



Youth
Co-research
TOOLKIT 

CASE STUDY 

Alex's story



CRIS
Centre for Resilient
and Inclusive Societies



**YOUNG &
RESILIENT
RESEARCH
CENTRE**



Centre for
Multicultural Youth



**DEAKIN
UNIVERSITY**



**WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY**

Hear from a young researcher: Alex's story

Meet Alex!



Growing up in regional Victoria as part of an increasingly diverse generation of Australians, Alex is passionate about promoting inclusiveness in our leadership structures. Alex believes that it is time that we, as a society, recognise that diversity is no longer some marginal part of our society; it literally constitutes it.

Why did Alex want to be a co-researcher?

Alex has a keen interest in interculturalism and sociology. As such, she was eager to get involved in Explore, a program which develops the research skills of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, to investigate these topics. Alex also wanted to make connections for future career pathways that aren't limited to research, like community-based work.

What has Alex's experience been like?

Alex has been able to work on several projects. One of her first projects involved learning how to facilitate workshops with young people and adults through the Centre of Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS) **Living Labs**. Since then, she has helped the Centre for Multicultural Youth to reform their program evaluation process, and has been involved in the preliminary stages of developing an anti-racism research project at the Australian National University. Alex also serves as a youth advisor with CRIS, attending monthly meetings and giving feedback on their projects.

Were there any challenges?

A challenge that Alex reconciled with for a long time was feeling uncomfortable with the idea of representing the experiences of multicultural young people. She said that,

“Although I am of mixed heritage, I grew up in a white Australian family and so feel uncomfortable at the idea of representing the universal values and experiences of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. I am already involved in academia through my PhD and many young people may not be.

She voiced these challenges to the more experienced researchers on her project and they clarified that they were not looking for Alex to represent all young people.

“Directly talking to the researchers and being honest with them about how I was feeling, helped me to overcome this discomfort and made me see that I was being accepted for myself.

What about the benefits and opportunities?

Alex emphasised that being involved in research as a young person has been an incredible experience.

“I have a greater sense of control and responsibility, especially in the smaller research projects that I have been involved in. It's also given me more insight into the different methods of conducting research.

Alex also loves the first few meetings of a new project where she gets to meet people,

“... especially amidst COVID-19, I formed new connections and friendships with other researchers and young people, being able to meet a group of young people who are all interested in research.

Alex has also noticed how much more confident she feels when participating in new research projects. Alex often works on projects for a short term, while other researchers generally have been working on those projects

for much longer and have years of experience behind them.

“I used to feel less confident coming into new projects as I had less familiarity with the projects. But, they [more experienced researchers] want you to be there. So now, I feel much more confident taking up opportunities with people that I would normally think are too far above my level in terms of experience and knowledge. I have found that youth co-researcher roles can provide a meaningful and helpful bridge between youth work and research.

One of Alex's favourite memories was when participants expressed how grateful they were for her anti-racism research.

“People were so grateful that you are doing research where they have gotten a chance to discuss something that's important to them.

What is Alex's advice for other young people?

Alex says that sometimes young people may question why they are involved in a particular project. However, Alex advises young co-researchers

“to trust in themselves and not doubt whether their contributions are unique and valid. If someone wants you to be there, don't question it. Just assume that you are contributing.

She also advises to not be afraid to define your own role, stating,

“There are different hats you can wear, and that's very useful – you can choose which hat to represent. However, at the same time it's

important to embrace ambiguity. It's about learning to be flexible and realising you are bringing in an individual experience that may not fit into a pre-decided category. You are much more than just data.

What is Alex's advice for senior researchers wanting to engage young co-researchers?

Alex recommends that researchers help young researchers to develop in areas that they may not feel experienced or confident in.

“By being approachable, honest and asking young co-researchers what would be helpful can be very effective in helping them to tackle any challenges that arise along the way.

She also encourages researchers to support young people, by

“regularly checking in with young people and referring them to others that can provide support has made my experience very rewarding.