase EM park visits by providing leisure activities in line with their preferences and communications catering to their language needs (Gómez, 1999). Snaith (2015) is critical of these recommendations, questioning whether they follow logically from his empirical research. She maintains Gomez contradicts himself with his recommendations, given his starting assumption was that EM communities would have different cultural norms regarding park visit frequency, which would be lower than the majority cultural norm. She also questions the correlation Gomez makes between Acculturation and park use, as well as his exclusion of Discrimination findings. Lastly, she asserts there is no evidence park use would increase based on Gomez's inclusiveness recommendations.

While much research has been done on the reasons why there may be underrepresentation of EMs in UG, there is a lack of research into what *has* worked successfully to improve inclusion of EMs in UG. This is the gap my research aims to fulfil. Exploring successful FG initiatives reported to have improved EM participation will provide insight into what inclusivity measures are effective for EM communities in UK greenspace and what common factors contributed to the success of those different initiatives.

3. Methodology

I chose to do my dissertation through CRIS⁹ at UCL so I could conduct research that would have social impact and incorporate multiple perspectives and knowledge-sharing. I worked closely with three community partners throughout the process. Dave Morris who is chair of the NFPGS and an FG in London, Paul Ely a voluntary advisor at NFPGS and Nadeem Aziz, chair of an FG in Birmingham.

3.1. Situating the Researcher

My personal researcher ethos accepts knowledge is situated (Haraway, 1991) and the positionality of the researcher is a pertinent factor in any study. This involves introspection and recognition of uncomfortable truths perhaps raising questions around power, ethics, and representation. However, I believe it is morally beneficial to address these issues transparently and openly admit them while capturing the research process, agreeing with McDowell (1992) who believes 'we must recognise and take account of our own position...and write this into our research practice' (p. 409).

I undertook this research topic because as a member of an EM community myself, inclusivity in public space is a subject of particular interest to me. Growing up as a Third Culture Kid (Dillon & Ali, 2019; Pollock et al., 2010) in the expatriate world of the Middle East, I was used to being in a marginalised minority. Attending an international school and living in an expatriate-only gated community, living concurrently with privileges but without basic rights,

⁹ Community Research Initiative for Students (CRIS) at UCL helps partner students with community organisations to produce mutually beneficial research. <https://studentsunionucl.org/volunteering/cris/about-cris>

I had friends and acquaintances from over 50 countries by the time I was an adult. Diversity and cultural differences were something I navigated with ease as a child and other perspectives always something I was genuinely curious to understand. I have often seen myself as a bridge between cultures, probably similar in many ways to second or third generation immigrants and believe this has formed my ability to look at issues with objectivity and an expanded worldview.

3.2. Reflexivity

Understanding my positionality as a researcher was vital for reflexivity which is considered an essential component of qualitative research. Hibbert et al. (2010) define it as a ‘process of exposing or questioning our ways of doing’ (p. 48). I adopted the reflexivity approach of Corlett and Mavin (2018) as a ‘self-monitoring of, and a self-responding to,’ my ‘thoughts, feelings and actions’ (p. 377) through my research process.

During my research, I tried to be cognisant of the fact my background and worldview are different to the UK-specific context under study. As D’silva et al. (2016) asserted ‘people who possess distinct backgrounds from others are likely to have divergent understandings of the world’ (p. 97). I continually gave thought to how my background positioned me as a researcher, particularly in relation to my research participants. During the research process, I felt myself sliding frequently between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives (Mullings, 1999). This helped me to question certain aspects of the methodology and make adjustments based on those reflections.

3.3. Research Approach

I chose to undertake my dissertation with a strong commitment to Participatory Action Research (PAR). The approach is characterised by research emphasising ‘active collaboration through participation between researcher and members of the system, and iterative cycles of action and reflection to address practical concerns’ (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020, p. 3). Key to a PAR approach is community members and researchers co-designing and co-creating some or all of the research process (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). I chose PAR specifically because:

- PAR is well-suited to solving real world problems and community-driven social change, which is what I hope my research achieves.
- The Institute for Global Prosperity (IGP) conducts much of its own research in a participatory manner, employing citizen scientists who self-mobilise to effect social change. As such, I have a proven belief in PAR and its benefits to link communities with academic researchers in a powerful and effective way.
- The topic of ethnic diversity is a sensitive one and can invoke feelings of defensiveness or discomfort. PAR makes the process collaborative and co-produced and enables incorporating insight from partners to make the research as comfortable as possible for those involved.

Throughout my research I made sure to constructively share power, collaborate and co-produce with my community partners, recognising they had knowledge and insight I did not,

which would inform the research beneficially. Details of how PAR was employed at each stage of the process are given in the methods section.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

My primary question ‘**What are the common themes in initiatives reported by FGs as successful, that suggest a basis for establishing good practice?**’ required first understanding the secondary question ‘**What have FGs who reported improvements in ethnic participation in their groups and greenspace done to achieve this?**’. The secondary question findings will help me to identify themes to help formulate recommendations.

This research used an exploratory mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Martha et al., 2007) with exclusively qualitative data collected and analysed sequentially as shown in Figure 4. The NFPGS previously conducted a network-wide ‘Better Friends Survey’ to gather data regarding group composition, management, activities, and community links. Mixed methods were chosen because the data from this survey needed to be expanded on, and initiatives hinted at, needed to be further explored and developed which was done through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling was employed for both questionnaire and interviews so richer, descriptive insight could be collected from information-rich respondents (Patton, 1990)

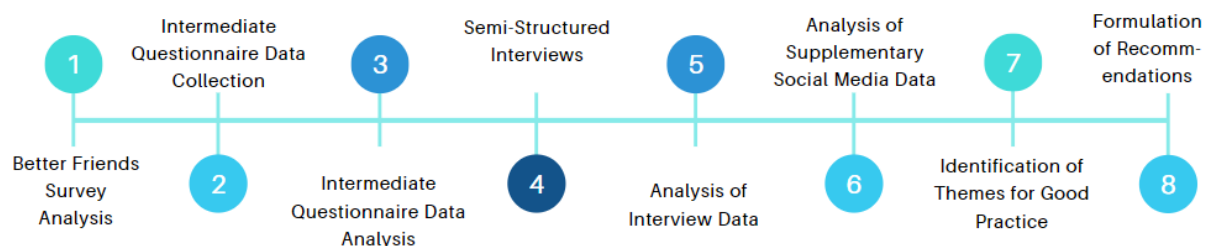


Figure 4 Research Design Diagram

Using an inductive approach in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014), I carried out thematic analysis on interviews to identify patterns across the dataset following the steps outlined by Braun and Clark (2012). I extracted themes from the patterns and used these to formulate recommendations. Table 1 details the research methods used and the PAR collaboration and co-production with community partners in each phase shown in Figure 4. Ethics was approved by UCL and was observed throughout data collection with all participants’ consent explicitly obtained.

Table 1 Research Phases 1-8 Explained

Research Phase	Description	PAR Incorporation
Phase 1: Better Friends Survey Analysis (Primary Data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis of qualitative data from the NFPGS Better Friends survey. - Dataset comprised 211 FG responses from September 2020 to July 2021. - Analysed qualitative answers from free text questions identifying FGs having achieved self-reported success in ethnic diversity and inclusivity initiatives. - Analysed Likert scale questions about diversity and identified FGs valuing diversity. - Above analysis identified 140 FGs, providing a basis for purposive sampling for questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best approach and parameters to extract meaningful data from survey results discussed and co-decided with NFPGS community partners.
Phase 2: Intermediate Questionnaire Data Collection (Primary Data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employed to ensure best chance of recruiting respondents from FGs most likely to have useful information. - Google Forms Questionnaire requested details about EM diversity initiatives undertaken (Appendix A). - Of total 140 FGs identified in Phase 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o 118 groups indicating viewing diversity as important sent mass email with questionnaire. o 22 groups indicating self-reported achievements in diversity sent customised emails referring to their answer given in Better Friends survey. - Groups given deadline of one week to respond to questionnaire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire co-created with NFPGS community partners. - Email drafted by one community partner and finalised with input from myself and other community partner. - Emails sent by community partner to maximise level of response through trusted community member, as opposed to myself as researcher from outside.

<p>Phase 3: Intermediate Questionnaire Data Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Of 140 emails sent out, 26 responses received. - Questionnaire results analysed with following parameters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Groups indicating an EM diversity improvement initiative undertaken. o Groups indicating a significant initiative in free text question. o Groups reporting an improvement in EM participation after initiative. - Analysis results provided basis for purposive sampling for interviews. - Seven groups identified for interviewing potential, but one declined interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NFPGS Community partners consulted on process for recruiting identified groups.
<p>Phase 4: Semi-structured Interviews (Primary Data)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducted to qualitatively explore in-depth, with grounded, inductive approach, FG successful diversity initiative and factors contributing to success. - Emails sent to six groups with Participant Information Sheet (PIS), Consent form (Appendix B) and list of broad questions to be covered in interview. - Six interviews carried out on Zoom lasting 40-60 minutes (Appendix A for questions). - Interview transcription was mixture of digital and manual. - Auto-generated text from Zoom transcription feature were initial transcripts. - Manual corrections made by listening back to interviews and ensuring speech meticulously captured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision to send list of broad questions to participants was due to strong suggestion by NFPGS community partners to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o make interviewees feel more comfortable and less anxious o help interviewees come prepared with most useful information. - Worked with NFPGS community partners to include FG member of South Asian background in research process. - Four of us together co-produced interview questions.
<p>Phase 5: Analysis of Interview Data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thematic analysis of interviews in Nvivo. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community partners kept informed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Descriptive and values coding done using grounded theory and inductive approach. - Two rounds of coding done to refine data and make groupings across interviews to identify implied or explicitly stated ‘successful’ practice. 	
Phase 6: Supplementary Analysis of Social Media Data (Secondary Data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content analysis on FG Facebook groups via observation. - Analysed last six months of posts for representation of EM communities. - Post counted as being EM-representative based on visual indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o EM persons in photos o EM cultural elements in posts promoting events (like <i>Eid</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community partners kept informed.
Phase 7: Identification of themes for good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final codes analysed for commonalities and overlaps. - Codes grouped into themes. - Themes encapsulated practices and initiatives for which FGs self-reported success in EM participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed initial findings and themes with all three community partners. - EM background community partner offered insight confirming themes uncovered made sense from perspective of EM communities. - All community partners provided insight, resulting in finalised themes.
Phase 8: Formulating Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Themes interpreted through and validated by triangulating with wider literature on EM participation in other sectors. - Recommendations for EM participation produced for FGs based on five themes and related practices by FGs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborated with all community partners on recommendations. - Ensured output of research was accessible and easy for non-academic communities to engage with and use.

3.5. Enrichment Through PAR Approach

Given the sensitivity of the topic and the potential for participant discomfort or defensiveness around discussing or revealing action or inaction to address ethnic underrepresentation, it was vital to build a research environment of trust and comfort. Using PAR, my community partners were invaluable in providing insight on how best to phrase questions in the questionnaire, craft an email in the most encouraging and transparent language, as well as helping me to understand the exact reasons why this topic was sensitive in the context of FGs, which helped me greatly in interacting with participants during interviews.

In Phase 4, my choice to send a list of questions to participants prior to the interview was influenced by community partner suggestion for reasons outlined in Table 1. This illustrated how ‘academic-community partnerships... work together to make choices that... best meet the needs of both the research and those involved in the research’ (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020, p. 5).

Additionally in phase 4, the interview questions were initially a process of iterative collaboration between myself and my two NFPGS community partners. However, because of my conscious effort to question my positionality throughout the research, I realised I was addressing the question of ethnic participation in FGs, but the research itself lacked the voice of a person from the group I was hoping the research would affect.

My two community partners were both of White-British ethnic backgrounds and I, despite being from an EM background and perhaps an insider in some ways, was an international student in the UK, and as a simultaneous outsider, did not have detailed understanding of the lived experience of an EM background citizen/resident. If my intended research outcome was to increase inclusion of EMs in FGs and their greenspaces and for it to have ‘the potential to contribute to longer-term processes of societal change’ (Mahony & Stephansen, 2017, p. 43), then it was imperative the research process included the voice of an FG member from an EM background; a member of the group we were hoping for the research to effect social change in AND who was involved in an FG (the desired outcome of the good practice we were concerned with) as illustrated in Figure 5.

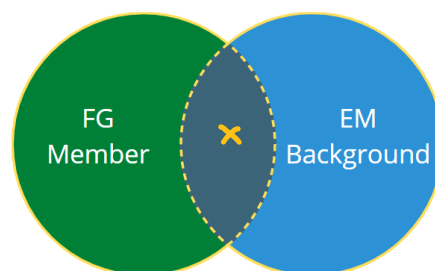


Figure 5 Venn Diagram illustration of the voice that needed to be included in the research.

Incorporating reflexivity enhanced my research by ensuring the inclusion of relevant voices with lived experience of the topic being studied. This informed the research process beneficially and upheld the commitment to PAR, characterised by the ‘co-construction of research through partnerships between researchers and people affected by and/or responsible for action on the issues under study’ (Jagosh et al., 2012, p. 311).

Borrowing Vaughn and Jacquez's (2020) 'Participation Choice Points in the Research Process' diagram¹⁰, I visually summarise the levels of community partner participation employed in Phases 1-8 in Figure 6¹¹. Vaughn and Jacquez's description of levels is mentioned in Figure 7, where 'Inform' is the lowest level of participation and 'Empower' is the highest.

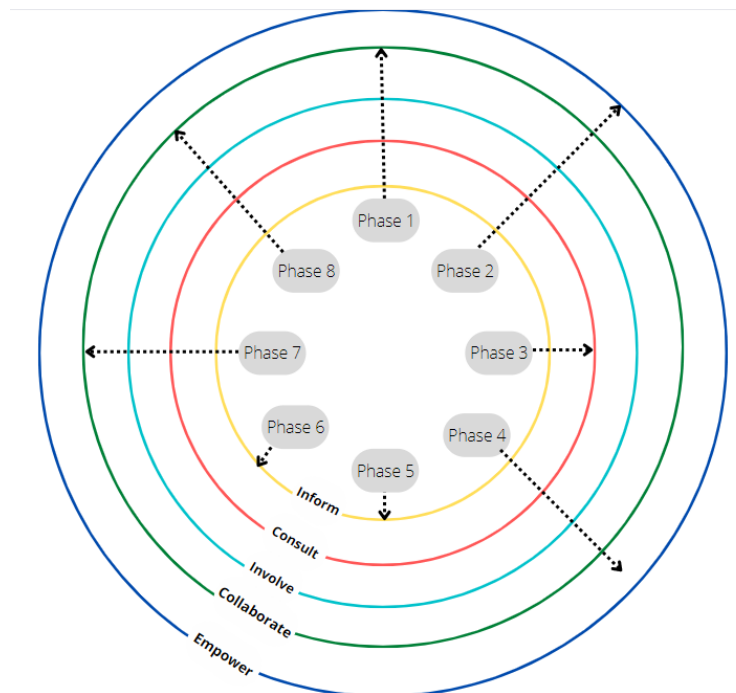


Figure 6 Community partner participation levels in each phase - Adapted from (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020, p. 6)



Figure 7 Definitions of community partner participation levels in research - Reprinted in adapted form from (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020, p. 6)

¹⁰ Note: Unlike in Vaughn and Jacquez' literature, I did not use the level of participation to guide the selection of research tools.

¹¹ For Phase 4, I have chosen to indicate a participation level between collaborate and empower, because the participation of the FG member of EM background greatly shaped the research and empowered the voice of the community the research hopes to impact.

3.6. Limitations

One of the main limitations of this research is its basis on FG self-reported success and not empirical evidence. A primary reason for this is because no baseline data exists against which to measure success. It is not FG practice currently to keep statistics, nor is it likely they will do so in future due to a lack of resources and volunteers. Perhaps also due to the voluntary nature of FGs, response to the questionnaire was low. Possibly, there were other FGs who had successful initiatives but did not respond to the questionnaire. Using purposive sampling based on the Better Friends survey results lent itself to logic, but it was based on the answer to a Likert scale question. These can be subjective and so the criterion may have excluded FGs having valuable information to share. Lastly, PAR can take longer to get things done as achieving consensus takes time with multiple stakeholders producing the research.

4. Findings

This chapter discusses the analysis results¹², first addressing what FGs who reported improvements in ethnic diversity in their membership and greenspace did to achieve that (secondary question), leading to understanding what common themes there were in the different FG initiatives that might suggest basis for good practice (primary research question).

4.1. Context of Participating FGs

Table 2 sets the context of the FGs and their greenspaces, describing the general locations and ward demographics to give an idea of the EM population in the local area. The table shows local areas have varying percentages of EMs which is good for generalising the findings.

Table 2 Context of participating FGs' greenspaces and communities¹³

Group No.	Participant Pseudonym	Greenspace Location	Ward Demographics
FG1	Walter	Birmingham	63% Asian, 24% White, 8% Black, 3% Mixed/Multiple, 1% Arab, 1% Other
FG2	Mark	Liverpool	95% White, 2% Asian, 1% Black, 2% Mixed/Multiple, 0% Arab, 0% Other
FG3	Gabriella	Bradford	54% Asian, 43% White, 1% Black, 1% Mixed/Multiple, 1% Other 0% Arab
FG4	Catherine	London	52% White, 24% Black, 12% Asian, 6% Mixed/Multiple, 5% Other

¹² Because of the sensitivity of the topic, participants were promised total anonymity to facilitate open conversations. Hence, the participants and FGs have been assigned pseudonyms and numbers, respectively. All names mentioned in subsequent quotes have been changed for confidentiality.

¹³ Ward level demographics obtained from *City Population*. (n.d.). <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/> which cites its source as UK Office for National Statistics. I was unable to obtain ward-level disaggregation directly from the government website.

			1% Arab
FG5	Brad	Gloucester	93% White, 3% Black, 2% Asian, 2% Mixed/Multiple 0% Arab 0% Other
FG6	Heather	Manchester	80% White, 11% Asian, 5% Black, 4% Mixed/Multiple 1% Other 0% Arab

4.2. FG EM Participation Levels

The initiatives FGs undertook to achieve reported improvement in EM participation, which were indicated in the questionnaire answers and elaborated on in the interviews are summarised in Table 3. The table also indicates what EM participation looked like for each group because of their initiative(s), ranging from having an EM core group member in the FG to EM usage of the park. These levels of participation (which I established based on insight from my community partners) are visualised in Figure 8 from the most passive to the most active. For example, from these two sources we see FG1 has high levels of EM participation across passive and active types of participation. The FG has two EM core group members, active EM supporters, active partnerships with EM groups and high EM park usage. Other FGs will have varying levels of participation.

Table 3 Summary of FG ethnic diversity improvement initiatives and EM participation as reported by FGs

Group	Main EM Participation Improvement Initiative(s)	EM Core Group Member ¹⁴	EM Active Supporters of FG ¹⁵	EM Active Links ¹⁶	EM Usage ¹⁷
FG1	Partnering with local EM organisations and groups and requesting a park-keeper more representative of the local Asian community.	2	Yes	Yes	High
FG2	Partnering with a University and Local school with large ethnic mix and changing meeting venue to a more inclusive location.	0	No	Yes	Medium

¹⁴ Refers to EM background members in the core group (as officer, committee member, regular organiser, or trustee) representing the highest level of involvement with an FG.

¹⁵ Refers to EM background members who are not part of the core group but still very active in the greenspace's activities and events, supporting the FG with volunteering.

¹⁶ Refers to the partnerships and contacts FGs have with local ethnic groups that get involved in the greenspace and with FGs.

¹⁷ Refers to EM visitors to the park and has the lowest level of engagement with FGs.

FG3	Partnering with local EM community groups, co-opting a female Asian representative in the core group.	1	No	Yes	Medium
FG4	Supported the development of widely varying independent user groups for a range of activities.	0	Yes	Yes	High
FG5	Partnering with local groups that have ethnic mix.	0	Yes	Yes	Medium
FG6	Setting up meetings with local EM women's group to understand what they needed from the greenspace and FG. Being representative on social media.	1	Yes	Yes	High

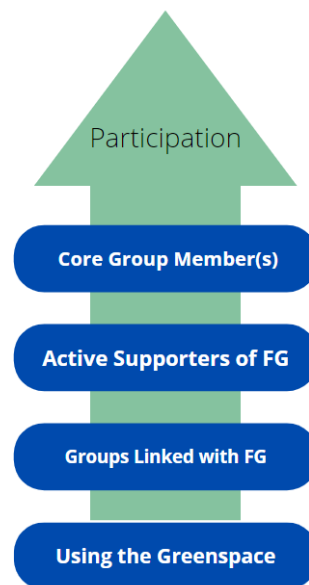


Figure 8 EM Participation levels from passive to active

4.3. Themes

In the semi-structured interviews, I asked participants to elaborate on the initiative(s) indicated in their questionnaire answers and to reflect on what factors contributed to the success of those initiatives. Participants' self-reported success was most often based on visual indicators (like seeing increased EM visitors in the park) and sometimes based on feedback from the EM community. The participants made explicit statements about factors they believed contributed to success of their specified initiative, as well as implicit statements indicating success due to other practices which I meticulously coded in the analysis.

The analysis process involved carefully disaggregating the elements of a single successful initiative into its separate factors which were assigned codes. I further analysed these codes for commonalities and grouped them together into themes. From this thematic analysis, I

extracted five themes, 1) Representation, 2) Gaining access, 3) Diverse Activities, 4) Youth and 5) Facilitation (overview shown in Figure 9), which will be discussed in detail and illustrated with quotes from the interviews¹⁸.

The themes are closely intertwined and often one initiative intricately weaved multiple themes together. It is important to note themes themselves do not indicate low-participation or high-participation scenarios. For example, the interviews revealed it was equally possible to have visible core group EM representation with low overall EM participation, as it was to have no core group EM representation but high overall EM participation.



Figure 9 The five running themes identified in successful EM participation improvement initiatives.

4.3.1. Representation

Subtheme 1: High Visibility

Walter of FG1 related how he realised one day the cohesion between the park-keeper (a form of authority) and the local EM community was not working very well. He decided upon the park-keeper's retirement, to request the next one be 'more representative of the community'. Walter says this initiative alone has,

seen a complete change in the local communities and the people living in and around and using the park. What a difference that made really because 90% of the park users are Asian... [Having a park-keeper from the Asian community], it has [been a key turning point] - it has opened up avenues of introduction.

¹⁸ All quotes have been kept as close to the original speech and only edited for anonymity or for brevity to highlight a specific point.

High Visibility subtheme refers to EM representation manifested either as an EM person in visible leadership roles like park-keepers, FG core group members and EM user group leaders, or then more passive but still highly visible representation like events celebrating EM cultures and customs such as ‘Diwali’ celebrations or ‘Mela in the park, which obviously attracts the Asian community’ (Walter, FG1). Five FGs reported such highly visible forms of representation contributed to success and helped EMs think about the possibility of participating – as Heather from FG6 reflected, ‘I think, just having some [EM] presence on the board has helped people to go, okay it’s not just for white, old, people’.

Subtheme 2: Significant Links

A dominant view amongst all FGs was that key partnerships with local EM groups were critical to improving EM participation, evident in the quote from Gabriella of FG3 who highlighted the role of **Significant Links** saying,

It was a concerted effort between us. The H***** Centre - the people they cater for, are...all South Asian ...then R***** is definitely the Asian Women and girls, but... that's mental health [group]... people coming into the initiative from different directions...So it's not just us, if we were working alone things wouldn't happen.

A few examples of significant links identified by FGs were neighbourhood groups, health centres working with EMs, or schools with mostly EM students. Partnering with such key groups reportedly improved EM participation either in simple usage of the park or more active citizenship such as ‘the Asian Community...started a park watch with us and patrolled the park with us at night’ (Walter, FG1).

FG6 indicated in the questionnaire one of their successful initiatives was representing diversity on social media. Since all FGs had Facebook groups, I analysed the last six months of posts for representation of EM communities using observation as a methodology like Snaith (2015), employed in her user counts to assess EM representation in the Olympic Park. This method assumes ethnicity identities based on physical markers or attributes – a limitation acknowledged by Snaith too.

This observation covered both subthemes because posts were counted if EMs were visible and EM-representative posts often promoted a significant partnership with an EM user group. The results showed a wide disparity amongst FGs’ numbers of EM-representative posts, ranging from just 1 post in the last six months for one FG to 36 posts in the same period for another and FG6 having the second-highest representative posts at 27. Furthermore, Gabriella (FG3) claimed they had feedback the local EM community did not use social media.

4.3.2. Gaining Access

Gabriella of FG3 recounted in her interview how her FG felt they had tried everything they could to reach the local EM community. They had printed out flyers and put them in mailboxes, tried speaking to local councillors for assistance, but the local EM community

remained elusive and out of reach. It was only when they recruited an EM female representative to be in the core group, a breakthrough was made.

Farzana who joined us...she's somebody who's active in the Asian community. And she has the trust of, especially the women... We knew... our efforts needed to be channelled through somebody who the community trusted... Her input meant we got feedback as to what the real situation was. She was the one who made us aware of the fact a lot of the families don't come out without their men. The menfolk are all - a large portion of them - are doing night, evening shifts ... So, if we wanted to engage the local community, we needed to time our events slightly differently.....And she was able to recruit two Bangladeshi ladies for our Apple Day last year to make fresh chutney with apples... we then got feedback from Farzana from these two ladies and the comment was – “we didn't think that sort of thing was for us” but they've really enjoyed themselves.

From Gabriella's anecdote we see **Gaining Access** consists of three subthemes which were reflected in four of the FGs' initiatives. FGs revealed *Gaining Insight* into EM communities helped FGs make adjustments that encouraged EM communities to get involved with the greenspace. Due to cultural differences, sometimes FGs did not know what EMs required from a greenspace. Gaining this insight was often achieved through *Gaining Trust* of the community either by having informal chats ('and we had this women's meeting in the park ...a very lovely chat' – Heather, FG6), or in cases where access was extremely difficult, by employing trusted word-of-mouth *Insider Communication* ('the word would go out via the new park-keeper, through the newspaper shop down the corner, sort of social gatherings...particularly where men were concerned' – Walter, FG1) which also overcame language barriers by using native language communication

The **Gaining Access** subthemes interlink together because the process of Gaining Insight by holding informal focus groups as one FG did, itself fostered trust as barriers were broken down. Using Insider Communication involved using insiders which resulted in FGs Gaining Trust. And using Insider Communication, like FG3 did with their Asian trustee, brought feedback resulting in the FG Gaining Insight.

4.3.3. Diverse Activities

All FGs interviewed emphasised the significant role an array of organised activities had in EM participation. This theme encompasses FG practice to have different kinds of activities going on in the greenspace organised by either FGs themselves or local community groups.

Catherine (FG4), painted a colourful picture of the rich tapestry of diverse activities going on in their greenspace, providing opportunities for intermingling between different user groups.

We hold a people's coffee morning... there's a walk group that comes past and an older people's health walk - a lot of them come in and that's very ethnically mixed, it's like you know, some of them sitting around playing dominoes and another play chess and it's just nice talking shop and it's very mixed...[People] living around our park...

feel able to come in, because there is so much going on. There's an activity most people can say 'Oh, I want to do that', so I think that's the way it works in our park...It's so full of people.

Sometimes the activities were intercultural, allowing interactions between different ethnicities, like FG5's community allotment gardens where, 'the ...allotments group ...get more and more people becoming interested in... growing their own food...and there's a black BAME Community there all the time. We help them with it, and everybody helps, everybody else' (Brad, FG5), showcasing a space where people of all backgrounds work together on a common goal.

Other times the activities described were organised by EM-specific community groups, such as the 'Ghanaian football team that come in and play on the field every Sunday [who] just turned up and did it' (Catherine, FG4). These groups at times only made use of the parks which is at the lower end of the participation spectrum (Section 4.2, Figure 8) but other times their engagement with FGs placed them higher up on the participation spectrum.

4.3.4. Youth

All but one FG strongly emphasised the success they saw by bringing younger people into the greenspace, whether through partnerships with schools and universities, or through FG-organised activities. It was reported to be a significant avenue to improving EM participation because according to Gabriella from FG6, '[When] the children do things, the parents turn up'.

Mark (FG2) specifically credited partnerships with schools and universities as being a key reason their greenspace had significant improvement in ethnic diversity observing it was 'not just in respect of specific events for the school, but in terms of those children, bringing their friends and family to the site. So, it... has a knock-on effect of increasing the diversity of site users'.

Heather (FG6) stated involving youth in park activities inevitably means the parents come out to watch or at the very least pick and drop them. She thinks this helps support a broader learning in EMs of how they can participate in greenspace saying,

Once those kids come to the park... and their parents are coming to the park to drop off and pick them up and they'll see all the stuff on noticeboards about what we're doing. It all just helps to embed the learning this is not just for 'other' people - it's for everybody.

Walter (FG1) also illuminated the fact 'in Asian communities not all children go to schools, traditionally' and special groups partner with FGs to 'bring those home-schooled children out into the environment'.

4.3.5. Facilitation

Five FGs recognised encouraging EM communities to engage with them and use the greenspace, sometimes required facilitation in various ways. For example, Gabriella (FG3) recounts how they facilitated the involvement of two Asian ladies at their event by ensuring ‘it was all organised and we paid their expenses, because they needed to have a taxi because otherwise there was nobody there to [bring them]’.

The facilitation was not always monetary, as Catherine (FG4) narrates how they ‘worked together and supported [an EM user group] ...with fundraising and with their lease and other things’, to obtain one of the park buildings for their activities. In this way, FGs improved EM user group participation by facilitating them with their own skills and expertise.

Similarly, Mark (FG2) advocated for facilitating EM participation by pushing his FG to start holding meetings in a more inclusive space, recognising meeting in a pub could be a barrier to people from other backgrounds. He asserted FGs needed to be ‘open to people who have different religions and different EM mixes who wouldn't have set foot in that sort of establishment’. Likewise, Heather (FG6) narrated how her FG attempted to make local EMs feel included and more comfortable in the park’s new tea-room by inviting feedback on the menu saying, ‘they had a look at the menu, and suggested some things they definitely wouldn't eat and things that were missing off they would normally and so we adapted the menu slightly’.

4.4. Summary

The themes I extracted from my analysis are interrelated and often a successful initiative drew on several themes. For example, FG3’s recruitment of an EM representative into the core group, which I used to explain the Gaining Access theme, also falls under the Representation theme. I have attempted to illustrate each theme with specific examples from interviews but due to how intricately related they are, it may rightfully appear one initiative falls under multiple themes.

5. Discussion

In my literature review, I have discussed at length existing literature on the reasons why there may be EM underrepresentation in UG. In this chapter, I will link the themes from my findings to the literature reviewed, discussing where they confirm or contradict each other. Secondly, one of the things found to be lacking was baseline data to empirically measure progress or success of initiatives and the analysis relied on FG self-reports of success. Therefore, I will triangulate the themes I extracted from my data with findings on EM participation in other fields, like Healthcare, Minority studies, Education, Psychiatry and Sociology to verify their validity.

5.1. Representation (Subthemes - High Visibility, Significant Links)

A dominant view amongst FGs stressed the importance of highly visible representation, as well as more passive low-profile representation. When FGs had a highly visible EM member in a leadership position, they reported very active or greatly improved EM participation. Similarly, when FGs had links with EM groups who use the greenspace or groups having influence on EMs (such as local doctors' surgeries) they reported improved EM participation.

Gomez's model discussed in Section 2.3, postulated Sub-cultural Identity and Perceived Discrimination constructs intervene to affect EM Recreation Participation (Gómez, 2002). My Representation theme links closely to this concept because a person experiences 'representation' only when they are aware of their own 'sub-cultural identity' in order to compare it to the other person. Seeing someone they perceive to be like them at an aspired role, in a leadership position, or even taking part in an activity perhaps one felt was for 'other people', makes it likely EMs perceive they would face less discrimination too, if they did the same as the person representing his/her perceived identity. Identifying Representation as a success factor in improving EM participation confirms Gomez's position stating when people are aware of their sub-cultural identity AND perceive low discrimination their participation improves.

As mentioned in the review section, Amin (2002) is somewhat critical of highly visible large, organised events like *Eid* or *Diwali* celebrations believing they are insufficient in fostering intercultural understanding, although he acknowledges they are 'important signals of shifting urban public culture' (p.968). However, my research aims to identify success in improving EM participation, not intercultural understanding, and FGs reported large, culturally representative events are very successful even in cases, like FG3, where the EM community has been very difficult to access.

Broader contexts also confirm Representation improves EM participation. In the field of Health research, Williams et al. (2010) asserted employing minority staff, faculty and consultants was key to successful recruitment of minority participants in research. Although, the context is entirely different we can draw a parallel to my research because FGs also, in a sense, 'recruit' volunteers for their support and participation in greenspace. Williams et al. also advocate for 'advertising strategies' with EM representation in photos to create positive impressions. However, contrary to this recommendation, FGs reported inconsistent success with EM-representative social media, which my supplementary Facebook observation

analysis confirmed. The three FGs with the highest EM representation on Facebook have varying levels of EM participation. Therefore, it was doubtful whether online representation could be generalised for good practice.

Research in Psychiatry shows EMs may feel more at ease approaching and discussing problems with someone they perceive to be of a similar background (Jackson et al., 2004; Malgady & Costantino, 1998), such as in the case of FG1, with their EM background park-keeper. Additionally, Representation links closely with the socio-psychological concept of role models (a person others look to imitate) which greatly impacts mental barriers and minority participation (Lockwood, 2006; Rivera et al., 2007). FG1, with the highest number of EM core group members and highly visible EM park-keeper, appeared to have the most self-mobilisation and active citizenship from the local EM community. Leadership Studies research provides further support Representation in leadership roles has a causal effect on the group being represented to have an increase in leadership roles overall, establishing with empirical evidence, the importance of representative role models for underrepresented groups (Arvate et al., 2018). When EM communities see EM core group members in FGs they may start to think, as Heather (FG6) said, it is not just for ‘others’.

Similarly, in Political Science studies, Banducci et al. (2004) invoke empowerment theory to suggest representation has positive effects on EMs’ trust in government and participation. Since FGs are a form of participatory community governance, they would benefit greatly from EM representation, as it would attract more EM participation. Bobo and Gilliam (1990) also postulate Representation is a precursor to EM empowerment, which in turn is associated with greater participation in their empirical evidence.

5.2. Gaining Access (Subthemes – Gaining Insight (GI), Gaining Trust (GT), Insider Communication (IC))

According to the majority of FGs, Gaining Insight of what local EM communities required from them and their greenspace was imperative to improving EM participation. Without insight, EM cultures were to FGs, as one participant put it, ‘a bit of a mystery to us!’. In agreement with Snaith (2015), this finding confirms her assertion spatial managers must be willing to challenge their own pre-conceived notions to manage spaces with input from the local community to understand their needs.

However, Snaith challenged Gomez’s (1999) and Rishbeth’s (2004) conclusions for increasing EM participation by catering to EM’s leisure preferences and language needs, arguing there was no evidence presented park usage would increase because of these recommendations. FG reports suggest such initiatives as recommended by Gomez and Rishbeth do, in fact, increase EM participation in greenspace. According to FGs who catered to EM preferences and addressed language needs through Gaining Insight and Insider Communication, EM participation improved. As Walter (FG1) related, the EM background park-keeper employed heavy insider communication to help the FG gain community trust. This led to mutual understanding and respect for each other’s cultures and they ‘were able to open doors, or windows perhaps, you could see through’ which improved EM participation.

Broader contexts also confirm the importance of Gaining Access to EM participation. Health Studies, for example, supports this theme with its recommendations to improve minority participation by forming connections with trusted members of the community and insider perspectives using word-of-mouth (GT/IC) (Ahmed et al., 2022; Mohammadi et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2010). Minority participants reported the most-influential method to recruit them was referrals by other participants or trusted community members (Sankaré et al., 2015) which are particularly effective in collective cultures (McLean & Campbell, 2003). In Immigrant and Minority Health studies, Ibrahim & Sidani (2014) highlight studies successfully recruiting minorities by enlisting referent members of the community (GT/IC), collaborating with community leaders, and involving them in the recruitment process (GT/GI/IC), as well as effectively using word-of-mouth (GT/IC).

5.3. Diverse Activities

All six FGs held the position a rich variety of activities, organised both independently by local community groups as well as by FGs, succeeded in attracting EM participation. These diverse activities can be thought of as the ‘micro-publics’ discussed in the literature review, which Amin (2002) describes as purposefully organised and allowing for people from varying backgrounds to come together for a common goal in an environment of intercultural conviviality. Due to the presence of a common goal, micro-publics enable moments of solidarity. The kinds of activities Amin considers to be micro-publics are ‘communal gardens, community centres, neighbourhood-watch schemes, child-care facilities, youth projects and regeneration of derelict spaces’ (p. 970), all of which were mentioned as thriving activities by at least one FG.

Sociologists Wise & Velayutham (2009), suggest leisure and sport activities are good possibilities for such micro-publics. These are logically abundant in greenspace and evident in the plethora of sports teams, walking groups, youth clubs, biking clubs, craft groups and theatre groups making use of the parks managed by the FGs in this study. Robinson (2020) adds weight to this theme in her study of everyday multiculturalism in a knitting group held in another form of public space (a public library). She found from such ordinary activities (as opposed to local authority sponsored interventions or celebrations of multiculturalism), emerged a kind of community-feeling and trust that fostered understanding of differences and consequently the social inclusion of EMs.

While my results agree with the existing literature on how micro-publics can facilitate participation of EMs, through my interviews it was also identified there were many ethnicity-specific community groups organising activities as well. Hence, the concept of micro-publics as conceptualised by Amin did not always hold true in the FGs studied. The many diverse activities did offer plenty of opportunities for intercultural encounters which could be harnessed to create the kind of participation that engages more with FGs (like different ethnicities working on the same allotment garden), but they also included groups that were sometimes labelled by an ethnicity itself (‘Kurdish-women’s walking group’ and ‘Ghanaian football team’).

While this could be seen as exclusionary to others and not embodying the kind of interculturalism Amin's micro-publics envisions, it likely helps marginalised groups to participate by doing so in the safety of their own numbers – especially if the community is very tentatively emerging to join the wider community, like in the case of FG3. As the levels of participation increase it is reasonably believable these ethnicity-specific groups do not remain cloistered within their own groups but will gradually start to mingle and engage with other groups, as described by Catherine (FG4) of various user groups joining a larger group at the community centre for coffee and biscuits, after their respective activities. The case for encouraging ethnicity-specific groups is also evidenced in the number of such groups recently forming to venture into rural countryside and national parks (Hill, 2022; Kampfner, 2021) All FGs reported providing space for such diverse activities, whether intercultural micro-publics or ethnicity-specific groups, attracted EMs to participate in greenspaces.

5.4. Youth

Five of the six FGs claimed the involvement of youth through various initiatives had a positive effect on EM participation in their greenspaces and two explicitly mentioned children's activities influenced parental involvement.

In Leisure Studies research, Loukaitou-Sideris & Mukhija (2019) promote environmental justice for EM groups in peri-urban parks and highlight their participants' suggestions to forge partnerships with schools, universities and other youth clubs like Scouts, recognising their importance in improving ethnic diversity. While they do not present evidence these recommendations would work, the success FGs report from their own initiatives of partnering with local schools and youth groups gives their recommendations credibility.

There is a paucity of studies specifically examining the link between youth inclusion in UG and its effects on ethnic participation. However, broader studies lend weight to FGs' claims youth-involvement initiatives improved EM participation. In Education studies, for example, Sanders (2009) makes the assertion school, family and community partnerships promote collaboration between students, their families, the communities, and schools.

After-school, extracurricular activities, like sports, held in greenspaces through school partnerships with community groups like FGs, can offer a point-of-entry for parents to get involved. This general ease with which parents can get involved in youth activities held at greenspaces is possibly one reason why FG youth-themed initiatives have seen reported success. Even by simply coming to watch a child's activity EM parental participation in the greenspace increases. Also, such activities offer parents the opportunity to build relationships with each other around the commonality of their children taking part in the same activities, resulting in 'a greater sense of a collective community' (Warren et al., 2009, p. 2231).

Attending after-school activities can be a comfortable experience for EM parents (Birman et al., 2007) as it allows for a passive observer role, as well as offering opportunities to build

relationships with other parents, both EM and non-EM. Such relationships may reasonably offer introduction into other activities (such as an EM mother befriending other mothers and being invited to join a morning walk group). Partnerships with communities, schools and parents ‘focus on the leadership development of parents’ which Warren et al. (2009, p 2210) cite as a core element of community-based organisation collaborations with schools. In extracurricular activities, this could manifest as leadership in taking on lead roles to organise activities or volunteering as assistant coaches for junior sports teams. Interactive participation like this is postulated to be a prerequisite to the kind of active citizenship (Jansen et al., 2006) that may culminate in FGs having EM active core group members.

5.5. Facilitation

This theme encapsulates successful elements of FG initiatives characterised by extra measures taken to support EM participation. Gomez (2002) hypothesises in his model Socioeconomic Status affects EM participation; a low socioeconomic status hinders participation. FG3 appears to confirm his postulation with reports of improved EM participation at their park event by providing funded transportation. Without this compensation, FG3 claimed the EM persons would not have been able to participate in the event.

There is evidence to support facilitation for marginalised communities in wider contexts as well. Healthcare research claims providing compensation and incentives like covering travel expenses or childcare, improves EM participation in studies (Ibrahim & Sidani, 2014). Offering free classes and compensation that offset practical barriers (Williams et al., 2010) like FG3 did, signals to EM members FGs appreciate their participation and efforts in the community space.

However, my research also uncovered facilitation need not always be in the form of financial compensation. Sometimes the facilitation was in the form of FGs sharing skills with various EM groups or helping build capacity by supporting them through legal processes to get approvals from local councils like FG4 did. Such knowledge-sharing aligned with what my EM community partner highlighted as a necessity during the research process. He strongly voiced those who have specialist knowledge needed to be a successful FG, should share that knowledge with EMs to build their capabilities. He stressed one reason EM people hesitate to come forward is a lack of formal education or skills and being unconfident in what they could offer to FGs. The two FGs who claimed to work on building EM groups’ capabilities also reported more self-mobilised EM participation than most of the other FGs

Other times FGs facilitated EM participation by recognising certain barriers to participation existed in current FG practices and adapting, like changing meeting locations from a pub to a more inclusive venue. My EM community partner also pointed out FGs facilitating inclusion like this where EMs could be their authentic selves, without compromising their cultures or beliefs, enables minorities to feel comfortable sharing ideas and stepping up for leadership

roles which would help slide them higher up the participation spectrum (Section 4.2, Figure 8).

6. Recommendations

The aim of this research was to provide the NFPGS with practical recommendations FGs could use to improve EM participation in their groups and greenspaces. This section will present recommendations based on the findings of qualitative research investigating the successes of six FGs who self-reported improvements in EM participation, in an approachable and community-usable format.

I present a Recommendations Palette in Figure 10 to visually illustrate FGs must get creative to formulate their EM participation improvement strategies. Most of the FGs interviewed first informally analysed the current EM participation situation. This helped them to customise their initiatives to the local context. In line with Amin (2002), who sees success resulting from local context and local energies, I suggest a foundational recommendation to first analyse current EM participation levels to understand the local context (denoted by the palette itself).

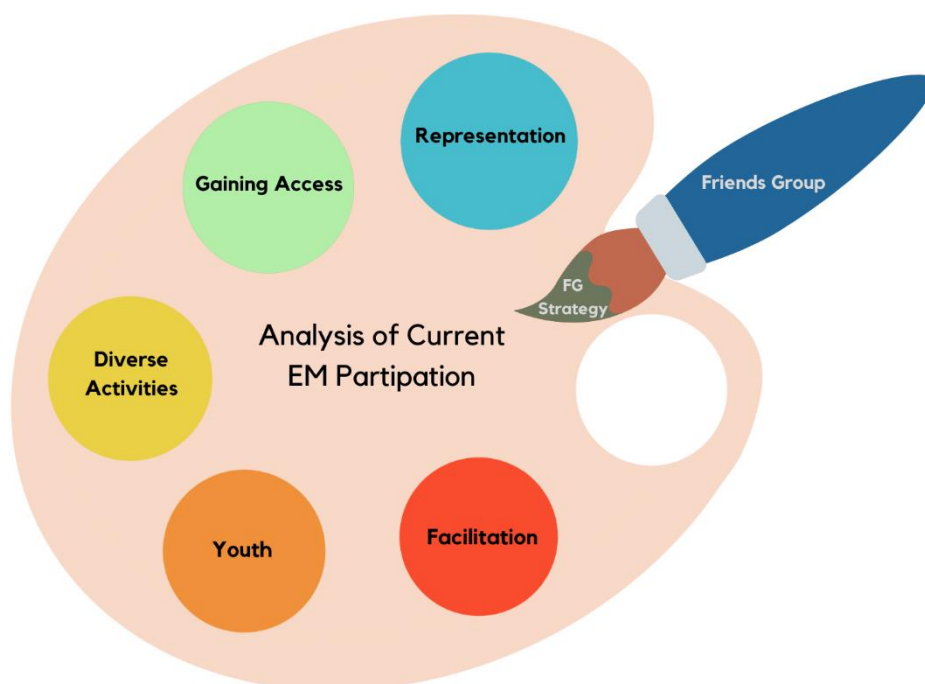


Figure 10 Recommendations Palette to improve EM participation in FGs and greenspace

Based on that insight, FGs should mix recommendations corresponding to different themes found in Table 4. For example, an FG with a local context of an extremely hard-to-reach EM community, not even visiting the greenspace, could create a ‘mix’ relying heavily on the recommendations given under Gaining Access and Facilitation first, before adding Youth and Diverse Activities recommendations. In contrast, an FG with an EM community making active use of the greenspace but no EM core group member, should make use of

Representation recommendations and see if there are some Facilitation recommendations that can be used in conjunction.

Table 4 Recommendations of the Recommendation Palette

	Recommendation	Support from Research	
Recommendation 1	Analysis of Current EM Participation by Completing the NFPGS EM Participation Level Checklist (Appendix C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All studied FGs reported recognising where EM participation was lacking (usage, supporter, core group etc.) Forms basis for customising initiatives to improve participation based on local context. 	
Recommendation 2	Recruit EM persons into core group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All FGs interviewed revealed representation was associated with improvement in EM participation. Both highly visible leadership roles and passive representation of EM groups in greenspaces considered important. 	Representation
Recommendation 3	Establish partnerships with key EM community groups to use greenspace for their activities.		
Recommendation 4	Lobby local authority for more diverse on-site park services staff.		
Recommendation 5	Enlist support of trusted insiders from EM communities.	Four FGs interviewed indicated gaining access to EM communities was achieved successfully through insight, trust and/or insider communication	Gaining Access
Recommendation 6	Make heavy use of trusted word-of-mouth communication and personal referrals.		
Recommendation 7	Hold informal focus groups with EM communities to understand what they require out of the greenspace and FG management.		
Recommendation 8	Organise a diverse array of activities.		
Recommendation 9	Encourage EM visitors to set up their own activity groups as well.	All FGs interviewed reported greenspaces with range of varied activities was associated with good EM participation.	Diverse Activities
Recommendation 10	Encourage user group collaborations.		

Recommendation 11	Establish links and partnerships with local schools and other youth groups (scouts, various youth sports clubs) to collaborate and organise after-school activities.	Five FGs interviewed, highlighted involving youth in parks improved EM participation notably.	Youth
Recommendation 12	Engage with EM parents accompanying children to organised activities and develop inter-parental community by organising activities for parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two FGs explicitly mentioned parents influenced by children’s involvement. • Education literature suggests such situations opportunities for parental leadership development. 	
Recommendation 12	Facilitate EM participation to overcome different kinds of barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five FGs reported facilitating EM involvement had positive effects. • Monetary compensation where financial barriers to participation existed were reported successful. • Identifying non-inclusive current practices and changing them improved participation. • Facilitating active participation through sharing knowledge and skills-training to empower EMs was successful. 	Facilitation

In attempting to establish a template for good practice it is crucial to emphasise flexibility and customisation based on local EM participation levels. The Recommendation Palette is an attempt at doing this, giving direction but leaving enough space for FGs to assess themselves and create their own strategy from the recommendations.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Key Highlights

My dissertation sought to understand good practices that improve EM participation in UG, specifically through the lens of UK FGs. I aimed to produce recommendations for the NFPGS' network of FGs to replicate similar success. My research benefited from multiple perspectives as I used a PAR approach throughout the research process, collaborating closely with my community partners and co-producing elements of the research together. Including an EM community voice in the methodology, embedded the desired outcome of the research (EM inclusion and participation) within the research process itself.

The two research questions addressed what self-reportedly successful FGs did to achieve the improvements in EM participation and what the common themes in the different initiatives were that could offer basis for good practice recommendations.

I uncovered five running themes from FGs reports of successful initiatives. First, FGs reported using elements of highly visible as well as more passive Representation in their successful initiatives. I show how this finding is supported by Gomez's model and argue there is validity to FGs reports by triangulating it with wider literature on EM participation from fields such as healthcare and psychiatry amongst others.

Second, FGs reported Gaining Access to EM communities was key in improving their participation. Half the FGs described doing this by enlisting the help of trusted insiders who helped FGs gain insight through feedback. Trusted word-of-mouth insider communication was cited by four FGs to improve EM participation. I engage with the academic debate outlined in my literature review, by offering FG reports of success as evidence for the validity of recommendations given by Rishbeth and Gomez and challenged by Snaith. Additionally, I discuss how Minority and Health Studies literature provides further reason to believe there is weight to FGs' claims success is associated with Gaining Access.

Third, I found all FGs reported having a wide array of Diverse Activities and user groups in the greenspace to have a positive effect on EM participation. I detail how these diverse activities are akin to Amin's 'micro-publics', which in the FG and greenspace context helps foster community-feeling and participation. However, I also draw attention to FG reports ethnicity-specific group activities and park usage improved EM participation. I argue that while this does not follow Amin's prescription for interculturalism, it allows for EM participation from communities perhaps not ready for intercultural exchanges.

Fourth, I found five FGs highlighted involving Youth in greenspace improved EM participation. I triangulated these findings by examining studies in Education asserting community organisations (like FGs) and school partnerships have positive effects on parental development and relationships. I postulate FGs see improved EM participation because of EM parent development through involvement in youth activities in their greenspace.

Fifth, four FGs reported Facilitation of EM participation through monetary compensation, skills-building or removing barriers to participation helped EMs participate. I make the case this is in line with Gomez's model and also further validated by evidence from the broader context of EM participation in Healthcare research.

Finally, I used the five common themes I extracted to formulate a set of recommendations for other FGs to improve their EM participation. I visualised this as a Recommendations Palette to illustrate FGs must mix and customise their own strategy using the different recommendations suggested. This is essential because due to the high variability of local contexts it would be unwise to have a standardised approach. The palette analogy lends itself flexibly to FG creativity and encourages them to assess what their local context is first and then apply the most appropriate recommendations.

7.2. Limitations and Future Research

One of the main limitations of this study was the aggregation of EMs as one homogenous group. It is important to acknowledge there are many different cultures within the EM group. Additionally, degrees of acculturation and assimilation affecting participation vary across first generation, second generation and third generation EMs, which was also not captured in my research. Secondly, the in-depth qualitative interviews were done on six FGs only and the limited sample size could raise questions about the generalisability of findings.

Based on these limitations, I suggest future research in this area disaggregate EMs by sub-culture and/or degree of acculturation by first, second, third generation status. Doing so may also result in formulating more targeted inclusion practices that prove more effective than recommendations targeting a broad EM group. I also recommend increasing the sample size to establish better generalizability for good practice.

7.3. Research Value

The research output of my study has been a set of usable recommendations for FGs that can be customised for local contexts. This will prove valuable in helping FGs across the UK to increase EM participation in their groups and greenspaces – the intended research outcome. The NFPGS also believes the recommendations could potentially act as a template for other diversity efforts, like disability or age. Beyond the specific case of FGs, they could be used in other public settings such as libraries or museums to improve EM participation and extrapolated to other aspects of diversity there as well. Understanding what has worked in improving EM participation in FGs and their greenspaces can illuminate what might improve EM participation in the broader voluntary sector as well.

More broadly, with the UK projected to become more ethnically diverse in the future and EMs beginning to constitute majorities in certain urban areas, it is vital space managers understand how to make UGs socially inclusive and their practices conducive to active participation from diverse ethnic groups. As national policies of austerity continue, more volunteers will be required in greenspace to ensure their protection and preservation. This is

not only crucial for environmental sustainability but also because UGs have proven their momentous role in supporting physical wellbeing and mental health of urban populations by providing much-needed refuges, evidenced during the pandemic.

Finally, legislation alone cannot end social injustice and exclusion. Ensuring the urban realm is a place where diversity thrives, requires those managing its spaces, whoever they are, to commit to practical measures that foster social inclusion. Enabling active participation from all members of the urban community is a matter of social justice and even relates to global agendas such as the UN SDGs, particularly Goal 11 for sustainable cities and communities. My research has highlighted the meaningful role community organisations can play in effectively driving localised bottom-up efforts towards achieving real and positive social change.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Ethnic Diversity and Inclusivity Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire!

You have been selected to participate because your answers in the Better Friends Survey indicated that diversity and inclusion is important to your Friends of Parks group.

Your answers to the survey below will help us research diversity and inclusivity in Friends of Parks groups across the UK. Your answers will be accessible to only the researchers and not be used in a manner that identifies you to anyone else.

The survey will take around 10-15 minutes. Please note:

You do not need to be signed in to Google to take part in this survey.

A copy of your responses will be sent to the email address you provide directly below this section

Please contact nyma.haqqani.21@ucl.ac.uk if you have any queries about how data will be used or are interested in the results.

What is the name of your Friends Group?

What is your name?

What is your position in the group?

What is the name of your greenspace?

What is your Local Authority area?

Has your group tried to improve ethnic diversity and inclusivity in membership and/or local contacts/partnerships?

Yes/ No

If yes, please briefly summarise examples of the efforts you have made to increase the ethnic diversity of your group's membership and/or your group's contacts/partnerships in and around your site.

Have you noticed an improvement in diversity and inclusivity of your group's membership and/or your group's contacts/partnerships due to your efforts?

Yes/No/Unsure

Do you have future ideas or plans in the coming 12 months for any initiatives to improve the ethnic diversity of your group's membership and/or your group's contacts/partnerships?

Yes/No

Would you be willing to participate in a follow up online or phone interview?

(All details will be held in confidence)

Yes/No

If yes, please provide a phone number you can be contacted on:

If yes, please also provide your email address where you can be reached.

Interview Questions

Interviews were semi-structured, and discussions were not restricted rigidly to the answers to the questions listed below.

For context setting

- What kind of site (size, type)?
- What kinds of user groups (on site and off site)?
- Is there a residents' association?
- Who owns the space and who manages the space?
- What kind of facilities are there?

About the Friends Group

- How long has your group been going for?
- What roles do are there?
- Is there formal or informal membership?
- Is there an email list?
- What types of meetings do you have? How often? Open or closed meetings?

Questions:

1. How ethnically diverse is the local community around your park?
2. Can you tell me a little more about the efforts you have indicated making to improve ethnic diversity in your group and make it more inclusive?
3. You said in the questionnaire you've noticed an improvement in the ethnic diversity of the group - can you please elaborate on this?
4. What did that 'improvement' look like to you? How did you measure it or what makes you think it has improved?
5. Why do you think the initiative was successful?
6. What factors do you feel were especially important?
7. What links and partnerships does your group have with ethnically diverse user groups at your site or in the surrounding area?
8. Have these helped diversify those actively involved in the greenspace's issues?

Appendix B

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Department: Institute for Global Prosperity, The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, University College London.

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher(s): Nyma Haqqani | nyma.haqqani.21@ucl.ac.uk

Name and Contact Details of the Research Supervisor: Dr Hanna Baumann | h.baumann@ucl.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this. You are being invited to take part in a research project as part of a collaboration between the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS) and an MSc dissertation in Global Prosperity at UCL. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do ask me for clarification of any point mentioned here, if required. I look forward to engaging with you should you choose to participate.

What is the project's purpose?

The purpose of the study is to identify from within the existing Friends of Parks Groups, good practice that has improved inclusion and diversity of membership and local partnerships. It is hoped that the identified good practices can be promoted through the Friends groups' local, regional and national networks so that these good practices can be replicated in other spaces with similar positive results. This will be done through qualitative data collection and analysis of survey results as well as through semi-structured interviews to be followed by a thematic analysis.

Why have I been chosen?

The participants for interviews were selected through a two-step process. Firstly, groups that had indicated aspirations or achievements in diversity and inclusivity initiatives in the Better Friends survey were asked to fill out a questionnaire. A further selection was done based on an analysis of the answers given in the questionnaire that indicated a significant effort in diversity initiatives.

Do I have to take part?

All participation is voluntary, and you can choose to withdraw at any time without providing a reason. Should you choose to withdraw, you can determine what is to happen with the data you have provided till then. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Should you choose to participate, I will conduct an interview on Zoom with you to capture insights on the initiatives that your Friends Group undertook. I will send you a list of the questions that the interview will cover broadly. The interview should be completed in 30-45 minutes. All information deemed will be anonymised. In case there are any additional questions, I may reach out to you to address them over email.

Will I be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio and/or video recording of the Zoom interview, should you consent, will be used only for interview transcription. Transcripts will be used to conduct thematic analysis and individual quotes may be used in the dissertation while maintaining your anonymity. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project (my supervisor and myself) will be allowed access to the original recordings or transcripts. Recordings and transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of my MSc degree.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

While there are no significant risks to participants, conversations around race, ethnicity and exclusion can sometimes be sensitive or difficult topics that may cause discomfort. However, please note that you can refuse to answer any question or even discontinue the interview should such a situation arise.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The key outcome of the research project is intended to be good practice recommendations that help improve diversity of Friends Groups and inclusivity of BAME communities in and around a greenspace. It is hoped that the practical implications of this could be:

- To guide NFPGS strategies and toolkits for Friends Groups.
- To strengthen community involvement in greenspace.
- To make greenspace areas of social inclusion.
- To inform further research within the parks and greenspace area.

What if something goes wrong?

In case you may have any concerns or complaints, you can contact my supervisor Dr Hanna Baumann (h.baumann@ucl.ac.uk).

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information collected about/from you during the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any revealing information will be modified so that you will be unidentifiable in any reports or publications.

Limits to confidentiality

Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. In the very unlikely event this should happen, you would be informed of any decisions that might limit your confidentiality.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the research project will be included in my dissertation. The dissertation will also be shared with NFPGS and may be available on their official website.

Contact for further information

Please reach out to my supervisor, Dr Hanna Baumann (h.baumann@ucl.ac.uk) if you have any further questions or concerns. This information sheet and the attached consent form has been provided for your reference. Please sign the consent form and send it to nyma.haqqani.21@ucl.ac.uk as we need a copy for our records as well.

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for taking part in this research study.

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Participant Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Department: Institute for Global Prosperity, The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, University College London.

Name and Contact Details of the Researcher(s): Nyma Haqqani | nyma.haqqani.21@ucl.ac.uk

Name and Contact Details of the Research Supervisor: Dr Hanna Baumann | h.baumann@ucl.ac.uk

Thank you for taking part in this research. Please read the Participant Information sheet before signing this form. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to participate in the research.

I confirm that I understand that by ticking/initialling each box below I am consenting to this element of the study. I understand that it will be assumed that unticked/uninitialed boxes means that I DO NOT consent to that part of the study. I understand that by not giving consent for any one element that I may be deemed ineligible for the study.

		Tick Box
1.	*I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet and would like to take part in an individual interview.	
2.	*I understand that any personal information I give in the interview will be used for the purposes explained to me.	
3.	*I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified I understand that it will not be possible to identify me in any publications.	
4.	*I understand that my information may be subject to review by responsible individuals from the University (my supervisor and my dissertation reviewer) for grading purposes.	
5.	I understand that the information I have submitted will be published within a dissertation.	
6.	I consent to my interview being audio/video recorded and understand that the recordings will be used only for the purposes stated in the Information Sheet and destroyed on completion of researcher's MSc. degree.	
7.	I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.	

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Appendix C

NFPGS - FRIENDS GROUPS ETHNIC DIVERSITY CHECKLIST

The NFPGS have produced this self-audit Checklist* to help Friends Groups (FGs) throughout the UK who wish to strengthen their ethnic diversity, and the ethnic diversity in active involvement in their site. Friends Groups will thereby be better able to strengthen their representativity and their overall effectiveness, and help enable greater engagement and involvement with their greenspace from local EM networks and communities.

We have tried to make it as easy as possible to fill in and to consider potential future positive actions as a result. We recognise it is a subjective, not scientific, exercise, and part of a journey towards greater diversity of all kinds, including regarding age, class, disability and so on.

The NFPGS may consider similar checklists for other diversity challenges eg youth. We already have a general self-audit tool, 'Better Friends', which includes general diversity questions and which nearly 400 groups have filled in (as of September 2022). So this, more specific, Checklist is a welcome development, an extra tool in the toolbox for local groups.

Key theme ['EM' = Ethnic Minorities]	Type of involvement of EMs	Level of Involvement of EMs Not at all / Some / Fairly/ Very / Completely representative [1-5]	FG efforts made to address? Not so far / A little / Some / Lots / Considerable [1-5]	Some examples of recommended potential future actions
General				<i>Note: We will provide with this Checklist a general 'menu' of actions to be encouraged. This will include: - commitment to [EM] diversity policies - doing this checklist - stakeholder mapping - improving FGs' awareness and links within the local community - using diverse images in FG media - be welcoming, etc</i>
EM Representation in FG				
	Core members i.e. from EM background in FG's core membership (eg on committee, officer, or regular attender of main Friends group or sub-committee meetings)			
EM active supporters of FG				
	Active supporters ie people involved in FG's			

	volunteering (eg delivering flyers, litterpicking, helping run events, gardening). May attend some meetings but not on a regular basis			
EM engaged with FG but less active				
	Engaged supporters The membership of FG (formal or informal) including those signed up via and/or engaging via social media			
EM involved in a site through a User Group but not currently engaging with Friends group				
	Are there site user groups (including using site buildings)with substantial EM involvement ?	n/a	n/a	
	Are there off-site stakeholder groups/facilities with substantial EM involvement (eg schools, faith groups, residents groups, youth clubs etc)	n/a	n/a	
FG links with relevant stakeholder groups				
	Links and collaboration Links with on-site user groups with substantial EM involvement Links with off-site stakeholder groups/facilities with substantial EM involvement			
Site usage generally				
	To what extent does the usage of the site reflect the EM make up of the people who live within the catchment area of the site?			
Composition of surrounding communities				
	Do you hold information about the EM demographic make up of your local community within the catchment area of the site?			