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EDUCATION INQUIRY

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THEMATIC SECTION

Children's rights at 21: policy, theory, practice

The challenges of conducting ethical research with children

*Deborah Harcourt & Jonathon Sargeant**

Abstract

The conduct of timely, ethical and reliable research in matters directly affecting children and childhood is of increasing importance to contemporary research communities. However, the challenges of seeking ways in which to include children's perspectives requires critical deliberations and is beneficial at all stages of the research endeavour, from conceptualisation through to dissemination. This paper seeks to identify some of the ethical and methodological considerations of this type of research and propose ways in which the research process can be enhanced through the careful examination of key markers in that process.

Keywords: Children's Rights, Participation, Advocacy, Research methods, Ethics

Introduction

This paper seeks to examine the ethical and methodological contexts in which research conversations have begun around the world in relation to children's¹ capacities to act as protagonists in their own lives. Many contemporary studies have established children's competence in articulating their views and opinions, and their ability to report on important issues based on their lived experiences of childhood (Harcourt 2008; Sargeant 2007, 2010). Studies have also established that it is highly possible that the way children experience childhood, and how adults (education, health care, welfare and legal professionals, researchers, parents and community members) perceive it to be experienced, may often result in a disjunction between the actual and the predicted. While these studies offer significant opportunities for adults and children to share their expertise, and develop new shared understandings about children and childhood, they also present considerable challenges to the research community in terms of the ethical implications of research that consider the child standpoint (Morrow, 2005). This paper focuses on current understandings of children and childhood, and explores the extent to which there exists a demonstrated research commitment to including children in endeavours that directly affect them.

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The ethical, legal and moral imperatives

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989) as the most comprehensive statement on children's rights provides the cornerstone for developing policies and practice around children. The UNCRC also resonates with emerging socio-cultural paradigms such as the "new" sociology of childhood (Mayall, 2002) and childhood studies (Smith, 2007) where children are seen as social actors (Wyness, 2000), with the agency to actively participate in their society (Danby & Baker, 1998; James & Prout, 1997; Woodrow, 1999) and contribute valid opinions as capable citizens (Neale, 2004).

Many research projects (Dockett, 2007; Einarsdottir, 2007; Fler & Quinones, 2007; Harcourt, 2008; Hayes & Bradley, 2007; Sargeant, 2010) have focused on the participatory rights offered in Article 12 of the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) and General Comment 12 (United Nations, 2009). These mandates for child agency are referenced by researchers as the significant platforms for the inclusion of children's voices in research (Harcourt & Conroy, 2009). As an argument for including children in research, Article 12 of the UNCRC is often used as an "unquestionable good" (Lundy, 2007, p. 931) and held out to be endorsed by the research community. Lundy suggests its abbreviated meaning, conveyed as "child voice", and representing the notion of children's right to express themselves in matters that concern them, does a disservice to both children's rights and those specifically encapsulated in Article 12. As an incomplete summary, the use of element specific phrases such as "voice of the child" or "the right to be heard" undersells the potential for impact. As well-meaning as these terminologies might be, they do not convey the provisions made in the Article in their entirety and thus have the potential to diminish the full extent of the right. Article 12 reads in full as:

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the rights to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Lundy (2007) urges us to focus on Article 12 as providing children with an *assurance* of their rights. The research community needs to demonstrate, through practice, its active commitment to involving children in research, not just as "an option which is the gift of adults, but a legal imperative which is the right of the child" (p. 931).

Pro-active strategies need to be taken in order to invite and encourage children to engage with the research enterprise and must also demonstrate that it has a tangible

benefit for children. This can be achieved firstly by asking children if the research topic actually matters to them, and if the outcomes will have an impact on their lives. School children involved in a study in Northern Ireland (Kilkelly et al., 2005) overwhelmingly reported that not having a say was the single most important issue to them.

While many studies exist relating to the issues affecting children, there are limited studies that directly present the child's view (Cook-Sather, 2002). In assessing the relevance of an issue to children, it would follow that children should be provided the opportunity to contribute to their identification (Hicks, 1996; Thomas & Campling, 2000). Studies about children from an adult perspective include adult bias and assumptions about what children think. While they espouse the importance of including children's voice, they also express concern as to the practical, ethical and procedural methods to enact this goal (Moore, McArthur, & Noble-Carr, 2008). Kulynych (2001) notes that younger children are not seen as reliable reporters, even of their own experiences, and as such are rarely asked for their own perspective (Thomas & Campling, 2000). Children may be more knowledgeable of the adult world than in previous years (S. L. Smith & Wilson, 2002), but adults cannot profess a reciprocal knowledge of children's perspectives. As noted in a report by UNICEF (2001):

“Some of what the children say will make adults uncomfortable. They speak eloquently and painfully about violence and injustice, about discrimination and not being heard. But they do also tell of many positive things: how much they appreciate love and support, how hopeful they are about the future and how, despite current difficulties, they very much want to contribute to building a better world for all”.

Compliance with Article 12 is therefore an ethical, legal and moral imperative (Lundy, 2007) and mandates that all children must be involved in decision-making processes on matters that concern them. This is a non-negotiable and permanent human right afforded to children. By ratifying the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989), a country undertakes legal obligations to accord children their rights. With a commitment to involve children in the decision-making and policy environment, a community can provide the structure and procedures that enable their participation, should it view the child as a competent and capable contributor. The wish to listen to, and involve children, originates within this context and leads to structures and procedures that can support the involvement of children (Langstead, 1994). It is this commitment that shapes the ideas the community has about children.

Ethical context of competence

Cocks (2006) suggests that little discussion has examined how a child's competence is measured and assessed by the researcher. Significantly, Article 12 assures children of their right to express their views, which is not dependant on their competence to express a mature view, rather that they have the competence to form and express a view (Lundy, 2007). That is, the child's view is commensurate with the child's age and

maturity; it is not dependent on it. That element is specifically linked to what *action* may be taken on those views, applying to the obligation to give views their due weight.

Children's views on matters that affect them and the application of child inclusive methodologies are directly influenced by how researchers themselves 'see' children. If there is an image held that 'sees' the child as a competent social actor in their own right, then it is likely that they can also be viewed as a reliable participant in the *entire* research process. Rejecting previous notions that children cannot provide reliable information (Dockett & Perry, 2003) invites an opportunity for children to provide the "missing perspectives" (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 3) and challenges an apparent cultural reluctance to take children's ideas seriously (Morrow, 2005, p. 153). When researchers identify the capacities of children to inform, not only the outcomes but the quality of the research process, all parties to the research benefit. As such children can (and should) be afforded the opportunity to demonstrate their competence as research participants in all aspects of the research enterprise, including the design of data collection tools, equitable representation, data analysis and dissemination. The following sections identify how this can be achieved.

The co-researcher

While it has been clearly established there is a growing emphasis on children as co-researchers (R. Smith et al., 2002), a difficulty with directly commissioned research prevails when children are only included after the topic has been identified (Moore et al., 2008). More studies are emerging that actively include children in the process and much of the methodological discussion and emphasis has moved from the data analysis to the data collection phase of these studies (Alderson, 1995; Farrell et al., 2002; Fisher, 2005; Harcourt, in press; McDowell, 2001; Moore et al., 2008; Valentine, 1999).

The lens through which researchers 'see' children can impact on all aspects of the research process. Using interactive and participatory methods respects children's developing capacity to engage with the representation of ideas and opinions. Affording children roles such as research assistant or data collector support the notion of collaboration and assist in diminishing the inherent power imbalances (Morrow, 2005) when children and adults work together on such intellectual and social pursuits. Seeking equity in recruiting the research population, i.e., ensuring representative participation of all children including, for example, children with disabilities, can demonstrate a researcher's commitment to 'seeing' all children as having the competence to participate as research collaborators (Cocks, 2006). Validating the research data through seeking children's input during the analysis ensures that the power imbalance, often evident in the interpretation of data, is addressed (Morrow, 2005). When the research is finally ready for dissemination, the researcher holds responsibility to ensure that children and their views are respectfully reported and the focus is on children's competence as research participants, upholding the image of child as a reliable and capable informant.

The co-reporter

To have some control over how we are portrayed by others is an inherent right afforded to many adults but not so to children (Grover, 2004). Children have little right of correction, particularly in relation to the stereotyping of childhood. Children are often not debriefed after a study due to an emphasis on group trends rather than individual cases as the participants are treated as objects of the study rather than participants (Grover, 2004). Cullingford (2004) states that child participants are more likely to embrace the research experience and in fact relish the opportunity to state their view.

While more research now considers the child's view and includes more 'child voice' there remains a scarcity of research that provides feedback directly to the participants, prompting McDowell (2001, p. 95) to ask "for whom am I writing?". Such dissemination inconsistencies (Alderson, 1995; Valentine, 1999) create suspicion and discontent in the children's attitude to adult researchers and, their possible future participation in research (Fisher, 2005). Grover (2004) and R. Smith (2002) suggest that unequal power does not "evaporate" when children at any age are involved. R. Smith (2002) notes that even 16- 18-year-olds are rarely given the opportunity to discuss ethical implications, contribute to data interpretation, provide reflections on the data and provide input on policy implications. Careful attention also needs to be given to the issue of power as relates to children with additional support needs (Sheehy, et al., 2005). By virtue of the presupposed hierarchical relationship between adult and child, any power given to, or removed from, children remains at the discretion of the adult (Valentine, 1999). Such imbalances can be extended through parental coercion that can either block or enable research activity.

When given opportunities to be heard, adults express surprise at the sophisticated responses provided by children that reinforces a hierarchy of expectation (Sargeant, 2010; Thomson, 2007). For example, Grover (2004) refers to one study by Davis & Bottoms (2002) where children were questioned about their feelings towards another investigator. The children revealed that the affect portrayed by a "supportive" investigator enabled children to gain confidence to tell the truth. Such inclusion of the children's views facilitated clear methodological revisions where children are clearly encouraged to question anything they feel is wrong. The resultant effect on the child participants allowed them to consider themselves competent informants to the process (Grover, 2004). Mahon et al. (1996) also alert to the possible expectation by children that the issues raised by them will be directly acted upon. Such expectations can lead to disenchantment with adults when children do not experience any direct personal effect of the research and, as such, it is essential that the full intent, objectives and limitations of the research be explained to the children (Harcourt & Conroy, 2011).

The informed, consenting participant

The voluntary consent of a human participant in the research process is absolutely essential according to the Nuremburg Code of Ethics (Nuremburg Code, 1947). Any

potential participant, in any research process, must be given the right to decide and determine whether it is in his or her own best interest to collaborate. However, along with other subjugated groups, children persist amongst the most heavily represented ‘victims’ of research (Coady, 2001) where the substantive benefits of the project remain with the researcher. It is therefore an ethical imperative that researchers focus not only on personal or professional outcomes of a project (e.g., PhDs, publications, grants) but also on the best interests of all the research participants (Cocks, 2006). Critical to this focus are the processes for gaining informed consent from participant children. Valentine (1999) identifies the process of consent as a key area of concern when working with children, asserting that children’s capacities to consent are contextual and relational rather than developmental but only legally valid when considered ‘in the best interests of the child’ however that may be defined.

Cocks (2006) describes the process as a “sensitive gaining of a child’s agreement” (p. 257) and that which is representative of the relationship of trust that develops between the researcher and the researched. This notion increases children’s accessibility to research without having to negotiate the perils of adult-orientated measures of competence in language and definable methods. Bessant (2006, p. 51) noted the legal inconsistencies, particularly within Australia but also apparent in other countries, as to what defines a child or young person and argues that the “fixed age” rule is outmoded for research that is considered ‘low risk’ but also identifies the varying determinants of what constitutes low risk research.

Bessant (2006) asserts that traditional ways of knowing children are considered redundant and as human beings, children have global human rights and should be afforded those in the same way other people are, noting that while a developmental view of children is convenient, it is significantly flawed. Adults also need to overcome their resistance to including children in research and should perhaps undertake training in communicating with children. Time cannot be overstated, and both adults and children need time to explore and understand the issues in research. However, when researching with children, a relationship of trust is only built over time. We also need to consider what happens at the end of the research and children need to be aware that this particular relationship is not permanent. Further consideration needs to be given to the nature of research with children and the potential exploitative relationships that may have a negative impact on children.

There are many interesting challenges when engaging in the process of seeking children’s informed consent. At times, this is a hurried process with little emphasis placed on ascertaining whether children are being empowered to make an informed decision to participate, or not to participate, in the research process (Harcourt & Conroy, 2005; 2009; 2011). If researchers seek to work *with* children rather than *on* children, consideration (and time) must be given to establishing a shared meaning about the purpose of the research to be undertaken (Dockett, 2007; Harcourt & Conroy, 2011; Robbins, 2003). This must include discussions about the roles and respon-

sibilities of those participating in the research project, how data will be gathered and analysed, and with whom it will be shared. If children understand that they are being invited to be partners in the research project, there is a window of opportunity for the adult to provide a research space for children to share deep thinking rather than superficial responses. If opportunities are provided for responsibility and initiative through a shared power base, there is the potential for developing active democratic citizenship (Neale, 2004).

In seeking children's consent, Cocks (2006) noted that children's competence to do so can be impacted by several factors. The researcher and the way they approach the child may make the child feel uncomfortable or intimidated. Even things such as the height difference between an adult and a child can impact the tentative relationship. Researchers may also unconsciously use a language of power, which implies that the child will participate. Researchers may phrase requests such as "I have come to get your permission", or "I have come to get you to sign that you agree". The intention may be to seek permission, however the request may be perceived as an already negotiated agreement (Harcourt & Conroy, 2009) rendering children disempowered to decline the researcher's request, particularly within a classroom climate of obedience.

Embedded within the process of seeking informed consent must be the intent to collaboratively construct meaning about what researchers do and, to invite consideration between all parties about how adult and child might work together to support each other's meaning making (Harcourt & Conroy, 2009; 2011). Considering Vygotsky's (1962) notion of intersubjectivity (shared meaning and understanding), the language used to introduce and explain the research project must be situated within the child's sphere of understandings (Harcourt & Conroy, 2011). Rogoff (1990) emphasised this shared understanding as occurring through active communication, as participants elicit and share information with others (i.e. negotiate shared meaning). Participants' standpoints are then adjusted as they communicate and discuss ideas, reaching a common ground or mutual understanding of the experience to be shared. That is, to support children's understanding of research as a serious endeavour to which both parties contribute. If the intent is to situate children as research partners, then the initial conversations must aim to both inform and to invite (children's) questions.

Edwards and Aldred (2000) suggest that thoughtful consideration also needs to be given to the specific context in which children are supported in their understandings, in order for them to make an informed decision about their participation. Danby and Farrell (2005) suggest that the "researcher and potential participant consider the possibility of the (research) conversation and what it might entail" (p. 49). Harcourt and Conroy (2005) affirmed the notion that it is essential to ensure that the aims and the purpose of the research are fully explored with children. Adults must be conscious of the language, or other forms of communication, which will be used to support the child's decision-making.

When children participate in shared research projects with adult researchers there is tremendous potential for constructing meaning about actions, events, places and relationships that impact on children and thus, informing the research enterprise. Tayler, Farrell, Tennant and Patterson (2005) note that research requires “sustained social engagement” (p. 143), and we believe that the time needed to develop the research relationship cannot be circumvented. Rinaldi (2006) reminds us of the significance of the *pedagogy of listening* – listening with intentionality, creating authentic opportunities for children’s thinking to become apparent. In many situations, children may not have previously been asked their opinion. Children, like adults, need time to reflect on the question being posed in order to offer an informed response. As such, the process of negotiating meaning, or co-constructing understandings, about what the adult and child will be working on ‘together’ must be given greater emphasis. We must acknowledge the time it takes to establish a relationship, which results in sufficient trust and security for the child to share opinions and viewpoints. As researchers struggle with tight deadlines, time (or the lack of it) may be one of the most significant elements in negotiating true research partnership agreements.

Alderson (1995) and Valentine (1999) both propose that children must be better empowered to opt in, rather than out, of research. Bessant (2006) reasserts that informed consent by the participant is essential and, that the measure of explanation regarding withdrawal of consent needs more consideration so that children understand that their initial consent is not a one-off and final decision (Valentine, 1999).

As an additional challenge, Balen et al. (2006) question the protocols that currently exist when seeking informed consent from children. These includes the consent of significant gatekeepers, including parents, school principals, classroom teachers, welfare officers, government departments etc. “young people ... have the capacity to make a voluntary choice about involvement in research and it should be their informed consent that we are seeking, not the consent of their parents” (p. 43). A consequence of the requirement for parent consent may render some areas of research such as sexuality, drug use, child abuse, chronic illness, and disability severely constrained or not researched at all (Bessant, 2006).

If we are to position children as active participants in the research enterprise, one which seeks their ideas and opinions about matters that concern them and whom will receive benefit from the research, then it is their rights that should be respected and given as much weight as those of the (adult) gatekeepers.

The ethics of relationships

Grover (2004) notes the importance of establishing trusting relationships to overcome the predisposition of the children to present what they believe they are ‘supposed to say’ in a research context (Mahon et al., 1996). In participatory research, particularly that which includes children, trust is important and must be built over time (R. Smith et al., 2002). McDowell (2001) asserts that the best code of practice is no substitute for

respect for, and empathy with, participants. The context (school, home, playground etc) in which research is undertaken, can shape the ethical implications of working with children (Valentine, 1999). Structures of compliance, privacy and confidentiality all reinforce an already uneven power distribution in the research relationship. Mahon et al. (1996) argue that children need extra protection in research contexts due to the potential for exploitation of the power imbalance or a lack of understanding. However, managing the fine balance between protection and participation in research may be problematic for many researchers.

Although including children in the research process is considered to contribute to establishing rapport and trust (Alderson, 1995), thereby breaking down some of the power imbalances due to age, perceived competence, and authority, Mahon et al. (1996) suggest that the appropriateness of involving children as researchers remains at the discretion of the adult. Mahon et al. also propose that the younger the child the more suggestible they may be to respond in a certain way. Therefore, the “concept of the homogenised powerful competent adult” remains dominant within discourses on conducting research *with* children (Thomson, 2007, p. 212). Researchers describe child/children using “an age based logic and convenient categorisation” (p. 211). Thomson also suggests that special measures in researching *with* children may be needed, not for reasons of competence or capacity, but because of their marginalisation and adult perceptions. In addition, the transitional status of older adolescents raises complex issues of power, ethics and status (McDowell, 2001).

Although there is increasing recognition of the importance of listening to children, this emergent appreciation is not present in all social research. This is particularly noticeable in that which resides in the experimental domain, unless directly identified in the pre-existing adult categorisations of the study (Grover, 2004). In the Australian context, prominent studies such as the *National Survey of Young Australians 2010* (Mission Australia, 2010) and the Australian Childhood Foundation’s *Children’s fears, hopes and heroes – Modern Childhood in Australia* (Tucci, Mitchell & Goddard, 2007) report on the children’s (predominantly adolescent) views on topics nominated by the researchers. This is consistent with findings from a 16-nation macro-analysis of the condition of childhood where researchers found that childhood in western industrialised societies is characterised by social exclusion (Thomson, 2007) and protection (Englebert, 1994 in Mayall, 2006). Grover (2004) notes that even studies on children’s understanding of human rights often use adult categorisations. Alternatively, Lundy (2007) implores us to consider strategies for the development of meaningful and effective shared participation in research with children. Children can speak confidently about their own lives and, when their input is heard and considered in planning processes, services are more likely to be used. Social capital theory states that social networks have value and that an individual is more productive when connected to others through relationships characterised by trust, reciprocity and exchange (Putnam, 2000).

Ethical Clearance

The relative new nature of research with children has provided another significant challenge for researchers seeking permission to conduct their project, and this is particularly evident when making applications to ethics committees. Allen (2005) comments that, regrettably, ethics submissions are seen by many as a form-filling exercise in order to fulfil the requirements for ethical clearance. Balen et al. (2006) refer to the “barriers of protocols” (p. 43) that are often put up by ethics committees and calls for flexibility in their approach to research with children. Cocks (2006) asks the researcher to see ethical frameworks and methodological issues not as “a posture assumed in order to satisfy academic and professional research” (p. 261), but as a declaration of the position or stance they are taking in the research. David, Tonkin, Powell & Anderson (2005) agree with this approach and suggest we look to the rigours of ethics committee scrutiny as a positive experience, a way to improve how research with children is conducted. Allen (2005) also concurs and notes that the process of applying for ethical approval should be a “process of reflecting upon ethical issues in a research design” (p. 15).

An emerging challenge that illustrates the occasional disconnect between ethical clearance and ethical research with children resides in the notion of participant identity. The consideration of **real names or pseudonyms** contests the traditional use of pseudonyms in research projects in order to protect the identity of those involved. Ethical considerations often dictate an assumption that those who are involved in the research would not want their identities to be visible to audiences. In contrast, Harcourt’s (2011) study reports that when given a choice, children will often elect to use their own names, initial or identifying symbol. The author reported a group of children aged five years requesting that their real names be used because they indicated that using their real names says who they really are. They did not want to pretend to be somebody else or be reduced to a number or letter. They wanted the people who read or heard about the research to know their names. In a negotiated compromise with the children, the researcher used the children’s first names and used de-identifiers for the settings that participated. Clark (2007) also spoke on this issue noting that children may record their name, initial, or “signature symbol” as a declaration, or “marker” of their presence. Ethically, this places another level of complexity within the relationship of collaborative research. Do we as adult researchers pursue the issue of anonymity as an accepted ethical practice? Or, do we begin a new dialogue, which reflects an ongoing commitment to children’s well-being, while responding to a new context of (collaborative) research with young children? We believe these questions are worthy of further consideration by the research community.

Many ethics committees have taken an “extremely conservative position” (Allen, 2005, p. 16), particularly when the research involves children or a research design that is unfamiliar to the panel members. It could therefore be useful for both ethics committees and researchers, at least at the organisational (e.g., university) level, to

engage in a proactive “culture of ethics learning” (ibid, p. 22). Allen proposes that this could be achieved through features such as:

- The provision of guidance and tools that facilitate excellent and ethical research
- An inclusive membership of ethics committees (i.e., multidisciplinary)
- Relevant advice on the different processes of the project
- Transparent, timely, predictable and standardised decision-making
- Research ethics being promoted as a research training and design process
- On-going dialogue between all stakeholders
- If the ethics process is positioned as a collaborative integrated approach by all concerned, we may see more positive outcomes in terms of high quality and ethical research.

Protocols for research with children

David et al. (2005) suggest that we consider developing a suite of protocols that relate to the research dilemmas challenging those who undertake research with children. These protocols can be used to ‘speak’ to the concerns of the gatekeepers of research, and can make assurances about upholding the rights of the child. The protocols may also establish specific standards of practice and approaches to research with children, which might not otherwise be explicit. Using the David et al. (ibid, p. 132) framework, the authors of this discussion would like to propose “markers” such as:

- How does an examination of the research approach indicate respect for children?
- Why the research is being undertaken and what consultation with children has occurred in relation to the research question?
- What is the likely impact of the research on children and what tangible benefit to children will ensue?
- Which processes of consent will be considered?
- How will children’s emerging competencies be represented?
- What engagement will children have with data analysis?
- How will the research findings be disseminated and how will issues of respect for children and their views be addressed?

By considering the establishment of protocols, researchers make their accountability for their research with children quite clear. Protocols will offer parents, practitioners, children and other stakeholders a way of raising questions and concerns about the research within a framework of professional capacity.

Conclusion

As identified in the preceding discussion, the challenges relating to ethical and consent issues in involving children and young people in research are numerous yet not insurmountable. As a priority, researchers must not only commit to truly inclusive practices but also maintain diligence in ensuring that children and young people are respected participants in the research process. Research that seeks to involve or include children should consider not only the project imperatives but also the conceptualisations of children and childhood in general, the capacities of the children involved, and the relationships developed through the process. By pursuing a commitment to ethical researcher behaviour we can better assure that the best interests of the child is maintained at all junctures of a research endeavour.

Dr Deborah Harcourt is a Professor of Early Childhood and a researcher at the Faculty of Education of the Australian Catholic University. Her teaching and scholarship encompass the areas of children's rights, children's active participation and the implications of Articles 12, 13 and 42 for the early childhood profession. Professor Harcourt's current research in Sweden, Australia, Israel and Italy seeks to raise the profile of young children's competence as research participants. She is particularly interested in incorporating young children's perspectives in all levels of policy and curriculum decision-making processes.

Dr Jonathon Sargeant is a Lecturer and Researcher at the School of Education of the Australian Catholic University (Brisbane, Australia). His teaching and research in physical education, special education and classroom management has a particular interest in student engagement, effective teaching and children's social development. Dr Sargeant's current research in Australia and Sweden seeks children's (particularly tweens') perspectives regarding their futures. He is particularly interested in developing better educational provision that incorporates young people's perspectives through ethical research practices that are informed by the UNCRC, in particular Articles 12, 13 and 42.

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Endnotes

- ¹ For the purposes of this paper *child or children or childhood* will be used to refer to persons from birth to eighteen years. (UNCRC 1989)

