STEPS TO ENGAGING YOUNG CHILDREN IN RESEARCH

VOLUME 1: THE GUIDE

Education Research Centre, University of Brighton

Funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation

July 2014

Edited by VICKY JOHNSON, ROGER HART, and JENNIFER COLWELL

University of Brighton

Available for download at: http://www.bernardvanleer.org/steps-to-engaging-young-children-in-research

PRINTING

This report has been designed to print in A4 size. If you wish to print this report in American letter size, please ensure that you scale the paper size in your print options.

DEDICATION

This resource is dedicated to Judith Ennew who gave children a voice, fought for their rights and inspired many others to do the same.

Contributors

The research team:

Vicky Johnson:
Principal Research Fellow, Project Lead, University of Brighton. Contact vicky.johnson@brighton.ac.uk.
Roger Hart:
Professor of Psychology and Geography, Graduate Center of The City University of New York
Jennifer Colwell:
Research Fellow, University of Brighton
Andy West:
Associate Researcher (freelance consultant)
Xenia Carvalho:
Researcher, University of Brighton

Advisor:

Selim Iltus:
Research and Evaluation Officer, Bernard van Leer Foundation

Expert advisors:

Linda Biersteker:
Head of Research at the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU), South Africa
Gina Crivello:
Young Lives (Department of International Development), University of Oxford
Johanna Einarsdottir:
Professor of Education, University of Iceland
Susan Engel:
Professor, Department of Psychology at Williams College
Judith Ennew:
Director, Knowing Children
Donna Koller:
Associate Professor, School of Early Childhood Studies, Ryerson University
Claire O'Kane:
I*ndependent consultant in childhood and youth*
Filipe Reis:
Head of Anthropology Department, ISCTE, University Institute of Lisbon
Pashupati Sapkota:
Program Manager, Save the Children, Nepal
Rajni Singh Shivakotee:
Independent Child Rights Specialist & Activist
Anslem Wandega:
Executive Director of ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter (African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect)
Leonardo Yanez:
Programme Officer for Latin America, Bernard van Leer Foundation

Researchers have also contributed examples of their research from different parts of the world in case studies of learning from practice as follows:

Anannia Admassu and Girma Amentie *on early learning in CHADET in Ethiopia*
Gina Crivello and Vanesssa Rojas Arangoitia *on wellbeing from Young Lives in Peru*
Vicky Johnson, Joanna Hill and Pashupati Sapkota *on 'Listening to Smaller Voices' in Nepal*
Roger Hart, Jasmine Rajbjandary and Chandrika Khatiwada *on group organisation in Nepal*
Anslem Wandega and Ruth Birungi *on school linking in ANPPCAN in Uganda*
Mallika Kanyal *on the school environment in North India*
Johanna Einarsdottir *on transitions to primary schools in Iceland*
Andy West *on water supply in Tibet in China*
Claire O'Kane and Rita Panicker *on street and working child rights in India*
Cath Larkins *on citizenship of marginalised children in Europe*

PRINTING

This report has been designed to print in A4 size. If you wish to print this report in American letter size, please ensure that you scale the paper size in your print options.

Acknowledgements

There are many people who have supported this work. We would like to thank each of the expert advisors and contributors who have worked with us.

The team would also like to thank Selim Iitus at the Bernard van Leer Foundation for his inspiration and for the initiation of this project.

The development of this resource has been funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, and through the contributions of individuals who are passionate about including young children in research and in decision-making on issues that impact upon their lives. This process can be seen as the first stage in a process of building a community of practice of researchers who work with young children.

We would also like to thank the administrative staff at the Bernard van Leer Foundation, particularly Inge Hanny, and at the University of Brighton, particularly Jo Havers and Sylvia Willis. We would also like to thank Nicolette Sheehan, Elizabeth Briggs and Angela Coffey for the copy editing.

Acronyms

CHADET	*Organization for Child Development and Transformation*
CPCs	*Child Protection Committees*
CRC	*Convention on the Rights of the Child*
CSC	*Community Sensitization Committee*
DFID	*Department for International Development (UK Government)*
ECCE	*Early Childhood Care and Education*
ECD	*Early Childhood Development*
HICODEF	*Himalayan Community Development Forum*
INGO	*International Non-Governmental Organisation*
MDG	*Millennium Development Goals*
NGOs	*Non-Governmental Organisations*
PAR	*Participatory Action Research*
PA	*Participatory Appraisal*
PtP	*Pikin-to-Pikin*
SLD	*Severe Learning Difficulties*
PRA	*Participatory Rural Appraisal*
UNCRC	*United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
UNICEF	*The United Nations Children's Fund*
VAC	*Violence Against Children*

Contents

6 *Acronyms*

8 *Introduction to The Researcher Toolkit and Resource*

10 *The Steps for Engaging Young Children in Research*

11 *The Six Steps for engaging children in research*

15 *Academic Background and Guidance on steps to engaging young children in research*

16 *Background to Involving Young Children in Research*

21 *Step 1: Capability including values, knowledge and skills*

25 *Step 2: Developing ethical processes*

31 *Step 3: Building supportive, trustful relationships*

35 *Step 4: Choosing methods and communication using different media*

36 *– Cluster 1: Interviews and discussions*

42 *– Cluster 2: Child led-tours/ In-situ methods*

47 *– Cluster 3: Visuals for free expression*

50 *– Cluster 4: Visual structures and templates*

54 *– Cluster 5: Narrative and performance*

60 *– Cluster 6: Play and games*

66 *Step 6: Flexibility in different contexts*

68 *Introduction to case studies in learning from practice in research*

115 *Linking to the researcher Tool Kit*

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCHER TOOLKIT AND RESOURCE

The *Researcher Toolkit and Researcher Resource* have been developed to support researchers to include young children in research; particularly children aged 5-8 years of age. While it has been designed to support those who are seeking to include young children in research for the first time we hope that the broad range of methods described will also be of value for more seasoned researchers. It does this by providing a six-step process for designing research and through systematically identifying and describing a range of methods that have been used with young children in diverse contexts around the world.

We use the term 'researcher' throughout this resource to refer to anyone involved in designing and conducting research including: practitioners, academics, community workers, staff in hospitals, street workers, school teachers and many others.

This publication, *Steps to Engaging Children in Research* is accompanied by a Researcher Toolkit.

The Collective Strategy Used for Producing this Publication

Academics and practitioners, who had actively carried out research with children aged 5-8 years old, were identified and asked to join a network of experts. These experts represented a range of academic and professional fields, including: streetwork, playwork, social work, childhood studies, education, psychology, counseling, sociology, and anthropology and geography.

An initial meeting of experts took place in The Hague in June 2013. Experts attended from Canada, Iceland, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Peru, South Africa, Uganda, the UK, and the USA. A draft literature review and framework for the gathering and analysis of methods was prepared in advance of this meeting by the research team. This framework was then further developed and built upon during workshop sessions at the meeting. During the workshop sessions the experts considered methods they had used in practice, identified the benefits and challenges of these methods and developed key messages to include in this resource.

In addition to the work of those experts in attendance, the group also considered the work of others in the field. Templates were designed to gather further examples of methods of value in working with young children.

These templates were piloted by researchers working in South Africa and India before being shared with experts living and working in a variety of global contexts. This included researchers working in Australia, Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America. Through this broad sweep in the collection of methods we have been able to gather methods that have been successfully used in research with young children for a wide range of types of research questions and in a very broad range of contexts. This has enabled us to identify some of the many important kinds of cultural, religious and resource issues that one needs to consider when working with children in very different kinds of settings.

We have also included case studies to show how the research methods have been applied in different parts of the world. These case studies enable us to illustrate that the methods described in this set of resources should not be simply copied; research design should involve the creative selection, combining and modifying of methods if it is to be safe, engaging, productive and relevant to children's lives.

The Structure of this Resource

'Steps to Engaging Young Children in Research' is split into a Researcher Resource and a Researcher Toolkit. These have been developed to assist researchers to design research which is ethical, sensitive to the needs of the children, the community in which they live, whilst also being engaging for young children. These steps suggest an initial process of reviewing capabilities, developing ethical protocols and building trust and relationships.

This *Researcher Resource* provides academic background about why young children should be involved in research and provides more guidance on each of the six steps to engaging young children in research.

For each of the steps guidance is given about what the researcher might include in their research when considering each step.

For each cluster of methods an overview is provided to show the range of the types of methods that could be applied with young children, key strengths and weaknesses of these methods and a consideration of the potential contextual, ethical and capacity issues which may arise through the use of such methods

Case Studies of Learning from Practice are included in this *Researcher Resource* to demonstrate research

processes have been applied with young children around the world. These demonstrate the adaptation and combination of methods that have been applied to answer particular research questions in different contexts. These examples are not meant to be prescriptive, but to give researchers examples from particular settings and to demonstrate the complexity of engaging young children in research. The examples include understanding: requirements in early childhood education in Ethiopia; wellbeing/ illbeing in Peru; work and household roles, Child Clubs and perceptions in early childhood in Nepal; street connectedness in India; moving from kindergarten to primary school in Iceland.

The accompanying *Researcher Toolkit* encourages researchers planning to work with young children to consider not only the types of methods needed to answer different research questions, but also the context in which the methods are to be applied and the skills that will be required to use them. Detailed methods discussed include clay modeling in South Africa, the use of medical dolls in Canada, child-led tours around slums in India, and drawing ecograms and wearing alien masks in Scotland.

A collection of methods provides a number of examples of methods successfully used in research with young children. This will support researchers to identify and trial different methods in their context to answer their research questions.

The methods presented have been divided into six separate, though interlinking, clusters:

- *Gaining Consent and Developing Trust*
- *Interviews and Discussion*
- *Child-led Tours and n-Situ*
- *Visual Free Expression*
- *Structured Visuals*
- *Drama and Performance*
- *Play and Games*

This *Researcher Toolkit* is presented as guidance rather than as a 'how-to guide' to be strictly followed. Each research problem is unique, each group of children will have different needs and abilities and as such researchers need access to a variety of methods that can be applied flexibly, modified, and combined in different ways to provide a unique research design. Many questions are raised for researchers to consider as they engage in this creative process of design. Collaboration with other researchers is encouraged. In doing so, if researchers continue to share their progress and extend ideas, then a community of practice of those engaging young children in research can be expanded and strengthened.

Detailed descriptions of how methods have been applied in different contexts are included in the *Researcher Toolkit*. These show how methods have been applied in a range of countries and settings so that researchers can get ideas of innovative tools and how they may be suited to their needs.

STEPS TO ENGAGING YOUNG CHILDREN IN RESEARCH

Introduction to the Steps

While there has been a positive increase in emphasis on hearing the voices of children in research over the past two decades, this seems to be less true of young children, under the age of eight years' old. Ironically, in some instances this may be because of an increased awareness of ethical issues in working with children and the need to protect children from inappropriate questioning. The focus on child protection/ safeguarding by donor agencies is welcomed, but this may have sometimes served as a barrier to the participation of young children in research. This resource identifies six steps to be consider in deciding how to engage young children in research. They are meant to offer a flexible process for building capability for the research process, to developing ethical protocols and processes, and for building trust and relationships. The methods have been organised into clusters to make them accessible to researchers, although there are obvious overlaps between these clusters. An overarching theme is that in order to successfully engage with young children research needs to be fun and relevant.

THE SIX STEPS FOR ENGAGING YOUNG CHILDREN IN RESEARCH

The steps to including young children in research are summarised in this section and then each is elaborated in a corresponding chapter. These resources are not intended as a toolkit. Methods or tools can be taken out of context and applied in a rigid and deterministic way. In order to make the research relevant to young children's lives, and engage them in a way that is fun, safe and rigorous, these steps to involving children should be considered.

Consideration of capacity and capability

The first step to consider is whether there is a commitment to including young children in research, and whether their evidence will be taken seriously when the data is gathered.

Local knowledge about the context and the role of young children is key to assessing what may be needed to translate a plan to involve young children in research into reality.

The skills of local researchers need to be taken into account. An assessment can be made about training required or partnerships that may formed to carry out research. Researchers within different organisations could collaborate, for example local non-governmental organisations with academic institutions, both bringing strength to different aspects of the research.

Last, but not least, the capability of children can be built through the process of being involved in research.

Developing ethical protocols and processes

This step considers the development of ethical protocols when working with young children in research, taking into consideration whether children will be treated as active participants in research, and how they will be respected as partners. This includes making it clear how children's evidence will be used and giving children the option of whether to participate in the research or not. There are many aspects of ethics to consider in involving young children in research, not least is whether and how, after spending time on research, children's evidence will be listened to.

Ethical protocols need to be applied to research with children. This will include considering how confidentiality on sensitive issues will be maintained whilst ensuring that children are safe and not exposed to different forms of abuse. Even if children want to have their names associated with their evidence, then risks need to be considered by adults in the research. There should also be consideration about how to involve different groups of children or with individual children, with a consideration of age, gender, disability and other aspects of identity and inclusion.

The data that is generated by any of the methods, especially those that are visual and have taken time for the children to create, are clearly owned by the children. Researchers need to make sure they can record data and leave the original outputs with the children (as long as this does not put the children at any risk). Particular ethical issues associated with different clusters of methods and detailed methods applied in different contexts are presented in the relevant sections.

Developing trust and relationships

Another priority when including young children in research is to build supportive, trustful, professional relationships between both adults and children and, children and their peers. There are two key reasons for this. Firstly, our moral and professional codes of conduct demand that we treat children with respect, listen to their views to prioritise their safety. The second reason is to create a safe, enjoyable environment in which children feel able to speak and share their views. If research is not conducted in a supportive trustful environment time may be spent collecting data that fails to represent the views of the children involved. Rather, the researcher is likely to have collected the voices of a dominant few, found that the children have said what they thought the researcher wanted to hear, and indeed may not have found out very much at all.

STEP 4 Selecting appropriate methods

STEP 5 Identifying appropriate forms of communication

Step 4 and 5 are taken together. Methods have been clustered into following clusters:

For each of these clusters there is an account of the background to the cluster of methods; overall strengths and weaknesses; overlaps with other methods; application and data analysis; communication and medium; ethics and context; and where to go for more information. There are also several accounts of specific methods in the cluster to give researchers an idea of how to apply the methods.

- *Interviews and discussions*
- *Child led-tours/ In-situ methods*
- *Visuals-free expression*
- *Visuals' structures and templates*
- *Narrative and performance*
- *Play and games*

Identifying forms of communication using different media includes pens/ paper, clay, objects from the environment, dolls with discussion, video and photography. For each method the resources needed to apply the methods are considered.

The following show some of the methods that have been used. This is not a comprehensive list but shows how the clusters have been constructed.

All of these methods could be seen as enabling children in research to use building blocks to express their emotions, needs, desires in different contexts. While methods are combined to answer different questions, there also needs to be an understanding of how to work with partners and carers. This includes consideration of whether children are being asked to communicate their own experiences or whether they are representing others. Children will communicate differently whether they are in a group or worked with individually, and they will also be affected by whether a parent or carer is present and how they are involved. Power dynamics and our awareness of them will make a difference to the process of research. The different methods will generate different interaction, and different forms of data and analysis. This needs to be considered in the choice of methods and how they are applied and analysed.

For example, some methods may be applied in-situ, that is going out to where children are to work with them, and this will affect the way that we understand their lives. These methods may include observing and accompanying the children in activities, and can be an effective way of engaging children in research and helping us to understand their lives.

Narratives and visuals may be interpreted differently depending on whether children are by themselves, in small or in large groups, but these approaches can help researchers to understand how children perceive their own lives, to allow them to tell their own story in their own way. Acting or performing which encourages children to give their perspectives on different issues and dynamics, situations and scenarios in their lives and the lives of others, can also help children to tell their story in their own way. Some methods, such as dance and model making, can be applied to understand symbolic or metaphorical expression, and can be used to trigger discussion.

Methods may also be applied to allow children to give their perspectives on the lives of other children and people in their lives. This may also involve them imagining an ideal situation, which can be useful in gaining an understanding of how they see their world, and how they would like it to be.

STEP 6 *Consideration of context*

If research is not relevant to young children's lives in their context, then it is likely that they will not enjoy the research, and it will not lead to meaningful results. Researchers will have to work with what is possible, considering existing local power dynamics and attitudes towards young children in different settings. This is why case studies have been included that have been conducted for a range of different purposes and in different cultural and political contexts in both the Researcher Toolkit and the Researcher Resource.

The cultural, political and institutional context affects the way in which people work with young children and which methods they choose for different purposes. The methods used will also be influenced by the discipline or professional working area that researchers in different organisations come from. The acceptability of different approaches and methods will in turn depend on how different forms of evidence are received in these different settings.

Further consideration needs to be given to understanding which methods are appropriate for use in the different spaces that children inhabit, in and out of school, during their work, or when performing tasks in the household. Also, for many working children and others who have little playtime, the length of time research takes up is an important consideration, even though many of the methods are playful.

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND AND GUIDANCE ON STEPS TO ENGAGING YOUNG CHILDREN IN RESEARCH

By
Vicky Johnson,
Roger Hart,
Jennifer Colwell,
Andy West
and Xenia Carvalho

BACKGROUND TO INVOLVING CHILDREN IN RESEARCH

Valuing Children's Perspectives

Since the development of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989, children's right to express opinions in matters affecting their lives as articulated in Article 12 (Van Beers et al. 2006) has been increasingly recognised. This has helped to highlight their opinions and voices in broader processes of consultation and participation in key areas of child rights. Many different types of organisations, including non-governmental, networks and coalitions have joined discussion relating to children's participation (Boyden 1997), for example Save the Children (1995) called for a 'New Agenda for Children'. There is a range of responses to articles of the Convention and how rhetoric is translated on the ground, for example as expressed in research in Vietnam (Burr 2006), and in the separate regional interpretations of the Convention (for example in the development of a separate charter for Africa). In broader international development contexts, however, children's participation has often been poorly understood (Theis 2010). In developed country contexts there is also the suggestion that 'educational developments have shown little concern for children's rights' (Taylor 2000, p32, referring to the UK context).

Power dynamics are such that children, especially young children are often considered not competent to be involved in decisions affecting their lives, especially in the 'developed' world. This paradigm has then been imposed in situations in the Global South where young children may have fulfilled a variety of roles that include contributing to work for the household, such as collecting firewood, water and looking after animals, and paid labour, such as petty trading, helping in fields and working in factories, and also caring for siblings and other extended family members and friends. Even when children are contributing to household economies, collective life on the streets and broader society, their perspectives may not be taken seriously in decision-making. This is often especially pertinent for girls in households. Children in broader social development interventions and policy-making have been seen as invisible, sidelined or even as a special interest group (Bartlett 2001, 2005), and if children's voices are heard at all, they are not necessarily acted upon (Chawla and Johnson 2004; Bartlett 2005). Young children's social development is also often seen as entwined with women's economic and social development so young children's perspectives are not sought apart from with their mothers.

As a result of decision-makers are not necessarily taking children's perspectives seriously, there are different debates that have arisen to validate research that involves children. For example, there have been calls for greater capacity building, commitment and collaboration for people in positions of power so that they take children's evidence more seriously (Johnson 2011). There is also increasing recognition in Early Years academic forums that young children have the competence to be involved in research as 'sophisticated thinkers and communicators' and examples from the Global North show that the inclusion of young children's views is central to understanding their 'life worlds' (p.301, Harcourt and Einarsdottir 2011). During the 1990s and 2000s, researchers from different academic disciplines and child-focused non-governmental organisations gave increasing attention to listening to children's voices, and, alongside this, recognition of some of the difficulties of the power dynamics and ethical dilemmas involved in taking young children's perspectives seriously (Berry Mayall 2002, Harcourt and Einarsdottir 2011).

The burgeoning of Child Acts across the world translating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into legislation is welcomed as they recognise the importance of child rights, although they often focus on protection and provision of services, rather than also including participation rights. Progress in paying more attention to child's voice is, however, countered by arguments that children's participation is often seen as an individual's rights, as opposed to part of collective in family and community (Kellet et al. 2004). The oversimplification of children's perspectives when in the right discourse is also highlighted in work with young children (for example by Kjorholt, Moss and Clark 2005). Children's participation may be distorted and imposed for external purposes of, for example, gaining the perspectives of those using services (Thomas 2007). We therefore need to understand children's participation in a multi-dimensional social construction (Harcourt and Einarsdottir 2011) and child rights need to be analysed in a diversity of household, peer group and community settings (Hill and Tisdall 1997). This is further discussed in the section on recognition of children's perspectives and age sensitivity in research below.

In conclusion, we now need to go beyond 'voice' and take on board some of the ethical challenges laid before us. Methods will not be the only answer to including and engaging young children in research, but consideration of how methods are applied in varying institutional, cultural and political contexts will be part of a process of taking the perspectives of young children seriously. This resource is part of that process of understanding how

methods can be applied in a variety of global contexts to engage young children.

The Importance of Early Childhood and Participation

There is a growing discourse about how early inequalities lead to a loss in developmental potential, and evidence is building about the effectiveness of interventions in early years (for example, Schweinhart et al. 2005). In terms of establishing the significance of early years and repositioning the child in society, academics such as Woodhead (2013) have drawn to our attention that the first 8 years of childhood is not marginal: it is the first half of a child's life and is significant chronologically, developmentally and socially/ economically.

The need for innovative solutions for working with children in early childhood has been drawn to our attention. UNICEF data shows that early childhood services are often accessed by the most privileged, and in 2008, UNESCO showed that inequalities can be reinforced by services (Woodhead 2013). The need to change the government's focus from primary school enrollment to innovative and creative solutions that focus on quality of care and education in early years and primary education is gaining ground in debates relating to post 2015 MDGs or Sustainable Development Goals.

There has also been a broader recognition of the importance of analysis across age in discussions about lifecycle and life course analysis, including an analysis of early years in an integrated approach to improving childhoods (Jowell 2013). Within any emphasis on early years, targeting young marginalised children will be important if there is to be an integrated sustained approach to improving children's wellbeing. Recognising the importance of the mother-child relationship and linking learning to life is also starting to be recognised in national and international policy discourses (Jowell 2013).

There is also growing awareness of the inequities in implementation of programmes of intervention in children's services, for example the lack of access for rural indigenous children in Latin America: this indicates that we need children to be involved in participatory impact assessment to provide statistics to show what is working (Yanez 2013). In order to understand how early years have contributed to learning through the lifecycle, we also need to encourage dialogue and shared critical reflection within communities in different contexts (Arnold 2013). In this resource we would argue that young children's perspectives are critical in contributing to lifecycle or life course analysis in order to inform appropriate interventions and policies for the early years.

In the light of international development and government organisations constructing discourses about early childhood in terms of school readiness and success, rather than the rights-based approaches of the 1990s, organisations have changed their perspectives to prioritise outcomes and impact as a rationale for working in more participatory ways with children. Tessa Jowell (instrumental in Sure Start services for young children and their families in the UK) suggests that if we give children love, value them and support their autonomy, then they will be successful and confident in early childhood and adulthood, and that we should consider what this means in different cultural contexts (Jowell 2013, Child to Child seminar on school readiness).

Recognition of Child Development and Age in Research

To a certain extent research with young children has spanned a range of disciplines. However, successful approaches and methods have tended to stay within disciplines, rather than spreading across all of those working with children aged 5–8 years old. Some academics and practitioners who have forged new ground, seeking the perspectives of children as active participants in the majority world, have concentrated on the participation of more marginalised street-connected and working children in research, but less attention has been paid to other children and youth living in poverty. Many researchers have also tended to work with older children and adolescents.

Mid twentieth century child psychology was characterised by Piaget's stages of child development. While the concept of children's developing capacities (Hart 1998, Lansdown 2005) is central to understanding how different approaches may be applied with different aged children, universal concepts of child development are juxtaposed to take into account that research with children needs to be sensitive to context. Around the same time as Piaget's work, Vygotsky took a more

ecological approach to child development, taking into account the way in which children interact in their environments, and how support from others contributes to their development in different contexts. These theories have more recently been built upon with socio-ecological theories of child development in the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986, 2005) and applied to children's participation in varying contexts (Tudge 2008, Johnson 2010/11). In Nepal, socio-ecological theories were also used in analysis of child-rearing practices (Arnold et al.. 2010). This has links to the concepts of interpretive reproduction in children's peer cultures (Cosaro 1992) and children changing their broader cultural contexts (Johnson 2010).

In anthropology, children and young people have long been recognised as new subjects in social sciences (for example by Mead 1955). Anthropologists have carried out groundbreaking research with children as active participants in research processes, for example with street and working children (Ennew and Boyden 1997) and in programmes of participatory action research (Niewenhuys 1997). Geographers have also conducted research over the past decades to understand children's perspectives of environment and their lifeworlds (Hart 1987; Johnson et al. 1995a and b). In addition participatory spaces have been suggested as critical to addressing power dynamics and engaging with children to build their confidence and capacities (Kesby 2005; Mannion 2010; Johnson 2010). Early childhood researchers also suggest that to engage with young children in research participatory and 'interesting' spaces need to be created (Harcourt and Einarsdottir 2011).

The 'new' sociology of children (for example James and Prout 1997) took on board how children's perspectives needed to be forefronted, although perspectives from child psychology were largely rejected in this movement. With the establishment of 'childhood studies' in many universities in 1990s, we may still ask whether researchers have answered the call of Margaret Mead in 1955 to work across disciplines, or have silos been further entrenched? There is still a lot to learn between academia and the unspoken, unpublished grey literature of many non-governmental and community groups working with children to understand their lives. It is hoped that these resources will bridge some of these gaps and share learning across disciplines, different organisational settings and country contexts.

In global discourses on children's participation and the ethics of research, there is a spectrum of views about children's roles in research, from children being 'unknowing objects' to 'active participants'. In the Global South, street-connected children are, in much research, positioned as resourceful and capable members of society (Ennew 1994). There has also been a shift in working 'on' children to working 'with' children in the Global North, with recognition of child-adult power dynamics (Mayall 2002). These resources hope to support researchers to move towards approaches that recognise children as active and resourceful partners in research.

Where to go for more information

Lansdown, G. (2005) Can you hear me? *The right of young children to participate in decisions affecting them*, Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague

Save the Children and Early Years Network (2003) *Never Too Young: How Young Children can take responsibility and make decisions*, Save the Children, UK

Johnson, V. Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. and Scott, P. (eds.) (1998), *Stepping Forward: Children and Young People's Participation in the Development Process*, Intermediate Technology Publications, UK

Kanyal, M. (Ed.), *Children's Rights 0-8: Promoting participation in education and care*, Routledge, London and New York

References for this Chapter

Alderson, P. (2004) 'Ethics', in Fraser, S., Lewis, V., Ding, S., Kellett, M. and Robinson, C. *Doing Research With Children*, Sage Publications, London. p. 97-112

Arnold, C. (2013) Panel presentation at seminar on School Readiness, Child to Child, London

Arnold, C., Bartlett, S., Hill, J., Khatiwada, C. and Sapkota, P. (2000): *Bringing Up Children in a Changing World*, Save the Children and UNICEF

Bartlett, S. (2001), 'Children and Development Assistance: The need to re-orientate priorities and programmes', *Development in Practice*, Vol. 11, (1), Feb. 2001. p. 62-72

Bartlett, S. (2005), 'Good Governance: Making age part of the equation – an introduction', *Children, Youth and Environments*, Vol. 15 (2). p. 1-17

Boyden, J. (1997), Childhood and the policy makers: A comparative perspective on the globalization of childhood'. In James, A. and Prout, A. (eds.) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, Falmer Press, London

Boyden, J. and Ennew, J. (eds) (1997) Children in Focus: A Manual for Participatory Research with Children, Save the Children, Stockholm

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) T*he Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by nature and design*, President and Fellows of Harvard College, US

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986), Ecology of the Family as a Context for Human Development: Research Perspectives. *Development Psychology*, Vol. 22, p. 732-42, cited in Boothby, N., Strang, A. and Wessells, M.G. (2006), *A World Turned Upside Down: Social ecological approaches to children in war zones*, Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, USA

Bronfenbrenner, U. ed. (2005), *On making Human Beings Human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA

Burr, R. (2006) *Vietnam's Children in a Changing World*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey

Chawla, L. and Johnson, V. (2004) 'Not for Children Only: Lessons learnt from young people's participation' in *Critical Reflections, Future Directions, PLA Notes*, Vol. 50, International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED), London

Corsaro, W. A. (1992) 'Interpretive Reproduction in Children's Peer Cultures', *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 55 (2), pp. 160-177

Ennew, J. (1994) *Street and Working Children: A guide to planning*, Development Manual 4, Save the Children UK, London

Harcourt, D. and Einarsdottir, J. (2011), Introducing children's perspectives and participation into research, Special Issue: Children's Perspectives and Participation in Research (Harcourt and Einarsdottir ed.), *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, Vol. 9 (3), Routledge

Harper, C. (2002) 'Recent approaches to understanding policy and action for eradicating poverty', in *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 14, pp. 1075-1079

Hart, R. A. Espinosa, M. A. Iltus, S. Lorenzo, R. (1997), Children's Participation: *The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*, Earthscan publications Ltd, UK/ New York

Hart, R. (1998), 'The developing capacities of children to participate', in Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P., Scott, P. (eds.) (1998) *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process*, IT Publications, Rugby, UK

Hill, M. and Tisdall, K. (1997), *Children and Society*, Longman, London and New York

James, A. and Prout, A. (1997) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (Second Edition) Routledge, Falmer, London

James, A., Jenks, C. and Prout, A. (1998, 2006) T*heorizing Childhood*, Polity Press, Oxford

Johnson, V. (2011), 'Conditions for Change for Children and Young People's Participation in Evaluation: 'Change-scape', *Child Indicators Research*, Springer Vol. 4 (4) pp. 577-596

Johnson, V. (2010), 'Revisiting Children and Researchers in Nepal: What facilitates and hinders change in a

context of conflict and the changing political economy', *Journal for International Development*, Wiley, Vol. 22 (8) pp 1076-1089

Johnson, V., Hill, J. and Ivan-Smith, E. (1995), *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an Environment of Change*, ActionAid, UK

Johnson, V., Hill, J., Rana, S., Bharadwaj, M., Sapkota, P., Lamichanne, R., Basnet, B., Ghimimire, S., Sapkota, D., Lamichanne, R. and Ghimire, S (1995), Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change (Nepal case study), ActionAid Nepal, Kathmandu

Jowell, T. (2013) Key Note Speech at seminar on School Readiness, Child to Child, London

Kellett, M., Robinson, C. and Burr, R. (2004) 'Images of Childhood', in Fraser, S., Lewis, V., Ding, S., Kellett, M. and Robinson, C. (2004) *Doing Research With Children*, Sage Publications, London

Kesby, M. (2005) 'Re-theorising empowerment through participation as a performance in space: Beyond tyranny to transformation', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 30* (4), pp. 2037-65

Moss, P., Clark, A. and Kjorholt, A.T. (2005) *Beyond Listening: Children's perspectives on early childhood services*, Policy, Bristol

Lansdown, G. (2005) Can you hear me? *The right of young children to participate in decisions affecting them*, Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague

Mannion, G. (2010), 'After Participation: The socio-spacial performance of intergenerational becoming', in Percy-Smith, B. and Thomas, N. (eds.) *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, Routledge, Oxford pp. 330-342

Mayall, B. (2002), 'Conversations with Children: Working with general issues', in Christensen, P. and James, A. Research with Children: Perspectives and practices, Routledge/ Falmer, London

Mead, M. (1955), Children in contemporary cultures, Cambridge University Press, London

Moncrieffe, J. (2009) 'Introduction: Intergenerational Transmissions: Cultivating Children's Agency?' *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 40 (1) Jan: 1-8. IDS, Brighton

Nieuwenhuys, O. (1997) 'Spaces for the children of the urban poor: Experiences with participatory Action Research', *Environment and Urbanisation*, Vol. 9, (1), April 1997, pp. 233-250

Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W.S., Belfield, C. R. and M. Nores. M (2005) 'Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through age 40' Highscope Educational Research Foundation. Online. Available http://www.highscope.org/ (accessed 11 August 2012).

Sumner, A., Haddad, L. and Climent, L.G. (2009), 'Rethinking Intergenerational 301Transmission(s): Does A Wellbeing Lens Help? The case of nutrition', *Intergenerational Transmissions: Cultivating Agency, IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 40 (1), Jan 2009, IDS, Sussex

Taylor, A. S. (2000), The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Giving children a voice, in Lewis, A and Lindsay, G. *Researching Children's Perspectives*, Open University Press, Buckinghamshire, UK

Theis, J. (2010) 'Children as Active Citizens: An agenda for children's civil rights and civic engagement', in Percy-Smith, B. and Thomas, N. (eds.) (2010), *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice*, Routledge, Oxford

Thomas, N. (2007) 'Towards a Theory of Children's Participation', *International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol. 16 (3), pp. 379-394

Tudge, J. (2008), *The Everyday Lives of Young Children: Culture, Class and Child Rearing in Diverse Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Van Beers., H, Invernizzi, A. and Milne, B. (2006), *Beyond Article 12: Essential Readings in children's participation*, Black on White Publications: Knowing Children, Bangkok, Thailand

Woodhead, M. (2013) Panel presentation at seminar on School Readiness, Child to Child, London

Wyness, M. (2006), *Childhood and Society: An introduction to the sociology of childhood*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire and New York

Yanez, L. (2013) Panel presentation at seminar on School Readiness, Child to Child, London

STEPS FOR ENGAGING YOUNG CHILDREN IN RESEARCH

Consideration of capacity and capability

Introduction

When beginning to design research that includes young children, particularly for the first time, it is crucial that the researcher consider two key issues. Firstly, the expertise they and their colleagues have for working with young children, including the value commitments they have for respecting and listening to young children and their abilities to engage with children in an age-appropriate way. It is also necessary to consider in advance how the data gathered will be used, reported and received by other stakeholders. As explored in the following section on ethics, it is not appropriate to involve children in research if their voices are not likely to be heard or respected. Consideration of these issues will require an honest and reflective approach to consider one's own values and skills as well as of those of others who will participate in the research.

It is also crucial that that the abilities of the children be considered. Knowledge of the local context and the roles of young children in that context is key to assessing this. However, while it may be that the initial involvement of children may be at a basic or minor level, the capability of children can be built over time, thereby increasing their capabilities to be involved.

What to Include when Considering Capabilities

Capabilities of Researchers

Key to successful research processes, are the abilities and competencies of the research team. A review of capabilities of researchers should include consideration of their interest and motivation in the research, their knowledge of ethics, their experience of working with children and their interest in relevant child-focused research methodologies. (Sargeant and Harcourt 2012, p.36). Time and care need to be devoted to training researchers, whether they are adult or child researchers (Alderson and Morrow 2011).

A study called *Rights though Evaluation* conducted in South Africa and Nepal showed that the capacity of organisations to develop and implement participatory approaches with children was often lacking (Johnson *et al*. 2000). Participation requires mediation and negotiation of participatory spaces to support children's agency in their local contexts (Niewenhuys 1997, built upon by Johnson 2011). It also requires the commitment of people in positions of power to take the evidence of children seriously and to take action based on their perspectives (Johnson 2010, 2011).

In processes of children's participation, often more vocal and invited children voice their opinions, thus excluding more marginalised children (Hill and Tisdall 1997). Researchers therefore need to plan methodologies that include those children that are quieter or more marginalised. This requires that the facilitator be skilled in the inclusion of all

At the initial planning stage it is necessary to consider the researchers' capabilities. These include:

- The commitment to include young children and take account of their perspectives
- The level of knowledge held about the local context including religious and cultural beliefs, institutional policies and political context
- The level of knowledge held in relation to local perspectives about childhood and young children's roles in households and society
- The level of skills to design and conduct relevant, inclusive and fun research. This includes communication skills for engagement with young children and the capacity to foster the inclusion of children that are quieter or more marginalised

- An understanding of ethical issues and how to develop and implement ethical protocols (Step 2 in this resource should help with this)
- The capacity to understand different approaches, including a range of innovative methods to include young children, and how to systematically design research questions and gain the perspectives of young children (Steps 4 and 5 in this resource should help with this)
- The capacity to analyse data and specifically to analyse by issues of difference including age and gender (Steps 4 and 5 on methods indicate the kind of data that arises from different methods)
- An ability to be imaginative, flexible, and able to adapt to conditions as necessary (Step 6 should help with this)

Once a capabilities analysis has been undertaken through an open and honest review, efforts can be made to 'fill' any potential gaps. For example, training could be sought and/ or partnerships could be formed with other researchers and/ or organisations, for example local non-governmental organisations with academic institutions, with both bringing strengths to different aspects of the research process. Teams of researchers can include people with local knowledge as well as those with experience of including young children in research.

Child-centred research skills and methods

Many of the methods that are included in this resource are based on the need to communicate with children in ways that make them feel comfortable, and experience of working with children is needed for this. Some of the research methods used for communicating with young children effectively are also valuable for working with children in counseling or therapy, or in providing different forms of informal education. It is necessary that the person conducting the research understand the differences between these different uses of methods and has prepared themselves with some of the basic specific understanding and skills of research. Researchers need knowledge of the further steps in developing ethical protocols, and building trust and relationships. They also need to be able to create suitable environments to engage children using a variety of innovative methods that enable their independent and creative thought, visual expression, speech and performance.

Designing the research to match the level of skills of analysis and resources available

The time and skills of analysis available need to correspond with the type and degree of data collected, and in turn with the tools and methods selected for use. The data emerging from a range of different methods will include children's perspectives and descriptions of circumstances, events and relationships, as well as how they feel about certain situations and people. Depending on the media used in applying methods and in recording, the resultant data may include visuals and visual recordings of processes of construction of visuals or play, notes of narrative and action, writings and other material made by children, and film and photographic record of performance taken by adults or children. Analysis of this data requires skill in the use of qualitative data sets, familiarity with children's language and meanings attributed to actions. Again the purpose and use of the research is a consideration. There is also no point in collecting huge data sets where there are neither the skills nor time available to analyse properly or make use of (or store for future use) the information collected.

Methods of checking meaning can be embedded in the processes used, for example, asking questions or for more information at points, or by re-telling the story back to children. Methods for recording data and checking meaning can be more rigorous if there is recording equipment available or cameras for recording visuals. Taking into account resources in low-income situations, findings can also be recorded by drawing and note taking when the use of cameras or recording equipment is not available or inappropriate. Skills for recording visuals, speech and action are therefore required when considering researcher and team capacities. The use of equipment or people for recording will also require different design and use of methods, depending on the local culture and setting.

Children validating findings

Researchers need to ensure that children are involved in validating findings in an appropriate way and that the process does not become hard work for them. Methods used with young children therefore need to be enjoyable as well as enabling the production of rich data and information. The extent to which meaning is verified will depend on the use for which the research is intended. For example, some forms of research are aimed at identifying and drawing attention to issues and circumstances of children, while other research aims to explore children's inner life, perceptions and social relationships. The collective kinds of findings may be publicly communicated or used by adults and children for community or institutional change. Sometimes children may be involved in the analysis of simple data, and this may even provide another level of information as well as checking and interpreting what has already been produced. For example after identifying their individual lunch preferences a group of young children can view the bars on a chart to see what their collective preferences are and then discuss these as a group.

Capabilities of Children

While some more traditional forms of research, such as one-to-one adult-to-child interviewing may produce useful information and data, they may not produce an enjoyable or developmental process for the children concerned, nor capture the same insights as other methods such as games or visual methods. Again, much depends on the cultural context, but also the physical and social environment for the research. Through the application of visuals, performance, storytelling or other forms of narrative, children may individually or in groups enjoy and build their own capabilities through the processes of research.

It is particularly necessary with young children to consider their evolving communication skills and social and cognitive capacities. Changes in depth and complexity of narrative and performative expression, for example, can shift rapidly. However, the process of engaging children in research can itself be developmental in enhancing skills of expression through language and in public settings, as well as in social relationships. In order to choose appropriate methods some prior knowledge of the children's groups, the culture and the setting, and perhaps traditions of communication and performance, is necessary in planning to work with them. Finally, depending on the culture, young children may be able to join in with research processes differently depending on whether they are in mixed gender or age groups.

Summary and Building Capabilities

It is important to review the capabilities of the researcher when embarking on research with young children. By acknowledging both the capabilities and the skills gaps in both adults and children, it is possible to plan suitable and useful research. This may involve additional training or the development of a team of researchers who can support each other and the children involved.

Research teams can be formed so that researchers with different levels of skills, knowledge and experience of child-centred research can take on different roles in the research team. It is advisable to review capabilities within teams to identify the areas where additional expertise is needed or how the team capabilities can be built through tailored training and support.

Where to go for more information and training

Sargeant, J. and Harcourt, D. (2012) *Doing Ethical Research with Children*, Open University Press, Berkshire, England

Guidance produced by ChildHope UK and Development Focus on children and young people's participation training can be located at: http://www.childhope.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Childhope-CYPP-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf This is not specifically for young children but includes principles and methods that are useful for participation of children and young people

Dyanmix (2011), *Participation Young Spice* – consultation methods for using with children under 11

Boyden, J. and Ennew, J. (eds) (1997), *Children in Focus – A manual for participatory research with children*, Radda Barnen - Save the Children Sweden, Stokholm

References and further reading

Hill, M. and Tisdall, K. (1997), *Children and Society*, Longman, London and New York

Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E. and Nurick, R. (2000), *Rights through Evaluation: Putting Child Rights into Practice in South Africa and Nepal*, Development Focus International, Brighton and Hove, accessed on 26/2/14 on: http://www.developmentfocus.org.uk/Development_Focus/Rights_files/DFID%20exec%20summary.pdf

Johnson, V. (2010), 'Revisiting Children and Researchers in Nepal: What facilitates and hinders change in a context of conflict and the changing political economy', *Journal for International Development*, Wiley, Vol 22 (8) pp. 1076-1089

Johnson, V. (2011), 'Conditions for Change for Children and Young People's Participation in Evaluation: Change-scape', *Child Indicators Research*, Springer Vol 4 (4) pp. 577-596

Nieuwenhuys, O. (1997) 'Spaces for the children of the urban poor: Experiences with participatory Action Research', *Environment and Urbanisation*, Vol 9, (1), April 1997, pp. 233-250

Sargeant, J. and Harcourt, D. (2012) *Doing Ethical Research with Children*, Open University Press, Berkshire, UK

Developing ethical protocols and processes

Introduction

This second step considers the ethical protocols and processes that need to be developed to work with young children in research. It is crucial that the ethical implications of working with children are explored throughout every stage of the research process from the initial planning phase through to the data collection, data analysis and dissemination phases (Alderson and Morrow 2011). Whilst ethical considerations ought to be addressed within all research, it is particularly necessary when conducting research with young children as issues of power, authority, accountability and responsibility may be even more marked than with older children and adults (Morrow and Richards 1996).

Ethical considerations include: whether children will be treated as active participants in research; how they will be respected as partners; clarity about issues of confidentiality; clarity about how children's evidence will be used; whether participants understand the research and the implications of research, as well as any risks to their being involved. Each of these issues will be explored in the following sections.

The importance of ethical approaches in research has been long recognised in literature and in guidelines and codes of practice issued by various professional associations and academic departments (for example, British Sociological Association 2002, British Psychological Society 2006), and consolidated through research ethics committees in universities and other establishments. In the meantime, professional groups have established their own codes of conduct, including organisations such as, the National Children's Bureau (2003) Save the Children (2005), and ChildHope (2009). Particularly, since the early 1990s, following widespread ratification of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), increasing attention has been paid to the specific question of ethics in research with children (for example, Alderson 1995; Morrow and Richards 1996; Skelton 2008; Morrow 2009). Most recently, an international website has been constructed with UNICEF on Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC): www.childethics.com . It offers a rich repository of evidence-based information, resources and links to journal articles to guide and improve ethical research involving children.

What to Include in Ethical Protocols

There are many elements that need to be included in ethical protocols when working with young children and which need to be reviewed and built upon continually throughout the research process.

1. Ensuring there is ownership of ethical processes so that they are followed throughout the research rather than being a theoretical exercise at the beginning of a research process.

Research ethics are the '… *social, moral and professional conventions and beliefs that underpin the basis upon which research should be carried out*' (Coles and McGrath, 2010, p.190). It is essential that all those involved in the research process are respected; this includes both participants and researchers. This means that the issues explored in this step must not be seen as 'a box to be checked', but must rather be viewed as an integral and essential element of any research process. The researcher must accept this responsibility and wherever possible seek advice and approval from another source (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). This could be through an established ethics committee, e.g. at a University or a group of representatives gathered for the project. Such a group may include parents, young people, local charities and so forth.

2. Establishing and making clear from the outset the level of input the children will have in the research process.

During the initial planning it is vital that the level of input the children will have is established and that this is explained to all of those involved. Research can been seen as being done on children, with children or for children (Kellet in Johnson et al. 2013, p. 73). A critical aspect of research planning is whether children's or adults' input has been taken into account in developing the research aims and objectives (Alderson and Morrow 2011).

A useful framework for considering the different degrees of children's participation in a process is Hart's Ladder (Hart 1992). In this ladder there is a distinction between non-participation that includes 'manipulation', 'decoration' and 'tokenism' and different levels of participation that consider who initiates the process of participation – children or adults? This questions the underlying assumptions behind why children are being

involved in research. The levels of active participation then describe different power dynamics between children and adults in terms of initiation and control of participatory processes.

3. Protecting all of those involved in the research

At the stage of project design the researcher must address issues of safety, e.g. neither children nor researcher ought to be placed in a situation where they could come to harm. For example, children must not be asked to participate in activities forbidden within their culture and care must be taken to protect their feelings. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC 2013) identifies five ways in which children may be harmed by participating in research:

- Vulnerable individuals can find participating in research stressful
- The research may 'reawaken' old feelings or memories
- The research may uncover hidden or suppressed feelings
- The research may create additional concerns
- The participant may be concerned about what they have shared.

Such issues can be overcome when there is an awareness of these issues, a consideration of who will be involved in the research and, what kinds of questions will be asked.

When considering researcher's safety it will be necessary to review the project and its aims. Some projects will carry greater risk than others. The University of Wolverhampton (no date) recommend that:

Researchers SHOULD NOT:

- Enter someone's home if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe
- Enter a house if the person they have arranged to see is not there
- Undertake an interview or assessment in a bedroom
- Give a personal telephone number or address to an interviewee

Researchers SHOULD:

- Ask a colleague to accompany them if they feel uncomfortable
- Upon arrival, explain their research role and the conditions of confidentiality to the interviewee(s) and offer them the opportunity to ask questions
- Consider an appropriate exit strategy (what to say etc.) should they wish to terminate an interview early
- Take steps to leave a situation immediately if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable
- Adopt a friendly and professional manner when conducting interviews but be careful not to be over-familiar
- Ask for household pets to be shut in another room if their presence during the interview is a cause of concern
- Ensure a nominated colleague knows the following:
    - Name, address and telephone contact of interviewee(s)/destination
    - Researcher's mobile telephone number
    - Time of leaving the office/ team location
    - Method of transport to interview location (car registration if appropriate)
    - Time of interview and expected duration of visit

4. Building trust and relationships with children so that they feel supported in the research.

As discussed in the previous section, young children will have varying degrees of social skill and ability to understand what the research process is about. Research methods, or their use in unfamiliar contexts, may be confusing or unsettling for them. The following step, Step Three, provides details on why it is essential to allow for time to build positive, trusting, supportive relationships, which can help children to feel secure. A positive adult-child relationship built on trust and understanding will both make the research process more enjoyable for those involved and help the research to progress smoothly in relation to children's greater interest in being involved (Webster-Stratton 1999).

5. Taking power dynamics into account, particularly adult-child power relationships, but also child-peer power relationships, that can lead the child to respond in particular ways to research questions.

There are inherent power dynamics involved in adult -to-child discussions, facilitation and relationships, that make it easy for adults to inadvertently shape children's

responses. Power is also connected with issues of analysis and interpretation, particularly where there is potential for dual meaning, and where the one an adult assumes to be the case may not be correct. There is a need to ensure that there are processes for checking interpretations, and providing feedback to ensure that the researcher is capturing the child's perspective. This is particularly pertinent to data collection and data analysis phases of the research.

Through the collection of data, which may involve discussions, the creation of visuals, performance or games children may individually or in groups refer to problems or issues that need some response. It is important for those adults involved to be prepared for this and to have plans in place for responding to children.

6. Providing a process for obtaining informed consent so that children understand why they are participating in research, and what it entails, before agreeing to be involved. This will include consent for photos and recordings that should be given by children as well as parents or guardians.

The UNICEF (2002) Guidance on participatory research with children states that it is not adequate to gain consent from adults for children to participate in research, particularly in light of rights of the child. As such it is advisable to endeavor to gain children's informed consent to participate in research in addition to the consent of their parents/ guardians. This means explaining research in a clear and accessible way and allowing time and space for children to understand what the researcher is saying. Informed consent should not only be applied at the beginning of a process but also throughout the process and at the end so that children feel at all times that they have the option to drop out of the process and to say that they do not want their input to be taken into account or shared. As many methods that can be exciting for young children are visual or involve visual or audio recording it is critical to make sure that consent is gained for these recording activities and that children understand how pictures and tapes with be used in analysis or shared with broader audiences.

There are interesting methods that can be used to gain informed consent other than by singing a word-heavy typed form. Examples include charts and visuals showing where research is going or where it will be used and models or videos that give ideas on the kind of research questions that may be asked.

The setting where research takes place may make a difference to whether a child feels pressured to say 'yes' to research, for example in a more formal educational setting, or if a parent or carer is present during the research, children may feel they need to be compliant with the researcher even if they do not really want to be involved. Researchers need to be aware of these power dynamics to achieve a genuine response from children. It is advisable to remain alert for non-verbal cues from the children that they do not, or no longer want, to participate in research (Skanfors 2009).

7. Respecting privacy and maintaining confidentiality to ensure that children are not put at risk.

Privacy in this instance refers to the child's right not to be subjected to 'undue intrusion into their personal affairs' (Alderson and Marrow 2011 p.31). Researchers have an obligation not to pry into matters personal to the child if the child or their parents/ carers do not give consent for the researcher to work with the child.

Confidentiality refers to researchers not sharing the names of the research participants. In addition to protecting participant's confidentiality as a 'moral' responsibility, confidentiality also carries a legal responsibility and researchers must ensure that they are operating within the applicable legal frameworks.

Generally it is considered good practice to anonymise evidence from research when sharing it with a broader audience (e.g. Alderson and Morrow 2011), thus maintain confidentiality. This will need careful consideration from the outset. Researchers/participants will need to consider how the data is stored – if found would the names of the participants be known? In addition, when the data is reported will the school/ village/community be identifiable? Will individual children be identifiable even where their names are not used e.g. given their needs, experiences, and positions in the community? Does some data need to be omitted form the reporting as it allows individuals to be identified? Are there any risks involved with their identification?

Whilst maintaining confidentiality is generally considered best practice, there are also instances where children want their names attached to their outputs/ evidence, particularly when creative methods are used e.g. model making. In such instances it is vital that the level of confidentiality is decided on prior to the research and that it is clear when children will be named participants or be credited for their comments. There are also times when confidentiality cannot be upheld, for example when the researcher has concerns that the child may come to harm if they do not follow up on child protection issues.

8. Following child protection procedures and ensuring there are processes that can support children if it is considered that the child may be 'at risk' of physical or psychological harm.

Researchers have a responsibility to report instances where children may be subject to abuse (Steinberga et al. 1999).

'Researchers need to be clear with participants from the outset that confidentiality may have to be breached if there is a disclosure relating to serious harm, abuse and/or other child protection concerns...

If a participant divulges any information that gives rise to child protection concerns, or where the researcher observes or receives evidence of incidents likely to cause serious harm, the researcher has a duty to take steps to protect the child or other children. The researcher also has a responsibility to ensure that the person disclosing is aware of the likely consequences, to ensure their wishes are clear and taken into account, to inform them of the steps that the researcher has to take and to offer support for them to tell someone else. They should ensure the individual disclosing is supported and kept informed.'

(Action for Children, cited Sheffield Hallam, n.d.).

As such it is necessary to ensure that there are adequate systems and processes that can be referred to if young children raise issues of abuse during research processes.

It is also advisable for researchers to consider working in pairs or at least in safe and/ or open spaces where they can be observed by others. There have been many developments in child protection relevant to research. Times have changed since the lone anthropologist could accompany children alone in the daily settings of their lives.

If children disclose a situation in their lives that causes them harm and distress then this should be referred to an identified person who can provide long-term support to that child. This should be considered in any research process.

9. Ensuring that issues of difference and inclusion are taken into account.

Depending on the issue, it may be important to split children into groups of girls and boys when they are working with each other discussing issues and circumstances, story-telling, and performing even with young children, particularly towards the top of the 5-8 year-old age range. Also, when children themsleves are involved as researchers, consideration should be made as to where it is appropriate for children to ask questions only of children of the same gender or not. It is important that adult facilitators are aware of local perceptions and gendered roles and restrictions so that researchers do not suggest contrary activities to which children may defer, but which they may find themselves in trouble for later. There are situations where girls or boys may find it necessary to work in distinct groups while articulating their concerns or designing a performance or visual, but afterwards they might be willing and able to present their performance across gender lines.

Age differences, as well as differences in capacities and experiences, need also to be accommodated so that, for example, older children do not dominate young, and exclude their views (Johnson 1998). Hierarchies and power dynamics may also be evident or less visible amongst children. Such hierarchies may reflect the local social position of families or whether certain groups of children go to school or not. An understanding of the composition of groups of children and local cultural circumstances is important in order to ensure that views of all are included. There may also be risks involved in children of subordinate groups revealing perceptions, so the use of methods needs to take hierarchical structures into consideration. These issues may apply also to other forms of difference, particularly the involvement and perception of children with disabilities. The use of some methods with some children may not be appropriate, and may serve to diminish their status or identity, for example asking children with learning disabilities to construct narratives or asking children with poor vision to construct complex visuals.

In some contexts language is a political as well as a social and cultural issue, particularly in regard to minority groups. For example, government policy may be to only teach an approved national language in oral and written forms, which can mean that while some children best speak a different language they use at home, they may not have a large vocabulary, and may not be able to read or write in it. However, they may not be as competent in the national language, and use of the national language may not be appropriate for some areas of discussion, for example, discussion which is focused on home or community life. There may be political problems in using the local language but to be valid the tools need to be translated into the language that that they know the best to ensure there is a clear understanding between both parties.

10. Ensuring there is adequate feedback to children who participate in research and that questions that arise from children are given an adequate response.

The issues of analysis and feedback have previously been covered in Step 1 on building capabilities of researchers. It is important that researchers check their meaning and interpretation with young children. At the same time researchers need to be prepared to respond to young children when questions arise during the research process.

Recordings can be made of children's evidence using audio-recorders, video recorders and cameras where possible, although sometimes the use of technology is not affordable or appropriate. In these cases then note-takers are important, and visuals may be recorded through drawing a copy. Researchers need to organise to copy or record evidence so that originals can be left with the children who participated as the originals belong to them (Greig, Taylor and MacKay 2007). This is in some ways simpler when children produce visuals as originals can be left if they do not present a risk to the children and copies recorded by photograph. With performance it is a positive if copies of videos can be left so that children can see their work again at a later date. Transcriptions of interviews can even be left with parents or guardians so that children can have a record of them later. This may sometimes become difficult, such as when when sensitive issues of abuse and safety are being addressed with young street-connected children. The best process to keep children safe in such complex situations, while also ensuring that children get something out of the process, is to discuss the problem with the workers who have the most sustained contact with them.

Summary

Ethical protocols need to be developed locally to ensure that processes of research are safe, rewarding for the children involved and relevant to their lives in local contexts. If the research is not meaningful, relevant and fun for young children then researchers should stop and allow children to use their time in a more productive way. Flexibility is a key to making sure research is relevant to different contexts, but this does not mean not having procedures that are set up to respond to difficult and sensitive situations where children reveal situations of abuse or dynamics that put them in risky situations. Teams of academics and practitioners working together can be ideal for dealing with local child protection issues whilst ensuring research is engaging, inclusive and rigorous.

Where to go for more information and training

There are resources available on developing child protection mechanisms, for example a range of materials can be located at the Keeping Children Safe Coalition http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/resources

There are also useful child protection resources including a child protection toolkit at ChildHope UK http://www.childhope.org.uk/resources/child-protection

Ethical guidance for including young children in research developed by the British Early Childhood Education Research Association (BECERA) http://www.becera.org.uk/

Children Act (1989) specifies that partner agencies have a duty to help Local Authorities (LAs) in the UK with enquiries in cases where harm to a child is suspected

The following books and chapters give a comprehensive account of ethics in research with children and young children's rights:

Johnson, V. (1998), 'Introduction: Building Blocks and Ethical Dilemmas' in *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process*, IT Publications, Rugby, UK

Alderson, P. (2008), *Young Children's Rights*, Save the Children/Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011), *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook* (2011), Sage

References and further reading

Akhtar, F. (2013) *Mastering social work values and ethics*, Jessica Kingsley, London

Alderson, P. (1995) *Listening to children: Children, ethics and social research*, Barnardo's, London

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A practical handbook*, Sage, London

Banks, S. (ed.) (1999) *Ethical Issues in Youth Work*, Routledge, London

Banks, S. (2006) *Ethics and Values in Social Work*, Palgrave Macmillan, Baskingstoke

British Psychological Society (2006) *Code of ethics and conduct*, British Psychological Society, Leicester

BSA (British Sociological Association) (2002) *Statement of Ethical Practice*, British Sociological Association, Durham (updated 2004)

ChildHope (2009), *Child Protection Policies and Procedures Toolkit: How to create a safe organization*, ChildHope, UK Accessed on 26/2/14 on the following address: http://www.childhope.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Final-Cover.pdf

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000, 5th ed.) *Research Methods in Education*, Routledge/Falmer, London

Coles A. and McGrath, J. (2010) *Your Research Project Handbook*, Pearson Education

Greig, A., Taylor, J. and MacKay, T. (2007). *Doing research with children* (2nd ed.), Sage, Los Angeles

Hart, R. (1992) 'Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship', Innocenti Essay No. 4, UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Florence, Italy

Hill, M. and Tisdall, K. (1997), *Children and Society*, Longman, London and New York

IAWGCP (Inter-agency working group on children's participation) (2007) *Minimum standards for consulting with children*, IAWGCP, Bangkok

Johnson, V., Nurick, R., Baker, K, and Shivakotee, R. (2013), *Children and Young People's Participation Training Workshop Guide*, ChildHope and Development Focus, London and Brighton

Johnson, V. (1998), 'Introduction: Building Blocks and Ethical Dilemmas' in *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process*, IT Publications, Rugby

Morrow, V. and Richards, M.P.M. (1996) `The ethics of social research with children: an overview'. *Children and Society* 10, pp.90–105.

Morrow, V. (2008) 'Ethical dilemmas in research with children and young people about their social environments'. Children's Geographies 6 (1), pp. 49 — 61

Morrow, V. (2009) T*he Ethics of Social Research with Children and Families in Young Lives: Practical Experiences*, University of Oxford/ Department for International Development, Young Lives Project, Oxford

National Children's Bureau (2003) Guidelines for Research, available at http://www.ncb.org.uk/ourwork/research_guidelines.pdf

NSPCC factsheet Conducting safe and ethical research with children
Available at: http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/briefings/ethical-research-factsheet_wda97712.html

Save the Children (2005) *Practice Standards in Children's Participation*, Save the Children, London

Skanfors, L. (2009) 'Ethics in child research: children's agency and researchers' ethical radar'. *Childhoods Today* 3 (11) pp. 1-22

Skelton, T. (2008) 'Research with children and young people: exploring the tensions between ethics, competence and participation'. *Children's Geographies* 6 (1), pp. 21 – 36

Steinberga, A.M., Pynoosa, R.S., Goenjiana A.K., Sossanabadia, H. and Sherra, L. (1999) 'Are researchers bound by child abuse reporting laws?' Child Abuse & Neglect Vol. 23, (8), August 1999, pp.771–777

UNICEF (2002) *Guidance on participatory research with children*

University of Wolverhampton (no date), Guidance Notes for Researchers Conducting Data Collection Off-Campus and Working Alone, Centre for Health and Social Care Improvement, University of Wolverhampton, UK Accessed on 26/2/14 http://www.wlv.ac.uk/pdf/lone%20working%20procedure%20for%20researchers.pdf

Webster-Stratton, C. (1999) How to promote children's social and emotional competence, Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd, London

Developing trust and relationships

Introduction

When embarking on research with young children it is vital that priority is given to building supportive, trustful, professional relationships between both adults and children, and children and their peers. There are two key reasons for this. Firstly, our moral and professional codes of conduct demand that we treat children with respect, listen to their views and prioritise their safety. Such is the importance of this that Step 2 was devoted to the ethics of conducting research with young children.

The second reason for prioritising building relationships is to create a safe, enjoyable environment in which children feel able to speak and share their views. If research is not conducted in a supportive, trustful environment time may be spent collecting data that does not represent the views of the young children involved. Rather the researcher may collect the voices of the dominant few, find that the children have said what they thought the researcher wanted to hear and indeed not found out very much at all. This is not to say that spending time with children guarantees that the researcher will build positive relations with all children – relationships are in a constant state of change (Bakhtin 1986).

There is a wealth of research from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, education and sociology, which has explored how behaviour and involvement in research can be impacted upon by issues of group dynamics and power relations (e.g. Marrow 1999). In this section we consider what research has told us about children's relationships and interactions and how the findings of this research can be used to improve the quality of research conducted with young children.

Why spend time building positive relationships?

When embarking upon research with children aged 5–8 years old it must first be acknowledged that they are still very much in the process of developing their social skills. There is likely to be great variation in the communication skills and levels of understanding children of this age group. Furthermore, it may be necessary for the researcher to become familiar with their use of language, the nuances of their speech, and their relationships so that the data collected can be understood (Coffey 1999). This may be achieved by spending some time with the children, getting to know them and understanding the level at which they can operate. Of course it is possible to work with one or two children from the outset if your research is based upon getting to know them and understanding their lives, but it is often necessary, particularly when working with a group of children, for relationships and boundaries to be established prior to the start of the research.

Consideration of how children operate within social situations led Crick and Dodge (1994) to develop a model of information processing within social interactions. This model identifies how a child's understanding of their own emotions and the behaviours of others, work together to influence their actions. This understanding helps children to understand what is deemed socially and culturally appropriate. Whilst this may often be beneficial and indeed crucial in allowing children to successfully operate within a specific context, learning how to behave in particular situations can also lead to outcomes which may be less desirable. Children may have learned that they have a particular role within their peer group for example. Issues that may arise include:

- Children who fear being teased may not risk joining the activity and become passive (Galton and Williamson 1992)
- Some may take the group activity as a time to fence sit or take a free ride, that is let others do all the talking or work (Dune and Bennett 1990)
- Some children may feel outside of the group because of their ethnicity, disability, gender or ability and therefore not share their views (Cowie and Rudduck 1990)

Such outcomes are likely to be particularly important for researchers who are seeking to gain children's views in a group situation.

In addition to children being influenced by their peers, adults have also been shown to be influential in shaping children's behaviours. Research has shown that for children to open up to adults during the research process they must feel that the adult is trustworthy, interested and supportive (e.g. Punch 2002; Butler and Williamson 1994). The role and approach taken by the adult may also shape the ways in which children interact with their peers in group situations. Sheridan (2007) found that where pre-school practitioners asserted dominance and demanded obedience from children, the children themselves demonstrated more anti-social behaviours towards their peers. In contrast where adults

fostered trust and respect the children were much more likely to cooperate with each other on joint tasks. Therefore, to gain the greatest levels of cooperation, and ultimately increase the validity of the data gathered, adults must be aware of the impact their behaviour has on children.

How to build positive relationships with children

It may be that a researcher works with the children they are researching often. It may be that a researcher does not know them well at all. Either way there are a number of things that can be done to build an environment where positive trustful relationships can thrive. This includes:

- Getting to know every child's name and using it whenever possible – this provides a sense of belonging and shows that the researcher is interested in them. It can also help the children to remember each other's names.
- Allowing some time for the child to lead discussions and activities – this shows that the researcher is interested in them and they have some power in the relationship.
- Getting to know the child's family/ friends/ community – the researcher can discuss their lives with them. In doing this, the researcher is showing an interest in them and their experiences. The researcher may also discover a better understanding of children's lives, feelings and opinions.
- Praising the child often for their contributions and accomplishments.
- Respecting the child and not dismissing their opinions or cutting across their conversations.

Such behaviours let children know that they are able actors in this relationship, that they and their opinions and experiences are valued and respected. Furthermore, as discussed previously, these behaviours are likely to foster more cooperative relationships between the children and their peers and thus have a further impact on the research process.

How to support positive child-peer relationships and cooperation within groups

Detailed programmes to support the development of children's social skills, allowing them to cooperate well in a group, which are rooted in theory and research, rarely centre on children under the age of six (Battisch and Watson, 2003; Colwell, 2012). This may be due to the fact that children of this age are often considered too egocentric to develop such competencies (Kutnick at al. 2004). Yet there are examples of programmes and activities which have been shown to foster these relationships.

One of the most frequently adopted approaches to the development of the skills required for successful peer interactions and relationships among children is `circle time' (Lang 1998). Circle time is also known as the Magic Circle. It involves, as one might expect, asking the children to sit in a circle. The circle is significant as it allows every member of the group to have eye contact and to hear what others in the group are saying. It is also useful for the adult leading the session to sit at the same height as the children.

When using circle time it is usual for the group to agree the 'rules' for example that *we must listen when somebody is talking and that everybody who wishes to will get a turn to speak*. There are some examples of the kinds of activities which can be used during circle time sessions at the end of this chapter. It is important to remember that the circle provides an environment for fostering relationships; sitting in a circle alone does not build trustful and respectful relationships per se.

One approach taken to support cooperation and collaboration in groups is the 'Relational Approach', which was developed during the SPRinG project in the UK (Blatchford et al. 2005). This approach combines aspects of social psychological and socio-cognitive theory to develop a social pedagogy of group work (Kutnick and Colwell 2009). This approach assumes that positive relationships are a prerequisite of successful collaborations (e.g. Hall 1994; Kutnick and Brees 1983) and that with the development of such relationships comes the reduction of those issues recognised as resulting from power imbalances within groups.

There are three key facets to the Relational Approach: **Building trust:** Galton and Williamson (1992) stated that children need support to develop the trust necessary for working together in groups; **Developing**

communication skills: many studies a have suggested that in order to collaborate children need to have developed communication skills (e.g. Gillies 2003) and **Problem solving skills.** The approach states that the first two stages must be achieved before the third is possible.

It is the first two stages that are of particular significance here; however it is proposed that the problem solving stage aligns well with the notion of using group research activities. Acknowledging this approach and its theoretical grounding it is therefore suggested that, when embarking on research with young children in groups, taking time to ensure that there are respectful and trustful relationships between children who can communicate with each other is likely to be beneficial. There are a number of activities provided in Section 3 that focus specifically on building trust and developing children's abilities to communicate well with each other. These may support the development of a respectful trustful environment in which research with children can be undertaken.

Summary

The evidence suggests that there are two key relationships that require attention when embarking on research with young children. The first is the adult-child relationship, and the second, the child's relationships with their peers.

There are a number of key points made in this chapter that shape the approach we take in the remainder of this resource. That is:

- Take time, if at all possible, to get to know the children
- Start with simple conversations, tasks and rules so that the work can be pitched to the child's level of understanding
- Focus on building a positive relationship with the children to ensure that useful representative data is gained
- Focus on supporting children to develop trustful supportive relationships with their peers so that they can work in cooperation and feel free to express themselves in a safe environment
- Allow the children to guide the conversation and/ or task where possible
- Listen to the children and the adults who know them well when planning and undertaking your research

Further support, reading and training opportunities

1. http://www.snipsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Inclusion-Tool-Kit-Part-6_Lets-Play_-Activities-That-Strengthen-Peer-Relationships.pdf

This resource provides practical activities for building children relationships with their peers.

2. http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module1/handout5.pdf

This resource provides support to adults wishing to build trustful supportive relationships with children.

3. http://www.workingwithothers.org/

A long-term approach developed out of the previously mentioned work of the SPRinG project can be found at the Working With Others website. *Working With Others* is a training and research organisation run by Dr Cathy Ota, which specialises in providing training and support to enable children and adults to develop respectful and trustful relationships.

References and further reading

Baines, E., Blatchford, P. and Kutnick, P. with Chowne, A., Ota, C. and Berdondini, L. (2009) *Promoting Effective Group Work in the Primary Classroom*: a handbook for teachers and practitioners, Kindle edition, Routledge, London

Bakhtin, M. (1986) T*he dialogic imagination,* University of Texas Press, Austin

Battistich, V., & Watson, M. (2003) Fostering social development in preschool and the early elementary grades through co-operative classroom activities, In R. M. Gillies & A. F. Ashman (Eds.) *Co-operative learning: the social and intellectual outcomes of learning in groups*, Routledge Falmer Press, London

Blatchford, P., Galton, M., and Kutnick, P. (2005) 'Improving pupil group work in classrooms: a new approach to increasing engagement and learning in everyday classroom settings at Key stages 1, 2 and 3'. Teaching and Learning Research Briefing Number 11, TLRP, London

Bennett, N. and Dunne, E. (1990) Talking and Learning in Groups, Routledge, London

Butler, I. and H. Williamson (1994) *Children Speak: Children, Trauma and Social Work,* Longman, London

Coffey, A. (1999), *The ethnographic self: Fieldwork and representation of identity,* Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA

Colwell, J. (2012) *The Relational Approach to Group Work: The role of the pre-school practitioner in the development of children's social competencies,* Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Brighton, England

Cowie, H. and Ruddock, J. (1990) *Co-operative Group Work in the Multi-Ethnic Classroom*, BP Educational Service, London

Crick, N. R. and Dodge, K. A. (1994) 'A Review and Reformulation of Social Information-Processing Mechanisms in Children's Social Adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115, 1:1, pp. 74-101

Edwards, E. and Talbot, R. (1999) *The Hard Pressed Researcher*: a research handbook for the caring professions, 2nd edn, Pearson Education, Essex

Galton, M. and Williamson, J. (1992) *Group-work in the Primary Schoo*l, Routledge, London

Gillies and A.F. Ashman (2003) (eds.) *Co-operative Learning: the social and intellectual outcomes of learning in groups*, Routledge, Falmer Press, London

Howes, C. and Farver, J. (1987) 'Social pretend play in 2-year-olds: effects of age of partner'. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly,* 2: pp. 305-314.

Keddie, A. (2000) 'Research with young children: some ethical considerations'. Journal of Educational Enquiry, 1 (2).

Kutnick, P. and Brees, P. (1982) 'The development of cooperation: explorations in cognitive and moral competence and social authority', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 52: 361-5

Kutnick, P. and Colwell, J. (2009) 'Relationships and dialogue enhancement: the relational approach', in C. Howe and K. Littleton (eds.) *Educational Dialogue: understanding and promoting interaction*, Routledge, London

Kutnick, P., Ota, C. and Berdondini, L. (2008) 'Improving the effects of group working in classrooms with young school-aged children: facilitating attainment, interaction and classroom activity'. *Learning and Instruction*, 18: pp.83-95.

Kutnick, P., Ota, C. and Berdondini, L. (2004) *SPRinG at the University of Brighton, Developing a relational approach for peer-based experience in pre-school classrooms; group working and relational skills with your class.* Draft Handbook. Unpublished

Ladd, G.W. (2005) *Children's Peer Relations and Social Competence*, New Haven, Yale University Press, CT

Lang, P. (1998) 'Getting Round to Clarity: what do we mean by circle time?' *Pastoral Care in Education*, 16, pp.3-10.

Mahon A., Glendinning C., Clarke, C. and Craig, G. (1996) 'Researching children: methods and ethics'. *Children and Society,* 10 (2) pp.145-154

Papatheodorou, T. (2009) 'Exploring relational pedagogy', in T. Papatheodorou and J.R. Moyles, (eds.) *Learning Together in the Early Years: exploring relational pedagogy,* 3-18, Routledge, London

Pellegrini, A.D. and Blatchford, P. (2000) T*he Child at School: interactions with peers and teachers*, Arnold, London

Punch, M. (1986) *The Politics and Ethics of Fieldwork*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, Inc, CA

Punch, S (2002) Research with children: The same or different from research with adults? *Childhood* Vol. 9 (3) pp.321–341

Sheridan, S. (2007) 'Dimensions of pedagogical quality in preschool'. *International Journal of Early Years Education,* 15 pp.197-217.

Selecting appropriate methods
and
Identifying appropriate forms of communication

Introduction

Approaches such as drama, role-play and visuals have been used as methods of finding out children's perspectives on their circumstances, their issues and solutions to problems in the Global South. These have not always been seen as research, but more as development initiatives, and consequently whilst there is expertise in applying methods, the use and findings have not always been written up. This means that although methods may have been well developed and rigorously applied, their circulation is limited. Where records have been published this is often in `grey literature', such as NGO reports and booklets for field workers and these are rarely picked up by academic research circles. On the other hand, some methods of narrative work have been developed and utilised in academic disciplines, but the use of the techniques, and even the findings from research, have not spread over into practice of organisations that are working very closely with children and promoting their welfare and their views.

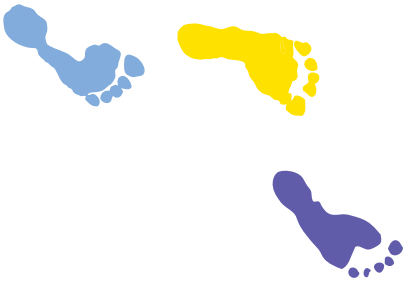
Other differences emerge in the detail of how methods are applied. Long-term academic research projects, that require stable populations and work in depth, for example using detailed narratives, are often based in institutions such as schools. On the other hand some other methods, such as the use of community theatre, have been used with working, out of school, children or in institutions such as in residential care. It is noteworthy that the methods that have been developed for children out of school are commonly more qualitative, holistic and innovative. This has been no doubt, in part, because of the need to voluntarily engage a mobile and often disaffected population. Although this is a broad generalisation, it indicates the need to take into account the local context and children's experiences of school and other organisations. This context includes the North where, in the past, children living in residential care had different experiences of engagement with adult rights workers to their peers who attended school and lived with their own family; children in care were bored with the ice-breakers and games in workshops that children in school found exciting and innovative (West 1998, p.195).

Methods such as interviews and focus-group discussions have been used across sectors. But with limited cross-over of publications and engagement among adult organisations and disciplines there is a risk of different insights and perspectives being lost to the detriment of the whole. This is particularly important in developing and learning about the design and use of tools in working with different groups and ages of children, especially young children, and in different contexts. Methods that have been designed for use in international development arenas may be valuable in the academic world, and methods developed in academic disciplines can enhance practice in the field by front-line workers who are doing research even though they may not have a research training.

This chapter of the resources is split into the following methods clusters:

- Interviews and discussions
- Child-led tours and other in-situ methods
- Visuals for free expression
- Visuals with structures and frameworks
- Narrative and performance
- Play and games

For each of these clusters there is discussion of the methods in overview, their key strengths and weaknesses, application and analysis, ethics and context, where to go for more information, and an account of the methods, materials and processes.



CLUSTER 1
INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

The most common method used for understanding children's perspectives and feelings is one-on-one interviewing. But conventional interviews are not a suitable means for talking with young children. Interviews break with their normal ways of communicating with others, putting them into the strange situation of answering a series of questions from a stranger. There is an exaggerated imbalance of power because the researcher asks all of the questions and, typically, the children have limited understanding of, and interest in, the interview process. This not only presents an ethical problem but also a problem of validity because a child is unlikely to fully share their thoughts and feelings with someone they are afraid of. There are times however when a researcher needs to guide a conversation with a child or children, and so in this section we provide techniques to make the interview process more comfortable to a child. This involves ways of making the setting more natural and reducing the power imbalance between the researcher and the child by providing a range of alternative methods and materials for communication. In the following section the details of how to conduct an interview and how to listen to children are not discussed, as there are already many resources on this. What is covered are the ways in which to make conversations, discussions and interviews more comfortable, relevant and fun for young children.

The subsequent methods chapters contain further alternative means of communication, so that, for any particular research question, researchers can consider how the methods in the sections of this guide might be used in combination with the interview processes described below.

Informal Conversations and Discussions

Before thinking about conducting formal interviews the researcher should ask whether there are opportunities to talk with young children in a more informal manner. If there is time available and the opportunity for repeated exposure with the same group of children, it is possible to create opportunities for spontaneous discussions with them. Susan Isaacs pointed out a long time ago that paying attention to the questions children ask is often more revealing than hearing children's answers to your questions (Isaacs 1926). If the researcher is able to adopt a comfortable role in a children's institution, or in a neighbourhood, for a significant period of time they could adopt a 'participant-observation' strategy and this would enable them to observe and listen to children in a relatively comfortable manner and to have informal conversations with them. Unfortunately this is time consuming and probably only realistic for research that is carried out by teachers or those facilitators of a children's setting who have sustained opportunities to work with children. Street educators and playworkers, for example, have an ideal opportunity to understand children's lives on the streets and in public spaces. In her work with very young children, under six, Clark has characterised this kind of sustained participant observation as 'listening to children' (Clark 2011).

Even if the researcher is not able to have this kind of engagement with children, there are many ways to make the exchanges with them more like discussions than interviews. Garbarino and Stott (1989) suggest that talking with children while they are engaged in routine activities allows them to talk spontaneously about things that they know the researcher is interested in. Encouraging children to tell stories can be another valuable way to gain access to a child's perspectives. It is often of course sometimes difficult to tell the difference between a narrative account of an experience and an imaginative one created to entertain you, but this is not always a problem (Greene and Hogan, 2005).

Individual Interviews

Individual, one-on-one interviews can be made less intimidating and more interesting by simply paying attention to the setting of an interview and introducing materials or props into the situation.

The Situation and the Setting:

Being interviewed by someone is an unusual occurrence for a young child, so researchers need to create conditions that will help children feel comfortable. It is important to choose a place to interview a child where they can feel relaxed and comfortable. Researchers

can think of three qualities in choosing a place: secure, neutral and comfortable. By '*secure*' we mean a place where the child feels that people who they trust are close by and accessible so that they feel that they could to go them at any time. This might be on the doorstep at the entrance to the child's home or, perhaps, in a school library. By '*neutral*' we mean a place that is not likely to influence the discussion. Conventionally, interviews were carried out in neutral laboratory-like settings, away from the child's everyday world because of the extreme beliefs that researchers in psychology had for controlling the contextual influences of the social and physical environment. In attempting to make the setting neutral, researchers should not make it strange to children. It should be familiar to them, but not a place that might influence their freedom to talk openly and honestly on the topic of your interview. For example, if researchers wish to understand children's feelings about their school, it would not be a good idea to hold the group discussion inside their school classroom. By '*comfortable*' we mean that the physical setting should be welcoming and the seating arranged in a manner that is familiar to them and informal.

While it is true that some settings would be most unsuitable for interviewing children, it is equally true that there are times when the validity and reliability of the data can be improved by conducting interviews in the particular setting where the issue of concern has been experienced. Such '*in-situ interviews*' can be valuable for learning about an event so that the degree of recall of the event, and the particular contextual details are present, such as research on the occurrence of bullying in a playground (Boulton 1993). Needless to say, researchers would need to be careful to not to upset the child through the recounting of a negative past experience, and such an interview may need to be done with a caregiver present.

The Use of Materials and Props in Interviews:

This discussion overlaps with the visual representation section but here the primary focus is on the interview being led by the researcher, whereas in the representation section the drawings, photographs, collages and maps etc. are the primary source of data.

Pencils and Paper:

It is common for researchers to ask children to draw them something related to their research question and then ask the child to talk about the drawing. Often a young child will be more comfortable talking with researchers while they are drawing; they are thinking in action when they draw (Susan Cox 2005).

Dolls and Puppets:

Puppets, dolls or stuffed toys are discussed in the Play and Games section, but they can also be used for role-play by both the researcher and the child as a way of liberating discussion. Having a doll take the place of an interviewer can sometimes help reduce the imbalance of power between interviewer and child.

Miniature Toys and Models:

Small toys, selected for their appropriateness for the topic of your investigation can greatly enrich discussions with a child. This method has been used successfully by clinical psychologists and therapists trying to understand emotional issues with children (Lowenfeld 1935; Erikson 1963), by cognitive psychologists exploring how children think (for example, Piaget 1945) and by geographers interested in children's environments (Blaut and Stea 1973; Hart 1976). Children typically enjoy the method and talk a great deal through the materials presented to them. If researchers wish, they can go one step further in setting up the conditions for children to talk about issues of particular concern to the researcher by building a specific 'stage' related to these questions, such as a simple model of a child care center where children can move miniature toys and dolls/figures around as they talk (Nallari 2005).

Group Interviews

The assumption of most researchers that interviews should be conducted with one child at a time is probably a reflection of the emphasis of psychology on individual development and ideas of control in obtaining data. With the growth of research with children outside the field of psychology there has been increasing use of group interview approaches because they appear to more fun and less intimidating to children, and because many researchers find that they provide a lot of data with much less time. There have not however been many published accounts of group interviewing with young children, mainly because many researchers believe that below seven years of age children do not have adequate social skills and language abilities for group participation. We argue here that while it can be more difficult to support discussion with very young children, there are significant benefits to doing so. Yet while

group interviews offer some important advantages over individual interviews with children they are not appropriate for all kinds of research questions. In-depth methods with individual children are often necessary for gaining an understanding of how children experience, perceive and feel about certain issues, particularly sensitive ones.

In a group discussion children can freely express their perspectives on an issue in an informal relaxed manner that is closer to their every day interactions with peers or friendly adults. A facilitator encourages discussion on a selected topic in order to reveal children's perceptions and feelings about it. This provides narrative data that can subsequently be analysed in relation to the goals of the study. One of the primary benefits of group discussions with children is that it reduces the power imbalance between adults and children; the children are now joining their peers for discussion with one adult rather than responding to that adult alone. Also, unlike an interview, no child feels that they need to answer every question or questions that they do not fully understand. This may reduce the tendency of children to answer in ways that they think an adult wants, which has long been seen by many researchers as a threat to the validity of findings in research with children. The researcher can probe for their thoughts and feelings in a significantly less threatening situation. The goal is not to achieve consensus amongst the children but rather to discover the divergence and convergence of their views.

Researchers commonly use the term *focus group interview* to describe interviews with groups, While we are stressing here the value of discussion groups with children for reducing the power imbalance with children and adults, it is worth looking critically at the research that has been done through focus groups with adults to have a more complete understanding of the issue of power. In the conventional focus group, which is a very popular method for market research with adults, the interviewer holds all the power and the paid interviewees are typically kept ignorant of the true purposes of the research. The researcher uses manipulative and indirect strategies to learn how a groups thinks, or might think if manipulated, about a new kind of product for the market. We do not feel that this kind of indirect strategy should generally be used with children, although sometimes it will be necessary to approach sensitive issues obliquely rather than directly.

It is preferable to think of group interviews as *participatory group discussions* with the researcher being transparent and clear about the goals and the process.

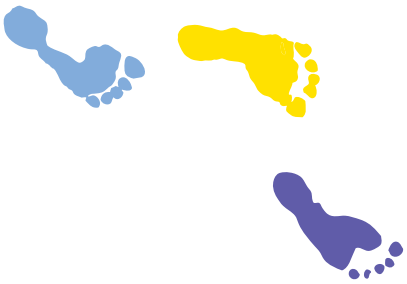
In most instances, however, the highly participatory research approach called *participatory action research (PAR)*, where the participants are themselves the researchers, identifying research questions and pursuing them, will not generally be appropriate for use with young children because it requires significant amounts of time to create the conditions for this. Nevertheless we would like to be clear that although PAR is usually undertaken with older children, progressive, skilled, early childhood educators sometimes conduct this kind of research as a valuable approach to learning in their classrooms. We are recommending in most instances that the researcher will want to define the question(s) and allow children to discuss them openly to allow for analysis and interpretation, which can subsequently be shared with them.

Some of the issues that should be considered when trying to decide whether or not to use group interviews in research are outlined here.

The Benefits of Using Group Interviews with Children

It is necessary to stress that group interviews are only useful for generating qualitative information that can offer insight into children's perspectives and feelings. It is a great mistake to try to quantitatively analyse data associated with individual children from the group; the group is the unit of analysis, not the individual children. Group interviews can be an extremely valuable component of a multi-method study, but they should never be used as the sole empirical evidence to support some decision to take action or to create policy for children. In summary, they:

- Enable a large amount of data to be collected quite quickly
- Provide a rich set of data with a greater breadth of responses than is possible with individual interviews
- Allow exploration of an area that has been little-explored and is not well understood – a group discussion can reveal a range of experiences and perspectives
- Recognise children as experts, when it comes to evaluating the settings and services that they regularly use, and valuable in the development of environments, programs and services for children
- Are less influenced than individual interviews by what the children believe adults want them to say



because they are spurred by the discussion to speak out about one another's ideas

- Provide access to children's own language and concepts, enabling the researcher to gain insight on how they co-construct meaning about and understanding of something
- They enable the researcher to observe the dynamics of the group's discussion, which provides understanding of social norms and how consensus attitudes emerge in groups of children

Some Limitations and Problems with using Group Interviews:

- Some children may not like to speak in groups and hence will say little or nothing
- It requires a trained, experienced, facilitator
- Because of the problem of group pressure the researcher cannot infer that there has been consensus on any issue
- It is not appropriate for quantitative analysis or generalisation from the data
- It is not appropriate for approaching sensitive personal issues
- Unlike in individual interviews, the researcher is not able to pursue an understanding of the details of participant's experiences

Group Size and Composition

With adults' focus groups a group size of eight to ten participants has been found to work the best for creating a rich, informative, discussion. While there has been no comparative research of group size with children under eight years of age, the group should probably be limited to three to five children because with larger groups there tends to be a loss of focus in the discussion and parallel conversations.

In some situations researchers have found it beneficial to have groups of similar children, for example groups of boys and groups of girls, groups of children in school and out of school, or groups of children who speak the same local language or come from the same area. On the other hand, it is sometimes these kinds of differences between children that are the focus of the research.

Awareness of this challenge by a good facilitator might be enough to surmount the problem of having children of very different backgrounds present.

Although there has not to date been very much published research on group interviewing with children under eight years of age, many early childhood educators know that it is possible to conduct valuable group discussions with four- and five-year-old children.

In one respect, group interviews seem to be a very effective strategy for young children because of the more spontaneous nature of their comments, having less tendency to regulate the social desirability of their comments than adults. It is difficult to come to a clear conclusion regarding the question of age of participants. It will largely depend on the researcher's skill as a facilitator and the nature of the inquiry.

It is preferable to involve children of similar ages in the group because of the great changes in social skills and language during these early years. In addition, because within any culture the experiences and interests of children change as they grow older, some topics will be more difficult to address across different ages. For example, young children may be less sensitive about discussing sexual issues than older children (Hoppe et al. 1994).

Many researchers have found that it is often valuable to conduct separate group interviews with boys and girls, but there is no clear indication that this is true with young children.

While it is tempting to bring together a group of friends for a discussion, because they are already comfortable talking freely with one another, there may sometimes be problems with this. Some market researchers, who rely heavily on focus groups, claim that there is more peer pressure on children to answer in certain ways when groups members are familiar with one another. This is particularly the case with those issues that might be sensitive for them to disclose in front of their friends. But there are many other research questions that would benefit greatly from children who know one another being able to talk as a group about their lives together, such as how they plan and carry out activities with one another, how they get together, what they talk about with each other, or what some of their shared perceptions of something is. There are even occasions when it is valuable to interview a 'natural group', that is a pre-existing social group of children who know each other very closely. For example researchers might want

to interview a group of street-working children who survive on the streets together about what they consider to be some of the greatest risks in their lives and their ideas for reducing these risks.

Facilitation of the Group

Good facilitation is the key to a successful group interview. The moderator facilitates discussion in an open-minded, non-directive, manner. Conventionally, in a focus group interview, the facilitator uses a set of pre-determined questions to help stimulate discussion about a topic that is commonly not directly shared with the group. In more participatory group interviews the facilitator shares the goals or primary question(s) of the research and leads an open discussion about them.

Facilitators will need to spend time in 'warm-up activities' where the participants can become familiar with one another and with the researchers (see Step 2 on Building Trustful Relationships). Then, before beginning the interview discussion, researchers will need to specify some ground rules for the discussion. They will also need to be aware of how the conversation is flowing in relation to the primary questions, and to help gently guide it through prompts and probes. It will probably be necessary to plan some break-out moments to re-energize the group, and researchers should consult with the children to learn what the activities might be

Recording of the Session

If conditions allow it, and the researcher has the approval of the child and caregiver, then it is productive to audio record the discussion (see Step 2 on Developing Ethical Protocols). This will be useful in helping researchers to recall what was said, but it cannot completely replace also having an observer take notes of the session. In addition to making a summary record of the ideas that are expressed, the observer can also record the dynamics of the group's discussion. In this way they can attempt to capture, through the children's non-verbal as well as verbal responses, tensions about certain issues, the conscious and unconscious influence of the children on one another's ideas, their shared and divergent perspectives, and areas of the discussion that seemed to be sensitive.

The Setting

The facilitator needs to create a nonthreatening supportive and positive atmosphere in order for participants to discuss their perspectives openly. The setting is an important part of this consideration

The interview should not take place in a location that might influence the discussion. For example, if the researcher wishes to understand children's perspectives on their school it would not be a good idea to hold the group discussion inside the school.

The presence of other persons in the room can dramatically affect the ability of the facilitator to foster open discussion between children. This can be a challenge in those cultures or institutional settings where the elderly or persons of authority consider it their right to be present. The best one can do in such instances is to introduce gently what might sound like the radical idea of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that enabling children's perspectives, fears and concerns is essential if we are to know how to best improve their lives, and that it has been found that children speak much more when only the facilitator is present.

The arrangement of the seating should be informal, reflecting how children themselves would arrange themselves and any furniture if they were sitting to discuss issues with one another. This offers the greatest opportunity for reducing the patterns of authority between adults and children that are the norm for any particular culture.

Combining Interviews with Other Methods

Triangulation and Complimentarity of Methods

As we have discussed elsewhere, triangulation refers to the overlap in the kind of data produced by using different methods. We have explained in this section that while group interviews are a potentially rich method for learning about children's perspectives and feelings, they may mask important individual differences that will require the overlap of findings from other methods, including in-depth individual interviews.

We have described in the above sections some of the different benefits of individual and group interviews,

but very often researchers will want to use both methods because of tier complimentary strengths and weaknesses. Lewis gives the example of research into young children's understanding of severe learning difficulties (SLD). Individual interviews were useful for her understanding of children's perceptions of the causes and likely progress of a learning difficulty, and whether a child had any control over the problem, whereas group interviews helped her understand group norms about fears and acceptable behaviour towards children with SLD (Lewis 1987).

Ethics and Context

There are some particular ethical issues to consider in using group interviews. One distinct challenge of group interviews is that children are disclosing information and feelings not just to the researcher, but to all of the group members. In the description of the research to the children's caregivers, researchers should not guarantee that participants will not be disturbed by the discussion because the children's comments cannot be controlled. The researcher, as a facilitator, and the observer partner, should monitor the stress of group members and intervene if needed, and provide a debriefing session at the end of the interview. If the group interview is on a very sensitive issue researchers might want their research partner to be someone with clinical experience so that they can better aid in assessing the situation (Smith 1995).

Where to go for more information:

Boulton, M.J. (1993) 'Proximate Causes of Aggressive Fighting in Middle School Children'. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 63, (2) pp. 231–244

Cox, S. (2005) 'Intention and Meaning in Young Children's Drawing'. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 24 (2), pp.115.

Greene, S. and Hogan, D. (2005) *Researching children's experience: methods and approaches*, SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, Calif.

Heary, C. (2002) 'The Use of Focus Group Interviews in Pediatric Health Care Research'. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, Volume 27, Issue 1, pp.47-57

Hoppe, M. J., Wells, E. A., Morrison, D. M., Gillmore, M. R. and Wilsdon, A. (1995) 'Using focus groups to discuss sensitive topics with children'. *Evaluation Review*, 19, 102-11

Isaacs, S. (1930) *The Intellectual Growth of Young Children*. Harcourt, Brace. Oxford, England

Lewis, A. (1992) Group child interviews as a research tool. *British Educational Research Journal,* 18, 413-421

Smith, M. W. (1995) Ethics in focus groups: A few concerns. *Qualitative Health Research, 5, pp.478-486.*

Lewis, A. (1992). 'Group child interviews as a research tool'. British Educational Research Journal, 18, pp.413-421

Smith, M. W. (1995). 'Ethics in focus groups: A few concerns'. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5, pp.478-486

CLUSTER 2
CHILD-LED TOURS/ IN-SITU METHODS

Introduction

The majority of research methods described in this compendium of methods involve ways of enabling children to represent to a researcher how they think or feel about something that is not present through the use of words, visual means such as drawings and photos, or through performances. In this section we describe child-led tours as a distinct set of methods that are designed to enable children to describe their experiences as they move through the spaces where they have happened or where they typically happen.

In-situ interviews, where a child is interviewed at a location where a particular experience happened, or typically happens, are also valuable and are discussed within the 'Interviews and Discussions' section as 'In-situ interviews'. In this section we focus on the special quality and values of methods where a child is moving with the researcher through a space while annotating their experiences or assessments of the space. These mobile in-situ methods are a relatively new, and rare, approach to learning about people's perspectives through dialogue with them that have been variously called 'child-led tours" (Hart 1979; Clark and Moss 2011); 'child-led neighborhood walks' (Lynch 1979; Moore 1986; Chawla 2002; Driskell 2002), 'accompaniments' (Johnson et al. 1995) or 'go-alongs' (Kusenbach 2003).

Individual Child-led Tours

This kind of child-led mobile interview allows the researcher to learn from a child about places and features that are considered to be highly significant for them. It has been used effectively in both indoor and outdoor spaces, including the evaluation of spaces for play (e.g. Nallari 2014), or more broadly for children's assessment of environmental and living conditions for children (e.g. Lynch 1979, Johnson et al. 1995; Chawla 2002 and Driskell 2002).

An obvious value of this set of methods is that they change the balance of power that a child typically feels in their relationships with an adult. Allowing a child to lead the researcher through a space that is familiar to them is a very natural activity for them which gives them a greater sense of authority in the situation. This contrasts with most other interview or discussion methods, where they are responding to questions from you. By taking the researcher on a tour through their familiar spaces children can direct your attention to particular places that are significant to them, and express their feelings, assessments and evaluations about the physical or social properties of these locations as they proceed.

While the issue of authority or 'empowerment' is an important rationale for using child-led methods there is also a philosophical rationale for them (Hart 1979; Kusenbach 2003). Enabling a child to move through familiar spaces while commenting on their experiences places them closer to their lived experiences than conventional sit-down research methods do, because all of our lived experiences are embedded in the spaces we use (Kusenbach 2003). For example, the roles and work of girls and boys in households and societies can be understood by accompanying individual children, as young as 5–8 years old, as they perform everyday tasks including collecting water and firewood, looking after their siblings and goats, while having a discussion with them to understand how they feel about their responsibilities (Johnson et al. 1996).

While this method feels more natural and comfortable for a child we must still remember that a conversation while walking with a researcher is still a contrived situation. Allowing two children who know each other well to talk with each other about a common set of experiences can approach an even greater degree of normality and can lead to even more commentary, unless the issue the researcher is trying to learn about is a very personal one.

Some of the possible situations where individual child-led tours might be particularly appropriate include:

- Learning about the different activities or events that take place in the environments that they use and how they feel about these
- Learning how children feel about the environments they use, such as playgrounds, schools or hospitals, so that they can be better planned, designed or managed

- Learning about the roles and responsibilities of girls and boys while accompanying them in their work
- Learning about the process that a child uses to do something, such as what they have been shown they should do in a fire emergency or how they go about getting their lunch, by recreating or demonstrating that process

Documenting Individual Child-Led Tours

Depending upon the issue being investigated, a still camera held by a child can greatly improve the clarity of purpose of the activity, especially when the purpose is to learn about qualities of the physical environment or about which specific places in a child's world have some particular meaning to them. Also, carrying the camera makes it clear that it is the child who has the knowledge or experience we are trying to learn about, and holding the camera gives them a rare sense of authority in their relationships with adults. The photographs can provide useful representations for subsequent further discussion with the child. They can also be subsequently used in further activities such as map making and personal books that offer the chance for children to further elaborate their perspective on the issue being investigated (see Cluster on Visual for Free Expression). The general term that has emerged for participatory photographic methods is 'photovoice' (http://www.photovoice.org).

The type of camera available can make a big difference, especially with young children. The main value of enabling a young child to take photographs is the opportunity it affords for discussion between the child and researcher. A camera that prints instantly, such as a Polaroid camera or a digital camera with a display screen allows for this dialogue. Those that require time to make prints are less valuable in this regard.

Audio recording during a tour with an individual child, or a pair of children, is important if researchers wish to capture a child's spontaneous comments on their experiences of, and emotions about, familiar spaces while walking. The insights that can come from these comments, made during the stream of experience, can offer insights into a child's personal experience that do not typically emerge when using sit-down methods.

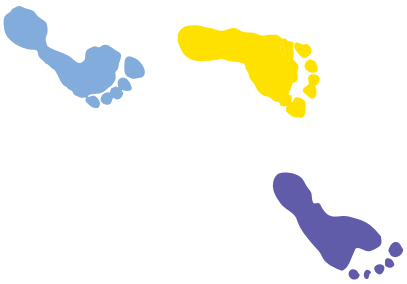
A video camera in the hands of a child is usually not as useful for obtaining useful data for analysis. It can be a powerful way of enabling a child to show, and simultaneously describe, their perspective on a setting or experience which they have had, but this type of shooting and presentation typically requires a sophistication in its execution that makes it more suitable for older children.

Group Child-led Tours

Group-led tours are extremely valuable but they have a different rationale and range of uses from *individual child-led tours*. While the individual walks with a child enable a researcher to get closer to the lived experience of a child, a group tour is valuable for obtaining a range of different perspectives about a community, local environment or an indoor institutional setting. As a group moves through a space the members of the group are free to call attention to places or features of the environment that present different issues of concern to them, and the group members can then all share their different perspectives. It is useful to think of this as a kind of *moving focus group.* Although it is a less normal type of daily activity than the individual child-led tours, it is still offers children a greater sense of control in the situation and typically provides richer data than a sit-down focus group discussion.

Unlike the individual child-led tours it is usually necessary for the researcher to follow a pre-determined route, though still allowing the children to take the lead in commenting while walking. One strategy is to walk along a transect, or relatively straight trajectory drawn across a map or plan, and '*transect walks*' are a well established method for enabling adults to articulate their knowledge of the land by traversing diverse distinct types of land in terms of topography, soil or agriculture. But in most urban settings a meandering route will need to be designed to pass through the greatest possible diversity of the physical environment or social properties of a community. Transects are often used with adults to obtain an overall view of an environment or community, particularly in the early stages of community participatory assessments because they enable the researcher to obtain a great deal of basic knowledge about the community (e.g. Van Staden 2006). They can have a similar value in working with children.

Transects or journeys around a pre-determined route are also valuable for comparisons between different types



of users of the same environments, such as a Children's Hospital. If a researcher wishes to evaluate how well a hospital is designed or managed for children they would invite people who are likely to have a diversity of perspectives on the subject, such as child patients, nurses, doctors, visiting family members, security personnel and janitors. Children under eight years of age however would typically be too intimidated to freely identify many of the issues that concern them in such a large, mixed aged group, and so it would be best for one adult researcher to first conduct the walk with a small group of children alone. They would walk together through the wards and treatment spaces and identify the different uses and evaluations of each of the spaces. When nurses, doctors and cleaning staff subsequently walk through the same spaces they would be asked to discuss their own perspectives on the issues raised by the children, as well as identifying their own concerns for discussion. In some institutions, where children of a wide age range commonly work and play together in mixed age groups and with adults, the levels of competency and confidence for participating in group-dialogues might be higher, making their participation possible.

In many instances it will be sufficient for the researcher to declare a general research question, such as an evaluation of the accessibility and quality of play places, and allow the children to lead the commentary. Researchers might sometimes, however, have a need to lead or probe with specific questions, such as asking children questions regarding the specific set of dangers that they might associate with different places along a route. While this can no longer be thought of as being entirely 'child-led', if a researcher is walking through an environment that is familiar to the children this is likely to still allow a child to feel relatively in control of the dialogue and to result in a richer commentary than would be elicited from a sit-down interview.

The data that can emerge from group tours is rich and complex because of the number of people speaking. The ideal way of capturing the data is a video recorder with a good microphone because it allows the researcher to identify which of the different participants spoke and the place or thing they were referring to. If this is not possible then an alternative is to have a map or plan of the spaces moved through on a clipboard and to make notes on it during the tour. It will be impossible to accurately record the different issues that particular people identified in this way, but the most valuable data is not about individuals but about the issues that they collectively identified and how they debated them.

Child-led Tours Through a Simulated (Model) Environment

With very young children even the empowering quality of child-led tours may not always be enough to elicit large amounts of commentary from them. Also, some spaces, like a hospital waiting room, are busy at all times, making it difficult to conduct a child-led tour. An effective alternative is to model the environment in three dimensions and then allow children to lead the researcher through that. This method is closely allied with the use of models as settings for children's play with dolls (See Methods Cluster on Play and Games) and the use of models in individual interviews.

A model of the space can be built simply with cardboard walls, no roof, and a few landmarks that are notable to children added to it. The child can then be invited to use a small doll and asked if they could show the researcher, or another doll that is in the role of a visiting child, around the space: e.g. "*Can you please pretend that a new girl is starting in your school and that you are showing her around, and explain all of the rules that a child needs to know.*"

Strengths and Weaknesses

Each of this set of child-led methods has the advantage of being a comfortable, natural activity that is highly participatory and can elicit a lot of information that is linked to particular locations. They enable children with limited verbal or other representational skills to point out (and sometimes demonstrate) to the researcher places or features of the physical setting that are of concern to them. Furthermore, because the method places children in a mode of reenacting travel through familiar spaces, the child-led methods typically elicit a richer set of comments than methods collected while sitting down in an arbitrary location.

While use of the child-led tours carries obvious advantages, it may sometimes result in children avoiding showing the researcher places that they are afraid of, or embarrassed by. To help correct for this a debriefing can be carried out regarding the places that were avoided after the tour. But, if the researcher knows in advance that they have the goal of eliciting a comprehensive view of dangerous or disliked spaces, they might want

to consider using a transect or pre-determined route through the environment, rather than following a child-led route.

Application, Data and Analysis

Whatever means are used to document the routes and the discussion the most valuable step in transferring the data for most questions that use this method will be to map it. If the data was collected with a video camera then it will be very easy to to associate the words spoken with places along the route. This greatly facilitates being able to transfer the data directly onto a map or a transect diagram. If the route was designed by a group, or groups of participants themselves then it is appropriate to record the data on a map of the environment that is the subject of the study. But if the children were taken on a transect walk, following a fixed route designed by you, then the findings can be displayed on a transect diagram (a cross-sectional slice showing the qualities of the spaces passed through with annotations above of what issues were identified by the group of each of the spaces).

If a video or audio recording was made the data will typically be too extensive to write it all on a map or diagram and so it will need to be coded in some way. In some instances where the purpose of the tour was clear and specific, such as identifying a dangerous location in a neighborhood, it might be possible to mark each location with symbols that represent the different threat or danger, such as places where "bullies hang out", "drug dealers live", or "trucks and cars go too fast" etc. In other situations, such as the open-ended group tour through the hospital described above, it will be necessary to build a detailed coding of the responses to capture the range of concerns and the different perspectives on them held by child patients, nurses and parents etc. In order to obtain sufficient depth of commentary on each of the issues identified it might be necessary to carry out a series of such walks with similar mixed sets of types of users.

Ethics and Context

Asking a child to lead the researcher through an environment that they are familiar with is likely to be comfortable for them, but there are important exceptions such as being taken through a neighborhood that has been the scene of past threats to the child. This danger is of course greatly diminished if they are leading the researcher to the spaces, rather than the researcher directing the route. The informed approval of caregivers is, of course, more important than ever when the children will be working with the researcher outdoors rather than being interviewed in an institutional setting. It would also be part of an ethical protocol for the researcher not to be with a child alone. Therefore, if the tour will not be in places which are open to the public, another child or adult facilitator or participant should be included in the tour.

References/ Resources

Boulton, M.J. (1993), Proximate causes of aggressive fighting in middle school children, British Journal of Educational PsychologyVol. 63, Issue 2, pages 231–244

Chawla, L. (Ed.) (2002) Growing Up in an Urbanising World. Paris / London: UNESCO Publishing / Earthscan

Chawla, L. and Driskell, D. (2001) *Growing Up in an Urbanizing World*, Routledge, London

Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2011) *Listening to young children: The mosaic approach*, National Children's Bureau Enterprises Ltd; 2nd Revised edition

Driskell, D. (2002) Creating Better Cities: *With Children And Youth: A Manual For Participation*, UNESCO Publishing/Earthscan Publications

Hart, R. (1979) Children's Experience of Place, Wiley, New York

Hart, R. (1997) *Children's Participation: the Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care*, UNICEF, New York and Earthscan, London

Johnson, V., Hill, J. and Ivan-Smith E. (1995) Listening to Smaller Voices, Action Aid, London

Kusenbach, Margarethe. Street phenomenology: the go-a long as ethnographic research tool. In Ethnography, 4 (3), 455–485

Loebach, J. and Gilliland, J. (2010) 'Child-Led Tours to Uncover Children's Perceptions and Use of Neighborhood Environments', Children, Youth and Environments 20 (1) pp. 52-90

Lynch, K. (1979) *Growing Up in Cities*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass

Moore, R. C. (1986). Childhoods Domain: *Play and Place in Child Development*, Croom-Helm, London

Nallari, A. (2009) *Ways of Accessing Preschool Children's Experience of the Physical Environment: A Comparison of Research Methods*. Unpublished M/S New York: PhD Program in Environmental Psychology, Graduate Center of the City University of New York

CLUSTER 3
VISUALS FOR FREE EXPRESSION

Introduction

This chapter concentrates on visuals constructed by children without guidance from adults beyond a theme or medium. Visuals are an exciting way of children to portray their own interpretations using mediums such as drawing, clay, collage and photography. This cluster can be seen alongside the cluster on visuals using structures and templates as there is a spectrum in research with children, or children working in collaboration with adults and child facilitators to express their ideas and imaginations. We thought it important, however, to allow this space on free expression with children to show that, with the materials and tools to help them, they can analyse their own lives and construct their own portrayal of ideas and issues of importance within their lives.

Over the past few decades, researchers working within academic institutions and non-governmental settings have applied methods that encourage visual free expression. Researchers span disciplines including environmental psychologists, geographers and anthropologists, using different forms of visual representation to gain a better understanding of children's worlds. Visuals have been used to understand the lives of children living in difficult circumstances, street-connected children, children in post-conflict situations and children living their everyday lives in neighbourhoods around the globe. Educationalists have used drawings and photographs in research to understand children's perspectives in early years and their school lives. Geographers and planners have often worked with children on 3D modeling and design to feed children's perspectives into planning playgrounds/ outdoor and other spaces.

Overview of Methods

Visual methods for free expression can help to access the imaginations of children who may not so readily express in spoken words, narrative or performance. Through free expression we also want to gain children's perspective on events and issues that, we acknowledge, adults may have preconceptions about.

The type of evidence that comes from many of the visual methods in this cluster is the visual outcome by children, such as drawings, photos, 3D models, clay, collages etc. alongside transcripts of interviews, conversations and researcher's notes. Some of the methods will also include children's writing. The visuals alone are fairly meaningless and require discussion with children in order that they can explain them, and the relevance to their lives.

Anthropological ethnographic research has for many years employed photographs, sketches, maps and signs. What we are trying to show in this chapter is how these types of visual methods can be valuable, but that the role of the researcher needs to be reconsidered. In research that involves young children the focus needs to shift from the researcher being the expert who observes and analyses, to the researcher being a facilitator, and the role of young children coming to the forefront in creating, analysing and presenting their own information. This was reflected in the academic and applied research and guidance given by leading anthropologists to international non-government organisations (for example Boyden and Ennew 1997; Neiwenhuys 1997; Reynolds 1991).

Despite a growing awareness over the 1980s and 1990s that visual methods could increase community participation, many methods did not explicitly acknowledge the value of children's participation, and particularly young children's participation (Hart 1997). Visuals were used extensively by geographers, environmental psychologists and planners to understand the lives of children and how they interacted with their environments (for example Lynch et al. 1977; Johnson et al. 1995; Hart 1997).

There is now a growing body of evidence around applying two and three-dimensional visuals, including drawing, clay modeling and collage, as well as mapping and model use of visual methods with children, although again young children have not always been included. Much of the international research in academic institutions and INGOs using visual methods have been with children of over eight years and often with teenagers. We have therefore, in these two chapters on visuals, chosen examples that have been used with children 5-8 years old, and a couple of methods that have been used with children aged eight and over, but which researchers regard as appropriate with young children.

In the academic contexts of social sciences, such as in sociology and social work, visual data may be used in

a deterministic and mechanistic way, although two and three dimensional visuals, including objects and signs, have increasingly been applied to construct and understand social life from different perspectives (Emmison and Smith 2000). In the sociology of childhood, researchers prioritising children in their research recognised the power dynamics between researchers and children (for example Mayall 2002) and would use visuals, often drawings, as methods to explore the perceptions of children including young children (Einarsdottir 2005). Pole (2008) suggests that there needs to be a conceptual shift from the pictures of childhood, to the use of visuals to contribute to knowledge about childhood. At the same time he acknowledges that data of an intimate and personal nature is often collected and therefore he stresses the importance in ethics in applying visuals in practice.

Overall Strengths and Weaknesses

The strengths of these visual methods lie in the way in which they allow young children to guide their own participation and analysis of issues that affect their lives. They are not structured or guided by adults but allow young girls and boys to think about their lives starting from their priorities, and applying these methods can help researchers to encourage children to express themselves without the undue influence. The weakness is that it can be difficult to compare the results of these visuals across groups or contexts. Where there is more guidance from researchers, the results may be more comparable as is the case with the more structured visuals that are included in the next methods cluster.

Application and Analysis

For young children the process of drawing or producing a visual is as important as the end product, and there can be enjoyment in this process of research.

In research in Nepal, drawing and constructing visuals can help children to overcome power dynamics locally whereby culturally, children, especially girls, may not regard themselves as having opinions that would necessarily be valuable to adults in households (Johnson et al. 1995; Sapkota and Sharma 1996). In addition in the UK, visual forms of research have been seen as a 'leveller' in countering power dynamics between generations, and between local residents of all ages and decision-makers in community planning (Johnson and Webster 2000).

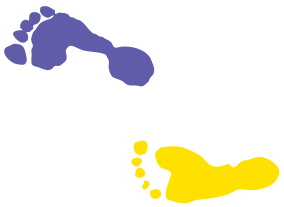
Visuals need to be seen as part of a process of research rather than as an end product, so the discussion about the visuals and the analysis of the children is vital to telling any stories or drawing any conclusions.

Ethics and Context

As for all of the other methods, rigorous processes of informed consent, both at the beginning and during research processes, should be observed as well as establishing with children how to deal with confidentiality. There is an additional issue with visuals as sometimes they can be used for decoration rather than to meaningfully inform research and decision-making. The children should therefore be clear about how their visuals will be used and described to other audiences. Researchers should be wary of using methods only to decorate reports rather than to really inform analysis and conclusions.

The owners of the visuals should always be assumed to be the children who created them in processes that employ visual methods. There may only be exceptions if a child gives the visual as a gift or if the children would be put at risk if they kept them. In most situations photos can be taken of any of the visuals so that they can be represented in the research write up. Writing or names that betray confidentiality on the visuals would then have to be blurred or removed to ensure children are not put at risk or embarrassed if their pictures are included in write ups or disseminated.

Sensitivities can arise with drawing and painting about whether children with lower levels of literacy and who are living in low-resource contexts feel comfortable to hold pens and paper. In certain cultural contexts children cannot draw representations of themselves. For example, in Afghanistan there are cultural beliefs about not having photos taken or having any form of visual representation of yourself (Abrioux 1998). In Nepal drawing on the ground can be seen in some remote villages as crossing the ancestors and other locations may have different cultural beliefs about the capturing of images or drawing in different settings (Johnson et al. 1995). Illiterate or less literate children may also feel less comfortable holding pens and paper so this method could make some of the most marginalised feel excluded from the process.



Where to go for more information

See detailed case studies from Iceland by Johanna Einarsdottir, from Nepal by Joanna Hill and from the US by Roger Hart

Detailed tools: Children's drawing and photographs with discussion by Johanna Einatsdottir, drawing inside the household by Joanna Hill, Clay modeling by Rachel Bray, ecocharting by Malcolm Hill.

References for this Chapter

Abrioux, E. (1998) 'Degrees of Participation: A spherical model – the possibilities for girls in Kabul, Afghanistan', in Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. and Scott, P. (eds.), *Stepping Forward: Children and Young People's Participation in the Development Process*, IT Publications, London, pp.25-27

Arnold, C. Bartlett, S., Hill, J. Khatiwada, C. and Sapkota, P. (2000) *Bringing Up Children in a Changing World*, Save the Children and UNICEF

Boyden, J. and Ennew, J. (eds.) (1997) *Children in Focus: A Manual for Participatory Research with Children*, Save the Children, Stockholm

Einarsdottir, J. (2005) 'Playschool in pictures: children's photographs as a research method', *Early Child Development and Care*, Vol. 175, (6), August 2005, pp. 523-541

Emmison, M. and Smith, P. (2000) *Researching the Visual: images, objects, contexts and interactions in social and cultural inquiry*, (Introducing qualitative methods series), Sage Publications Ltd., London

Ennew, J. (1994) *Street and Working Children: A guide to planning*, Development Manual 4, Save the Children UK, London

Hart, R. A. (1997) *Children's Participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*, Earthscan publications Ltd., London

Johnson, V., Hill, J. and Ivan-Smith, E. (1995) *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an Environment of Change*, ActionAid, London

Johnson, V. and Webster, J. (2001) *Reaching the Parts…. Community mapping: Working together to tackle social exclusion and food poverty*, Sustain: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming, London and Oxfam, Oxford

Lynch, K. (ed.) (1977) *Growing Up in Cities*, MIT Press, Cambridge, USA

Mayall, B. (2002) 'Conversations with Children: Working with general issues', in Christensen, P. and James, A. *Research with Children*: Perspectives and practices, Routledge, Falmer, London

Nieuwenhuys, O. (1997) 'Spaces for the children of the urban poor: Experiences with participatory Action Research', *Environment and Urbanisation*, Vol. 9, (1), April 1997, pp.233-250

Pole, C. (2008) 'Taking The Pics? Visual Methods, Childhood Research and Ethics' Abstract for QUALTI seminar at Cardiff University, Advancing the use of visual methods in research on children's cultures, April 2008

Reynolds, P. (1991) *Dance Civic Cat: Child labour in the Zambezi*, Zed Books, London

Sapkota, P. and Sharma, J. (1996) 'Participatory Interactions with Children in Nepal', *PLA Notes*, Vol. 25, pp 61-64

CLUSTER 4
VISUAL STRUCTURES AND FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

This chapter describes a wide range of methods that use visual frameworks or templates to enable groups of children to express their preferences, appraisals or evaluation. They differ from the other visual chapter on free expression in that there are structures and templates offered in order to work on two and three-dimensional visuals with children. This cluster of methods is often, by their very nature, a collaborative process of research with children working alongside adults. Some methods ask children to assess or evaluate using a graphic template with categories, such as a preference matrix, which allows for simple quantitative comparison of data. Others call for children to complete something in a freer manner, such as making a body map as a metaphor for something, and these lend themselves to more of a qualitative analysis. Visual methods may been seen on a spectrum of children's control, and structures may be minimal, for example, an outline of a body or a line drawing to indicate a timeline. Or they may involve more structure, working with children to create indicators for scoring or applying templates that work in comparative research across contexts. Most of these visual structures and templates have been developed for use in group participatory appraisal projects (PA), where children are invited to participate in collecting data on their own perspectives and to analyse and discuss this data with researchers (see introduction in Chapter 1).

Visual structures and templates have been used a great deal for many decades by NGO's and international development organisations as well as national development NGOs as a modest way of achieving the participation of communities in their own development (for example, Guijt 1994; Johnson 1995). The use of these kinds of methods with groups of children has grown rapidly in the past 20 years along with the international movement for child rights and the goal of giving children a voice in their own development. Urban planners and designers have also employed visual methods to understand children's assessments of their neighborhoods and public spaces as a basis for improved planning and physical design (Chawla 2002). More recently, visual templates have been employed by researchers to understand what is important to children in their learning in the early school years (e.g. Clark 2007). Some government schemes and departments in the UK have made children's participation part of community or school consultative processes, and visual participatory appraisal methods have been applied to gauge whether services for children are effective and reaching the right children (for example, Johnson et al. 2005).

To a certain extent these visual methods with structures and templates can be used with any of the other methods clusters. Sometimes dolls or puppets can be taken through the structured visual created, or theatre and play can be used to lead into or to explain some of the expression in a structured visual.

Overview of Methods

Many of the methods that we are presenting in this chapter, such as timelines, body mapping and ranking are aligned with participatory appraisal methods. Other methods, such as photography and video taken by children could be placed in either of the two visual chapters, depending on the amount of structure and adult guidance, versus free expression, that they are given. For the sake of clarity, photos and video taken by children have been covered in the chapter on free expression, and here we will be talking more about children's responses to visuals, such as photos and magazines, constructed by adults and/ or other children. This chapter also includes structured surveys. These may be co-constructed with children and use indicators that are developed by children, but this happens less with young children.

Drawings by children have also been used a great deal in both ethnographic research and participatory research with children, and can also be categorised under visual free expression or structured visuals, depending on how guided they are by adults, adult determined themes, structures and templates (Boyden and Ennew 1997; Niewenhuys 1997).

Visuals have also been an important part of the development of participatory rural appraisal (PRA), now often referred to as participatory appraisal (PA) due to its use in urban and rural settings over the 1980s and 1990s. In this text we will generally refer to participatory

appraisal (PA) and we acknowledge its roots in anthropology, participatory action research and Freirean pedagogical approaches to codification in literacy, and also embrace methods being flexible to the situation in which they are applied (Chambers 1997, 2002, 2007; O'Kane 2000).

During the early developments of PA visual methods, children's perspectives were often excluded. Difference in gender and age of participants were first acknowledged in adult PRA processes in the early 1990s, alongside other 'issues of difference' (Welbourn 1991). A community of practice was developed in order to establish the meaningful participation of children in PA processes (Johnson 1995). The use of PA or structured visuals with children, including young children, was developed during the 1990s by researchers in the field, within the context of international NGOs, gaining an understanding of local environments and children's lives (see examples below). This research included the perspectives of young children alongside older children and adults in communities. In many studies to explore children's lives, however, there was still a tendency to only include children above the age of around 8 years due to skepticism around competence (or perceived lack of competence) of young children. Examples of research that included young children's perspectives included understanding of local environments in Uganda (Guijt et al. 1994) and analysis of children's roles within households and societies (Johnson et al. 1995) and of children's participation in practice and research (Johnson et al.1997). Visuals have been expensively applied in INGO innovative practitioner research in the UK and internationally, for example by Claire O'Kane (for example O'Kane 1998).

Lack of attention to power and politics has been leveled at the PA approach (for example by Cooke and Kolthari 2001), with result that recently discourses around PA have concentrated on dimensions and flow of power and participatory spaces. The use of PA and visuals in PA, have also been discussed as part of move towards transformative development (Hickey and Mohan 2004 and Johnson 2010).

Overall Strengths and Weaknesses

Structured visual methods can be designed to be fun for groups of children. Although the structures are often initially determined by the researcher, there is room for involving children in the process, though less so with children under eight years of age. Visuals can be more or less structured, ranging from a line for time, a circle for a plate of food, or an outline of a body, to a more structured and researcher defined visual survey or use of visual stimuli. Ironically, one strength of using structured visuals to think with, versus free expression, is that they can often liberate children from the constraints of drawing using cultural conventions such as a square house with four windows, a front door and a triangular roof to represent their homes.

Another strength of some of the more structured visuals is that they enable comparison across case studies and by children's age, gender and other dimensions of difference (for example, see www.childfriendlyplaces.org).

A potential weakness of structured visuals is that if facilitators are not trained to use the methods flexibly, and to freely modify and adapt them, the methods can become mechanistic in their application. They can also become more researcher-lead, often adult-lead, depending on the degree to which the visual is structured, and the degree of opportunity children have to comment on and modify the structure.

Application and Analysis

The availability of local materials needs to be considered when planning the medium for visual research. Structured visuals methods have been applied most extensively with children in developing countries, often using local materials and avoiding pen and paper, as local resources are often not available and literacy may be low. Although literacy of young children is rising, many girls are still not in school, particularly in rural areas in many countries around the world.

In the Global North, more paper and pens are used, presuming higher literacy or comfort using these resources. Imaginative artwork, sculpture and collage can be fun and inclusive ways of working with groups and individuals in the Global North and South. Therefore, literacy and comfort with the use of different materials will determine how much different visual methods can be applied.

The evidence arising from a research process applying visual methods can never just be the visual products. The interpretation of these by the children will give rise to transcripts of discussions and/ or researchers' notes.

As much analysis as possible should be carried out with the children through discussion and cross checking of information.

Ethics and Context

Expectations of the potential roles and degrees of participation by children aged 5–8 years old will be dependent on the local cultural and political context, as will attitudes to early years and primary education and gender roles. Trying to understand these in advance is vital to anticipating which different tools may be applied, interpreted and accepted (Johnson 2011).

Visuals can work to level out power dynamics between children, so it can be productive to use with groups, however, facilitators also need to be aware when children start to copy each other rather than relying on their own thoughts and analysis. One disadvantage may also be that adults may interpret visuals in a way that distorts the child's perception unless they cross check interpretation and analysis with the children that they are working with. There can be a lot of 'baggage' arising from adult (or child) facilitators projecting their own memories and interpretations onto their analysis. These preconceptions need to be acknowledged, discussed and challenged.

Visuals can sometimes draw out sensitive issues in front of a group too effectively, and there needs to be protocols about how to deal with this. Being aware of what children may reveal in a group or individually is necessary in the development of the ethical protocols. These protocols should be followed as part of the research process with young children. Gender awareness in applying different visual methods to explore different issues in groups and individually is an issue across all methods clusters, but can be particularly pertinent when using visuals representations as the evidence is there for all of the research participants to see!

Where to go for more information

See detailed case studies in Peru by Gina Crivello, in Nepal by Vicky Johnson, Joanna Hill and Pashpati Sapkota, in India by Clare O'Kane.

Websites
www.childfriendlyplaces.org

Plan International Indonesia – guide on children's participation by Robert Nurick, can be accessed on www.developmentfocus.org.uk

References used in Chapter

Abrioux, E. (1998) 'Degrees of Participation: A spherical model – the possibilities for girls in Kabul, Afghanistan', in Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. and Scott, P. (eds.), *Stepping Forward: Children and Young People's Participation in the Development Process*, IT Publications, London, pp. 25-27

Boyden, J. and Ennew, J. (eds.) (1997) *Children in Focus: A Manual for Participatory Research with Children*, Save the Children, Stockholm

Brock, K. and Pettit, J. (2007) *Springs of Participation: Creating and evolving methods for participatory development*, Practical Action Publishing Ltd. (Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd), Rugby, UK

Chambers, R. (1997) *Whose Reality Counts: Putting the first last*, ITDG Publishing, London

Chambers, R. (2002) *Relaxed and Participatory Appraisal: Notes on practical approaches and methods for participants in PRA/PLA-related familiarisation workshops*, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton

Chambers, R. (2007a) *From PRA to PLA and Pluralism: Practice and Theory*, IDS Working Paper 286, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton

Chambers, R. (2007b) 'Creating, Evolving and Supporting Participatory Methodologies', in Brock, K. and Pettit, J. *Springs of Participation: Creating and evolving methods for participatory development*, Practical Action Publishing Ltd. (Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd.), Rugby, UK, pp.177-189

Clark, A. (2003), 'The Mosaic approach and research with young children', in Lewis, V., Kellet, M., Robinson, C., Fraser, S., Ding, S. (eds.), *The Reality of Research with Children and Young People*, Sage, London, pp.157-161

Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. (eds.) (2001) Participation: The new Tyranny? Zed Books, London

Einarsdottir, J. (2005) 'Playschool in pictures: children's photogrphs as a research method', *Early Child Development and Care*, Vol. 175, no 6, August 2005, pp523-541

Guijt, I., Funglesang, A. and Kishadha, T. (ed.) (1994) *It is the Young Trees that make a Forest Thick*, IIED, London, and ReddBarna, Kampala, Uganda

Hart, R. (1998), 'The developing capacities of children to participate', in Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P., Scott, P. (eds.) *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process*, IT Publications, Rugby, UK

Hickey, S. and Mohan, G (eds.) (2004) *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?* Exploring new approaches to participation in development, Zed Books, London

Hinton, R. and Baker, R. (1998) 'Using Matrices for Health Research with Children', in Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. and Scott, P. (eds.), *Stepping Forward: Children and Young People's Participation in the Development Process*, IT Publications, London, pp.96-101

Johnson, V. (2011), 'Conditions for Change for Children and Young People's Participation in Evaluation: 'Change-scape', *Child Indicators Research*, Springer Vol. 4 (4) pp. 577-596

Johnson, V. (2010), 'Revisiting Children and Researchers in Nepal: What facilitates and hinders change in a context of conflict and the changing political economy', *Journal for International Development,* Wiley, Vol. 22 (8) pp 1076-1089

Johnson, V. (1996) 'Starting a Dialogue on Children's Participation', *PLA Notes* Vol. 25 - Special Issue on Children's Participation, IIED, London

Johnson, V. with Nurick, R. (2008) 'The Legacy: The Croydon Children's Fund', Croydon Voluntary Action, Croydon, accessed at www.developmentfocus.org.uk

Johnson, V. with Pretzer, K., Drapkin, D. and Mendez, C. (2005) Croydon Children's Fund Programme: Full Programme Evaluation, Croydon Voluntary Action, Croydon

Johnson, V. and Webster, J. (2001) *Reaching the Parts.... Community mapping: Working together to tackle social exclusion and food poverty*, Sustain: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming, London

Johnson, V., Nurick, R. and Ivan-Smith, E. (2001a) 'Rights through Evaluation: Putting child rights into practice in South Africa and Nepal', funded by Department for International Development (DFID), available on www.developmentfocus.org.uk

Johnson, V., Sapkota, P., Sthapit, S., Ghimire, K. P. and Mahatu, M. (2001), 'Rights Through Evaluation: Nepal Case Study', Development Focus Trust, www.developmentfocus.org.uk

Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. and Scott, P. (eds.) (1998), *Stepping Forward: Children and Young People's Participation in the Development Process*, IT Publications, London

Johnson, V., Hill, J. and Ivan-Smith, E. (1995) *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an Environment of Change,* ActionAid, London

Nieuwenhuys, O. (1997) 'Spaces for the children of the urban poor: Experiences with participatory Action Research', *Environment and Urbanisation,* Vol 9, No. 1, April 1997, pp. 233-250

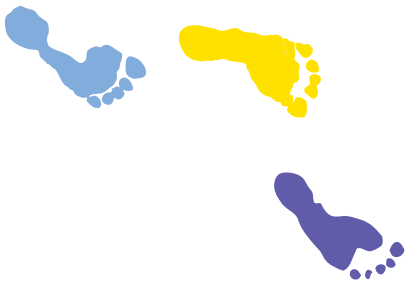
O'Kane, C. (1998) 'Children and Decision-making: Ethical considerations', in Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G., Pridmore, P. and Scott, P. (eds.) *Stepping Forward: Children and Young People's Participation in the Development Process*, IT Publications, London, pp.21-24

O'Kane, C. (2000) 'The Development of Participatory Techniques: Facilitating children's views about decisions that affect them', in Christensen, P. and James, A. *Research with Children: Perspectives and practices,* Routledge/ Falmer, London

Theis, J. (1996) 'Children and Participatory Appraisals: Experiences from Vietnam', in PLA Notes Vol. 25, Special edition on Children's Participation, pp.70-72

Thomas, N. and O'Kane, C. (1998), 'The Ethics of Participatory Research with Children', *Children & Society,* Vol.12 (5), pp.336-48

Welbourn, A. (1991) 'RRA and the Analysis of Difference' in RRA Notes 14, International Institute of Environment and Development, London, pp.14-23



CLUSTER 5
NARRATIVE AND PERFORMANCE

Introduction

The broad approach of `performance and narrative' covers a wide range of forms, in both methods and tools used. Narrative is essentially speech-based, but may include words or symbols on media such as paper; performance is essentially action-based with everyday presentation (such as gesture in daily life), or formal presentation (through specific enactment). Performance and narrative are both conceptually and practically interlinked, given the role of words alongside gesture, facial and body language in everyday communication. These terms are not discussed or interrogated here, although they have been the subject of extensive analysis, for example in the work of Goffman (1959). There are also various approaches to the study and use of narrative and language, and to performance across social science, arts and other disciplines, which are not taken up in this section. Rather, the focus here is on the practicalities of the forms of the performance and narrative approach – that is the use of methods and tools in research with children.

A primary advantage of these tools and methods is that most can be easily applied in low-income research situations, although the issue of recording content may be a challenge in some settings: recording what is being said or performed in a way that can be checked with children and provides sufficient detail for the purposes of the research project is essential. A particular advantage of these methods is that in situations where children are unfamiliar with the use of pens, pencils and paper, costumes or cameras, they can instead explore familiar forms of speech and performance. Their primary value for research purposes is that they allow children to give their perspective on any issue without fitting into a prescribed category of response as with a questionnaire.

Distinguishing Approaches

In performance and narrative approaches, there are varied means of facilitation. Narrative has, for example oral and written forms in different media; performance has silent or spoken forms, with or without props. Both narrative and performance have various possibilities for their facilitation, including by other children, by adults, and with the potential use of props or pictures to initiate dialogue or action. By methods we mean the processes of using tools, and this involves both the means of facilitating their use with children and the analysis and interpretation of results.

Communication is at the heart of narrative and performance approaches. The focus on communication also raises issues of the interpretation of meaning and question of language that are particular to performance and narrative. The process of interpretation concerns not only the meaning of a particular performance, but also understanding the meaning of narrative. Levels of clarity in speech-based performance and narrative also depend on language, not only children's developmental use of language, but also the specific language in use, where grammatical and other structures such as nouns with multiple and varied definitions have impact on meaning.

There are linkages between methods, such as role play or puppets, that may fall under both `performance' and `play', while the `visuals' approach include methods such as drawing or pictures that may be used to stimulate narrative/ discussion. The working definitions of narrative and performance adopted above (essentially speech or action based) are not intended to restrict, but to indicate the breadth of possible tools.

Narrative and performance methods described in this resource are discussed for the purpose of including young children in research. Similar types of performance and narrative methods are also used in education, and have been for years, for example the use of pictures shown to children to stimulate discussion so that they can provide a narrative on what is happening and what it means: in this case teachers can then provide the `correct' explanation and significance, sometimes according to notes provided (see, for example, Ginsburg 2013, pp. 116-117, on a picture of two Chinese children, one tying the other's shoelaces, from 1958-64, provided for use in schools). In education usage, the adult is teaching children; in research the adult is learning from children. Although education is not the focus here, children's personal development may be an incidental by-product of their involvement in research.

The term 'narrative' has overlapping but different uses in practice, as pointed out by Engel (2013 pers. comm.). The way in which performance and narrative are applied has implications for the role of the facilitator/ researcher in working with children and using results. This includes

the nature of the relationship between facilitators and children for example, whether and how they have previously met, whether they are from the same culture, and the extent to which children are active participants in the research.

Overview of Methods

Methods fall into two main groups: narrative (essentially speech based) and performance (essentially action based). There is overlap between the two because much performance also involves speech. So the main distinction used here is that performance has specific methods that are formally set-up to make a display. For narrative, although there are elements of performance (such as gestures and body language), this body language is observed in so much as it corresponds with the content of speech, the aspects that are emphasised or that contradict the speech. It is therefore important to take notes regarding the role of the listener and observer. The distinction between narrative and performance is more like a spectrum and the notion of stories and story-telling bridges the forms of narrative and performance.

Narrative

Key clusters within narrative include forms of dialogue and forms of creating stories or narratives about life. Dialogue as a means of eliciting children's perspectives can be can be arranged in several ways, for example:

- Adults may interview children individually and in groups (different formats include semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions)
- Children may interview adults
- Children may interview other children (mostly either younger than them or peers of similar age) individually or in pairs/small groups
- Children may talk about their lives and concerns singly, in pairs or in groups, in settings created to enable these discussions. This is a form of dialogue that moves on from interview. For example, an environment can be set up with models, toys or dolls that afford children the opportunity to discuss their experiences with the people or things represented

These forms of narrative cross over with performance and play, and are valuable for revealing concerns which children share with one another that they may not be comfortable in sharing in an interview. A key component of this form of narrative, as with interviews, remains that someone is listening and the content is recorded.

A distinction must be made between the narratives that children deliberately construct (for example, in response to requests by adult facilitators) and the narratives that are implicit in their words and play, and which adult facilitators observe and record (Engel 1995 and 2005). The focus in participatory approaches is on the former, whereby children are asked to relate a story or narrative. The latter approach depends on facilitators' interpretations of children's words

Stories and Storytelling

Creating stories concerns children telling (narrating) their real life as they perceive it – describing circumstances and actions. This may take on various forms: children telling their own life experience as a story, perhaps with graphic images; autobiographical descriptions using key questions as starting points; children providing biographies of other children or family members or others in the community (as they see those lives); family members writing parallel biographies/ autobiographies; children constructing stories about ideal life or idealised characters; children telling stories about changes or events that have occurred; children writing letters to tell about incidents (for example reporting abuse at home or school); children completing stories already begun; and children telling stories about their experience of doing research!

A story may be drawn from a child's own life, or a story may be a life story (of an unspecified life, but drawn from children's knowledge. Stories may be created by children individually, or they may construct stories with others. If story narratives rely on researchers interpreting what they see and hear, rather than explicitly engaging children in relating their own stories, then this is more of an interview. The distinction is important in terms of adult/ child control of the process and data analysis.

Performance

Clusters of performance include drama, role-play, dance, song, poems/ rhymes, use of puppets and use of sculptural forms in action. Some distinction is made between drama and role-play, with drama highlighted as having a structure and story, while role-play may be

acting out how individuals behave at certain times or acting out particular incidents.

Drama may involve children devising a sequence of actions to describe or portray a particular story (as above), or a re-enactment of events. Dance, song and poetry may concern telling stories or relating feelings about people, places, circumstances, events. Face paint, masks and costume may also be used to produce characterisations for performances of vignettes or storytelling. Sculptural forms may be used to portray ideas, for example as in the use of three-dimensional and two-dimensional symbols to indicate candidates for election and their policies/ ideas, which may be replicated by children. This was done by children, including young children, in a children's research project in Bangladesh, when elections were taking place. The use of some forms of drama, role-play, dance, song, poetry, making speeches has different cultural resonances (see section on context below).

Performance, including silent drama, mime, dance and characterisation with face paint and costume, can be a useful communication tool with some children with disabilities, particularly hearing and speech impairments, as well as other children. Again the process of understanding meaning and interpretation may be challenging to adults involved, particularly if they do not have prior experience of working with disabled children or with other groups.

The empathy and understanding required when working with other cultures should also be a basic consideration when preparing both adults and children for narrative and performance approaches (see West, O'Kane, Hyder 2008; Belloni and Carriero 2008).

Overall Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths concern both process and outcome. Children generally find these approaches to be enjoyable and they can lead to a rich data set. But there are also challenges. Some forms of narrative may superficially appear straightforward, but will not engage children, nor provide information, without taking account of context and related challenges. For example, children may be familiar with particular forms of conversation with adults in school settings, and reproduce those, which in some locations and contexts may emphasise power relationships or seeking the `correct' answer, rather than providing their views. In other settings, such as home or the street, different contextual elements may apply and need consideration. Care needs to be taken to ensure that methods are appropriate and suit the context, as well as being fun, whilst producing valuable data.

Children may find narrative and performance approaches enjoyable because their ideas and views are being taken seriously by others, especially by adults or older children: they are being engaged in dialogue in a different way. Children's familiarity with narrative may help produce rich data, but only if it is properly understood, interpreted and checked. The question of interpretation may be more obvious with performance, especially silent performances of children, where the audience wants to make sure they understand the meaning but this is also important with text that has been created from speech and conversation. Finally, although children commonly enjoy performance, this will depend on local cultural practice, since other forms such as narrative through speech or writing may be preferred.

In one form of narrative, children are requested to tell a story. A story is a culturally recognised activity with its own conventions and purpose and we know that children are able, from at least the age of three, to do this. Young children can tell stories that convey information that they would not be able to tell in any other way. In fact, developmental psychologists have concluded that that the earliest forms of concepts are constructed by children in script form. (Reference to Katherine Nelson or her protégé Susan Engel pers. comm.) While this is a strength, it sometimes remains a challenge to learn whether a story relays a child's experience or is recalled from an adult telling them a story from a book. The use of stories varies by culture and if a researcher wants to successfully engage children in the process of storytelling they will need to understand the norms – that is the way stories are locally constructed, the types of stories told, and some of the main characters and environments used, as well as the usual role or status of the storyteller (such as older sibling, parent, other relative, teacher, another person in the community).

One strength of dialogue-based tools and methods is that most children are familiar with this form of communication in everyday life and many adult researchers also feel comfortable with this approach. There are challenges though because the norm in dialogue that children get used to is typically that adults are the teachers and a child's role is to listen and to learn

and to not necessarily offer an opinion, perspective, or be taken seriously. Methods for performance and narrative need to include ways of creating an environment where children are confident in being able to use everyday methods of speech to tell stories and to relate circumstances and events that are meaningful to them, regardless of their assessment of what adults might want to hear.

The use of dialogue-based approaches alone may disadvantage some children who are shy, or some children with disabilities, or in circumstances of gender or other social hierarchies where some children are expected to acquiesce to others. The disadvantages faced by some children can be more apparent to observers where children are working, talking or performing in groups, and some are more easily seen to be excluded or their views ignored by their peers. Another challenge with dialogue is taking account of the developmental processes of childhood, where children are learning and exploring use of language, speech and conversation, and so understanding and interpreting a child's meaning is sometimes more difficult.

The application of performance approaches requires skill in working with children to support them in creating stories and designing their performance. In some cases this may also require ways of supporting children's confidence to perform. The attitudes, knowledge and skills identified for researchers using narrative are equally important in the area of performance, particularly where performing is a regular part of life in some cultures (for example where children are expected to have a repertoire of dance, song, readings or other performance that they can be called upon to do).

Application and Analysis

The quality and type of data depends on the forms of narrative and performance and the methods of recording and interpreting the content. It is important to distinguish between verbal narrative provided by children and narrative constructed by the observer on the basis of the child's actions. These are quite different, because when adults are observing they may make assumptions about what they are seeing and hearing which may be different to children's own meanings. Even with verbal narrative provided by children, adults may need to be clear and check meanings.

Recording and interpretation also depend on the purpose of the research and the level of detail required both for analysis and findings. Research analysing children's conversations, or the structure of narratives in speech or performance, can require detailed recording that may not always be possible or appropriate in some low-income situations. The question of interpreting what children (or any person) says and checking with them involves issues of ethics and research epistemologies. Here the starting point is not only the meaning of words, but taking account of the overall context and the discourse – the setting, the accompanying actions and the means of delivery.

Communication and Medium

Because narrative-based research in particular may appear similar to everyday conversation or speech, and performance mistaken for play, there needs to be attention to the medium used. The basic methods involve techniques of working with children both to engage them and to enable them to openly communicate through narrative and performance. There are different ways of using some methods or tools, for example, researchers using external stimulus to initiate children's views, or for children to write or otherwise record what they say and do, or making available materials and props to be used in performance. There are also differences dependent on the setting (the space and resources available), with the use of electronic or other equipment by children to communicate or to record, and with the use of electronic equipment to record by adults.

Different forms of external stimulus can be used to help enable children to provide a narrative, including: pictures, film, toys, models and dolls. Equipment, such as film and photography, can also be built into the process with perhaps a stage for children to view what they have said and done, and to reinterpret their words and actions.

Various ways of listening as well as recording are available. Apart from single or paired interviewers, or groups of recorders, audience reaction provides another means of listening to children, which may also create new dialogues. Audience reaction can be illustrated from the Philippines, where creating skits has long been a very comfortable method for children working in the street or living in other difficult situations to share their perspectives on issues with one another and build common understandings about their concerns – and

where the audience is as important as the performers. After presenting their script the audience of child peers will comment on the script, asking for clarifications or often comparing the issue to their own experiences. They often even feel the need to get up and present their own revised or alternative version of the script. Sometimes this process will be formalised, with one of the children taking down notes on a board of the points made by the audience and the performers.

Ethics and Context

The cultural context is crucial in terms of the familiarity of children with forms of narrative and performance, particularly the extent to which these forms are culturally approved, and the researcher's understanding of this. In some cultures, competence in performance (such as song, dance and poetry) is encouraged and expected from early childhood. This is a strength, in that many children have the confidence and skills of being able to get up in front of others and perform. Sometimes this may also be a challenge however because they are only used to performing in a pre-structured style that they have learned. Confidence and familiarity with performance can bring greater possibilities for adaptation by the children so that they are less shy in telling their own stories. Some cultures have a strong oral tradition that encourages and values speechmaking and abilities to declaim or recite in public. This offers strengths for children in this context, but also challenges because children may have learned forms of speaking or content by rote, and methods are need to enable children to move beyond prescribed texts they may have already learned, to be able to give their own views, opinions, and descriptions of life and issues.

Because the use of speech, and some forms of performance, can seem very familiar both to adults (in particular) and to children, as part of everyday life, assumptions can be made by both and greater attention needs to be paid to context and circumstances of ethics. The content and methods of research may raise issues that require attention or may highlight concerns of confidentiality, for example where children's response include disclosure of personal problems, or problems of peers or siblings at school, work or family, such as violence or abuse. The processes used, such as the type of language, the context such as the cultural situation of the children involved may also raise ethical concerns, for example in working with mixed ethnicities, or where children feel they must provide an answer to an older person but the question (and answer) is inappropriate for them to discuss. The need to check information collected with, and feedback to participants must also be addressed, not least to avoid erroneous assumptions. Adults, especially researchers, have a particular familiarity with speech and narrative, which can inadvertently (or deliberately) lead to their shaping of children's perspectives by selecting meanings from a range that might be available, or because there are other meanings possible but they do not know them.

Variations in the cultural context may mean that while there is a familiarity with performance as a medium of expression among boys and girls in some places, in others it is inappropriate and should not be used at all, or should not be used by one gender. This may also relate to mixed gender gatherings where, for example, girls may wish to express themselves through dance, but can only do so only in all female and enclosed spaces. Such restrictions may not apply to young children, although this can be the case at the top end of the 5–8 year-old age range.

Where to go for more information

http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/cypguide/index_concepts.html

General research with children:

Boyden, J. and Ennew, J. (eds.) (1997) *Children in Focus – A manual for participatory research with Children,* Radda Barnen (Save the Children Sweden)

Examples of research by children are available in several languages (including Bangla, Chinese, Bahasa Indonesian, Mongolian): only reports in English are noted here, many available electronically from websites of the organisation.

Altangerel, G. et al. (2006) *Children living in difficult circumstances: research report,* Ulaanbaatar: Save the Children [report by children]

Amaraa, D., Odgerel, T., Olonchimeg, O. (2006) *Children living in difficult circumstances: child-led research report*, Save the Children, Ulaanbaatar: [report by adults]

Khan, S. (1997) *A street children's research*, Save the Children & Chinnamul Shishu Kishore Sangstha, Dhaka

West, A. (ed.) 2005 (ed.) *The Difficulties We Face: children's experiences, participation and resilience – views and voices from HIV/AIDS affected Central China*, Save the Children, Beijing

West, A. and Zhang, H. (2005) *A strange illness: issues and research by children affected by HIV/AIDS in central China*, Save the Children & Fuyang Women's and Children's Working Committee, Beijing

West, A. (ed.) (2006) *Listen, Secrets: issues and research affected by HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang and Yunnan, China*, Save the Children, Beijing (Combined English summary of two Chinese reports written by Chen Qiang, *Secrets Confided by Children*, from Xinjiang, and *Listen the Voice of Growing Up*: an earnest appeal from children, from Yunnan) http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/listensecrets%281%29_1.pdf

References for this Chapter

Altangerel, G. et al (2006) *Children living in difficult circumstances*: research report Ulaan baatar: Save the Children [report by children]

Amaraa, D., Odgerel, Ts., Olonchimeg, O. 2006 *Children living in difficult circumstances: child-led research report* Ulaanbaatar: Save the Children [report by adults]

Belloni, M.C. and Carriero, R. (2008) `Childhood: a homogenous generational group?' pp 293-324 in Leira, A. and Saraceno, C. (eds.) *Childhood: changing contexts - Comparative Social Research Vol. 25* Bingley: Elsevier/Emerald

Engel, S. (1995) *The Stories Children Tell: Making Sense of the Narratives of Childhood* WH Freeman, New York

Engel, S. (2005) *Real Kids: Creating Meaning in Everyday Life*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.

Ginsberg, M. (2013) *The art of influence: Asian propaganda* London: The British Museum Press

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* London: Penguin Books

Johnson, V., Hill, J. and Ivan-Smith, E. (1995), *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an Environment of Change*, ActionAid, UK

Johnson, V., Hill, J., Rana, S., Bharadwaj, M., Sapkota, P., Lamichanne, R., Basnet, B., Ghimimire, S., Sapkota, D., Lamichanne, R. and Ghimire, S (1995), Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change (Nepal case study), ActionAid Nepal, Kathmandu

Khan, S. (1997) *A street children's research* Dhaka: Save the Children & Chinnamul Shishu Kishore Sangstha

West, A. (1998) `Family, identity, and children's rights: notes on children and young people outside the family' pp189-202 in Behera, D.K. *Children and childhood in our contemporary societies*, Kamla-Raj, Delhi

West, A. (ed.) 2005 (ed.) *The Difficulties We Face: children's experiences, participation and resilience – views and voices from HIV/AIDS affected central China* Beijing: Save the Children

West, A. and Zhang, H. 2005 *A strange illness: issues and research by children affected by HIV/AIDS in central China*, Save the Children & Fuyang Women's and Children's Working Committee, Beijing

West, A. (ed.) 2006 *Listen, Secrets: issues and research affected by HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang and Yunnan, China* Beijing: Save the Children (Combined English summary of two Chinese reports written by Chen Qiang, *Secrets Confided by Children,* from Xinjiang, and *Listen the Voice of Growing Up: an earnest appeal from children,* from Yunnan) http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/listensecrets%281%29_1.pdf

West, A., O'Kane, C., Hyder, T. (2008) `Diverse childhoods: implications for childcare, protection, participation and research practice' pp. 265-292 in Leira, A. and Saraceno, C. (eds.) *Childhood: changing contexts - Comparative Social Research Vol. 25*, Elsevier/Emerald, Bingley

CLUSTER 6
PLAY AND GAMES
Introduction

Play is sometimes contrasted with work and characterised as a type of activity that is essentially unimportant and lacking in any serious purpose (Whitebread et al. 2012). Yet, play is increasingly being recognised as crucial for children's social, emotional and physical development (Bodrova and Leong 2005) as well as being recognised as an integral and developmentally appropriate way to engage children in research (Boyden and Ennew 1997). Indeed, many of those working with young children within education, health services and counseling advocate the use of play-based approaches to seek children's views. Such methods are believed to help children make sense of their worlds (Piaget and Inhelder 1969) and to help adults and understand children's experiences (Freud 1920).

The importance of play for children has been internationally recognised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in a general comment (CRC 2013) often referred to as the `right to play' (see websites of the Child Rights Information Network and the International Play Association). Given the role of play in children's lives there are a number of overlaps between this section and the previous methods chapters in that all of the methods applied with young children should be fun and engaging involving playful approaches.

Children's play varies. Cultural expectations, children's work for their survival, their contributions to the household, their sex, age, disability, location and environment shape and limit time and other opportunities as well as types of play and games. But children themselves identify play as being important to them (e.g. Play England 2008), which also emphasises its potential for use in research. Indeed it has been recognised that play can be a 'social bridge' among children from different cultures (Roopnarine and Johnson 2001, p.298).

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how play-based activities can help children to tell us about their worlds, and help adults (researchers) to understand those worlds, and the challenges, strengths, contexts, medium and ethical concerns associated with these methods. In examining such issues effective play-based methods for gaining children's perspectives will be sought and through this discussion the case for including young children's voices in research is further supported: increasing international acknowledgement and interest in the use of play-based methods is evident in both northern and southern contexts (for example in USA, Lynch 2012 on nutrition and, in the Philippines Cruz et al. 2002 on abuse).

There are many different types of play. Contemporary psychological literature distinguishes five types of play:

Physical play
Play with objects
Symbolic play
Pretence/ socio-dramatic play
Games with rules

(Whitebread et al. 2012).

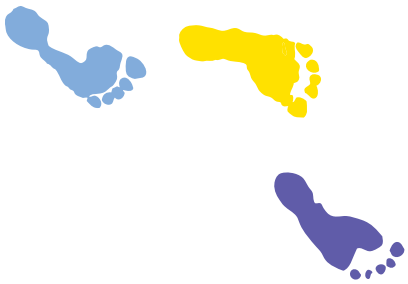
These five categories are used in this chapter to explore the types of play-based activities which can be used in research with young children. In addition to these five categories, a further distinction must be made between children's free play, that is free from adult control, and play that is instigated or facilitated by adults. The distinction has implications for children's understanding when adults use the term 'play' - will it be free time or adult facilitated time? (Alderson 2000). In the context of research the amount of adult facilitation has implications for the 'quality' of the data gathered and how greatly it represents children's perspectives. Free play is child-led and observed, while adult-initiated play offers different scope for recording data, not least because of the preparation involved when adults facilitate a particular type of play or game. Adult-initiated play might still be considered to be child-led, depending on the level of instruction.

There is some overlap between this and other chapters because of the significance of play in young children's lives. Many of the other methods could be considered to be play based or at the very least playful, for example, reenactment is used by children in play, but are also narrative and performance-based forms of research with children.

Overview of Methods

Physical Play

Physical play can take place indoors or outdoors. It can focus on using large muscle groups i.e. running,



jumping, climbing and fine-motor-skills such as sand play, drawing and hand-eye coordination, e.g. throwing beanbags or balls. Such games can be developed so that they can be used as research tools, as discussed in the chapter on *Building Relationships*. Simply adding the need to express a thought or opinion when throwing a beanbag to their peer can provide a wealth of information about a child's opinions and issues which concern them. Adapting play activities like this which children greatly enjoy can be a very appealing way of enabling them to take part in research.

Most of the physical games that a child knows are culturally specific, for example a football game traditionally involving a rattan ball in Myanmar and other parts of South East Asia, or games featuring characteristics of animals that are significant in that locale, such as chase games like `Who's afraid of Mr Wolf' in Europe and variations of it with a dragon and chicken, or bird of prey and chicken in East Asia. These games can be adapted with children to identify aspects of life important that are important to them, for example, by getting children to ask their own questions of the wolf, or to develop new rules for other games, which may produce views on social norms. Asking about games, who plays what and why, can also reveal children's notions about their social world.

Other games, such as stone, scissors/knife and paper/ cloth have local variations that may be acted out, for example, involving guns, humans, tigers or an adaptation in China using characters from the famous novel *Journey to the West*. These games also offer potential for adaptation in identifying what and who is more powerful or who has more authority. For example, these games can be used to illustrate what or who has more power and why: just as stone blunts scissors, and scissors cut paper/ cloth, and paper/ cloth wraps the stone other variations also express power: the human controls the gun, the gun controls the tiger, and the tiger controls the human.

Children can play these games in groups: they form two groups and decide which they will be in, and then line up with their backs to the other group. At a signal they turn round representing their chosen form (e.g. human, gun, or tiger). The adaptation lies in getting children to identify, for example in a particular community, institution, school, or extended family, who or what can control others and why. The adaptation used in China to illustrate this involves a monkey (who could defeat the spirit), the spirit (who could seduce or lure away the monk) and the monk (who could control the monkey).

Children adopted poses to represent these three.

Play with Objects

Many advocates of play-based approaches recommend the use of dolls, toys, tools or other objects as they afford children an age-appropriate and emotionally safe way to communicate their thoughts and feelings. "Child Life" professionals working in hospital settings in North America frequently use medical play dolls during medical play, while preparing children for procedures, and when familiarising them with the healthcare environment in the following ways:

- *To help staff develop a rapport with children*
- *To help children relax in the hospital environment*
- *To help children prepare for, and cope with, their treatment process. The doll can be used to show where an injection will be given or what posture or body position is desired*
- *To help staff assess children's perceptions and feelings. Talking about the doll helps children explore concerns in a non-threatening way*
- *To provide a source of comfort for children*

This method has similarly been used by social scientists, such as the use of hospital play sets by researchers investigating children's involvement in decision making on major surgery (Alderson 1993).

In recent years there has been an increased focus on the use of technology, including computers and mobile phones, in play research with young children. For example, computer games can be used with children in hospitals to look at their experiences in hospital. Different technologies can be useful tools to collect children's perspectives and to help adults to understand their perspectives. Again, this overlaps with the techniques which involve the use of photographs.

Such research highlights how play and games in research can offer children so much in terms of enjoyment, comfort and support.

Symbolic Play

Symbolic play refers to play in which the child uses objects to symbolise people or other objects, for example, using a piece of wood to represent a person.

This type of play can be very useful in research as it allows the child to control the depth of exploration into the issue and provides a 'step back' from the issue being explored.

In developing this method, a variety of materials can be provided (such as clay, sand, sticks, mud, leaves, stones) that children can use to represent figures. These objects can be combined and laid out, as in the form of a drawing, sculpture or painting, to tell a story (a method suggested by Cruz et al. 2002 p129). As with the use of puppets and masks in creating dramas, play with these materials can be useful in research on sensitive subjects, 'where children may become distressed about remembering painful experiences…. the pain then "happens" to the invented character' (Ennew and Plateau 2004 p229), which in this case is represented by objects or materials designated by children.

Pretence/ Socio-Dramatic Play

Whilst the use of drama has been considered in a previous section this section considers how pretense and child-led socio-dramatic play can provide us with an insight into aspects of children's lives. Here, instead of children acting out their own experiences or observations, they might develop their own play and act to illustrate particular issues. In such instances it is likely that the topic will come from the children themselves as their play develops. Potentially providing a crucial insight into the issues which 'matter' to the children. Research has made use of pretend characters, for example, in research on physical punishment in the UK. Here a pretend character was developed and used in a in a storybook, an alien called Splodge, who knew nothing about life on earth, but children could discuss the questions Splodge asked, rather than seeing them as questions raised by adults (Willow and Hyder 1998; Crowley and Vulliamy, no date). Such work highlights how an adult-initiated game can provide a play opportunity for children that then allows the child to direct the conversation to express their views and needs. However, caution is needed in distinguishing pretence from the subject of discussion, so that while the form is pretended or unreal, the content is a real view or concern of children.

Games with Rules

Play therapy toys, whilst not specifically designed for research, can provide a wealth of useful tools and ideas for facilitating research with young children. Games such as card games that provide multiple faces with differing expressions can be used to facilitate discussions with children. The researcher can, for example, ask them to discuss the expressions together, what might make people use such an expression and why they may feel that way. Board games can be used or modified, such as *Granny's House* based upon the story of Red Riding Hood, that present obstacles a child has to overcome on their journey. The game requires the child to discuss how they would overcome the obstacle. Listening to these discussions can provide a valuable insight into how children feel and think.

Such games do not have to be purchased. The researcher can use whatever materials they have to stimulate and support such discussions. The board games or dolls can even be made with the children. Indeed this could be a part of the research process as discussed in Step 2 on building trust and relationships. For example a cardboard board game was adapted by pre-school teachers in Iceland to find out children's views on pre-school. The children made and played the game themselves, and adults watching recorded their responses and views (Einasdottir 2005).

Data from Application of these Methods

When using any of the play and games discussed to understand children's perspectives it is likely that the researcher will have a clear objective – something they want to gain a better understanding of – though they may be trying to gain an initial understanding of the context before planning their research. In either circumstance, the researcher will need to record what the children are saying to enable the researcher to analyse the data. Once the researcher has recorded the data they can adopt traditional methods for analysing quotations and conversations, i.e. look for patterns or 'themes' and issues that are of interest or concern.

While the potential of play-based approaches is clear, there is a lack of a robust meta-analysis of its use because most research has been carried out in physical and mental health settings for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes, rather than for research. It is therefore a challenge to demonstrate its effectiveness to policy-makers. But, with a growth of recognition of the need to listen to the perspectives of children of all ages, we can expect the use of these kinds of methods to grow. There is also the ethical value of applying approaches which value the role of play in a young child's world.

If a researcher is in the position of having sustained opportunities to observe children over time, play-based methods can be closely linked with observational research for: 'As children play, themes, or consistent patterns, emerge' (Green et al. 2009 p.312). Observation helps us to gain an insight onto children's thinking, their interests and their preferences (Foreman and Hall 2005).

Theories about play can provide an insight into children's play and how data collected through play can be viable and robust. Jean Piaget, for example, wrote extensively about, and spent much of his professional life observing, young children at play. He believed the appearance of symbolic play in young children signified 'the transition from representation in action to internal representation or thought' (Piaget and Inhelder 1972, p.57). Referring to play as the 'language of childhood,' Piaget argued that in order to think things through, children needed to *play* things through, just as an adult might talk something through in order to sort it out. In this way, play both facilitates and transforms the young child's thought processes and in recording and analysing such play we gain an insight into children's worlds.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength of using play and games in research with young children is that it provides a developmentally appropriate way for children express their feelings (Green 2006, 2007) and gather information that can support understandings of their perspectives, worries and needs. `Play is the natural way of children to express themselves' (Cruz et al. 2002: 128). Young children play games across cultures; they therefore have the potential to be used in a variety of contexts. They can be enjoyable and support children's learning and development.

There are also challenges presented by the use of play based methods. When they are used by adults as a means of research, or education, play and games can shift from being fun to being duty bound and adult-led (Alderson 2000). Clarity in the distinction between the ideas of play and work or duty is important where adults are using play-based approaches for children's development or to understand their lives. As adults we must respect a child's right to play and recognise that we are shaping the data we collect by initiating and guiding that play. For example, adults may give mixed messages by announcing 'we will play games and have fun' when they want to find out children's views, because if children respond by playing around themselves, adults may feel that the process has gone wrong; the boundary that adults expected between serious consulting and play has been crossed (Alderson 2000 p.96).

As adults are using play-based approaches for a purpose, and although some methods may be child-led, there are some limitations (as with any research approach) as to the degree of decision-making by children that is possible. The use of play-based approaches for research might then be considered as children's work (likewise with children's education at school) but this use is important because it enables drawing on the forms that children use to express needs and messages and solve problems (Cruz et al. 2002 p.128). Such methods can be vital to allow adults to better understand children's worlds. Indeed, children have also been reported as not seeing play as a significant research methodology: Alderson reports how children wanted to have interviews rather than play because they had seen this on television (2000 p.98), and similarly children from care in the UK researching leaving care, and street-connected children in Bangladesh, researching life working on the street, wanted to use what they saw as traditional interview methods since they believed these would have more validity (West 1995 and Khan 1997).

Medium and Communication

The use of play-based methods is particularly suitable for young children and in low-income settings because methods can be based on local circumstances and cultures and do not require extensive equipment. But knowledge and skills in responding to the local situation are essential. In order to make best use of this method, researchers need to develop knowledge of the range of play and games at different ages and gender by local children, which may be part of building trust and relationships. Local games can be adapted for use in research, so creative skills in this are useful in order to develop the types of data required by the research project.

Exploring local play and games may take time, because the form of traditional games changes over time, and children often have clear divisions of age and gender in the appropriateness of particular games and play. It will be crucial that such issues are understood in order to gain deep insight into children's lives.

Apart from these age and gender dimensions, play-based methods are potentially appropriate for all children but attention needs to be paid to the local context and how play is seen by children and adults. Where children have household or other duties, which are remitted for the purposes of the research project, then it may be difficult for them and any observing adults if children are thought to be playing with no purpose. One of the challenges in some locations can be undertaking the research project at a time that is suitable for children, so that it does not interfere with their work responsibilities (such as fetching water in, for example, Myanmar or Indonesia or learning time in schools in China). Age differences may be significant within this age range and constrain some research, for example, where seven- or eight-year-olds have responsibility for care of young family members aged five or under.

Ethics and Context

We have touched upon some of the ethical considerations needed when using play and games as a research method throughout this chapter. Children vary in the degree to which they are playful, and to the extent to which they have opportunities to play. Playful children are securely attached emotionally to significant adults. Poverty and urban living, resulting in stressed parenting and lack of access to natural and outdoor environments, reduces opportunities for play, but even rural living can constrain open play space where ground is taken up in agricultural or livestock use, or controlled by persons in authority. Play opportunities may be particularly restricted for children who are working, especially those living in, such as domestic workers, with little control over their time. In engaging groups of children who are working, or have little time because of pressures of education (West and Chen 2005), there is a clear need to agree use of time because it is a scarce commodity for the children. As researchers we must not take away a child's time for free play and exploration.

As discussed previously play and games vary across cultures. In order to ensure that the methods selected do not undermine or contradict cultural norms, the use of local play and games might be adopted and appropriately adapted.

As in all clusters, attention needs to be paid to norms of gender and age mixed, but this is particularly the case here where the methods used take a form that might be interpreted as playing together, where this is not usual or permitted behaviour.

The distinctions between free play, adult facilitated and child-led play require some close attention, in particular so that child-led methods can be used in order that children express their own views, rather than those they think are wanted or the `correct answer'.

Where to go for more information

The Mosaic Approach, Clark and Moss (2008), is a multi-model approach to researching children's lives that acknowledges children and parents as co-constructors of meaning. Though used with slightly young children the use of role-play, including play figures and play equipment, demonstrates how play can be a useful tool to engage with children about their lives.

Many examples of toys can be found at http://www.childtherapytoys.com

For use of Persona dolls see http://www.persona-doll-training.org/
For therapeutic use of dolls see the work of Donna Koller e.g. Koller, D. (2008). Therapeutic play in pediatric health care: The essence of child life practice. Child Life Council Evidence-Based Practice Statement. Peer reviewed and approved by Child Life Council Board Members. Available online at www.childlife.org.

References for this Chapter

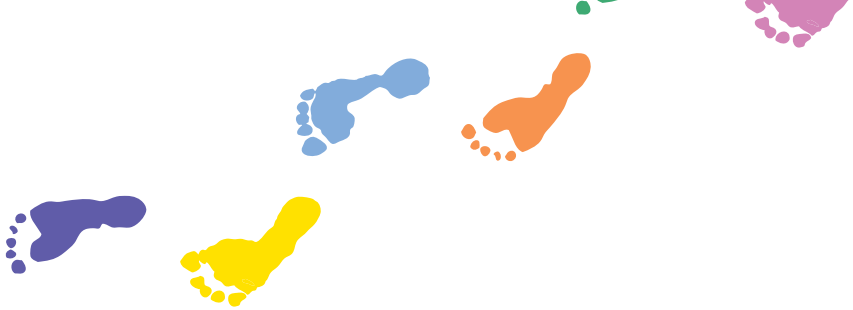
Alderson, P. (1993) *Children's consent to surgery,* Open University Press, Buckingham

Alderson, P. (2000) *Young Children's Rights: exploring beliefs, principles and practice*, Jessica Kingsley, London

Bodrova, E. and Leong D. (2005) 'The importance of play, why children need to play'. *Early Childhood Today*, 20 (3), pp. 6-7

CRC (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child) (2013) *The right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (Article 31): General comment No. 17* Geneva: United Nations http://crin.org/docs/CRC-C-GC-17_en.pdf

Crowley, A. and Vulliamy, C. N. (no date) *Listen up! Children talk about smacking*, Save the Children Wales, Cardiff



De La Cruz, M.T., Protacio-de Castro, E., Balanon, F.G., Yacat, J.A., and Francisco, C.T. (2002) Small Steps, Great Strides: Doing Participatory Action Research with Children. Philippines: Psychosocial Trauma and Human Rights Program UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies. Available at: http://mhpss.net/?get=49/1372043372-Small_Steps_Great_Strides_Doing_Participatory_Action_Researc.pdf

Einasdottir, J. (2005) `We can decide what to play! Children's perception of quality in an Icelandic Playschool' *Early Education and Development 16* (4): pp.469-488

Ennew, J. and Plateau, D.P. (2004) *How to research the physical and emotional punishment of children*, International Save the Children Alliance, Bangkok

Epstein, I., Stevens, B., McKeever, P., Baruchel, S. and Jones, H. (2008) `Using puppetry to elicit children's talk for research' *Nursing Inquiry* 15 (1): pp.49-56, March

Forman, George, & Hall, Ellen. (2005). Wondering with children: The importance of observation in early education. Early Childhood Research & Practice, 7(2). Available at: http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v7n2/forman.html

Freud, S. (1920) *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. Available free at: http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/38219

Green, E. J. (2006). 'Jungian play therapy: *Activating the self-healing archetype in children affected by sexual abuse*', Louisiana Journal of Counseling, 8, pp.1-11.

Green, E. J. (2007) The crisis of family separation following traumatic mass destruction: Jungian analytical play therapy in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. In N. B. Webb (Ed.) *Play therapy with children in crisis: Individual, group, and family treatment* (3rd ed., pp.368-388), The Guilford Press, New York, NY

Green, E. J., Crenshar, D.A. and Lubin Langtiw (2009) 'Play themes-based Research with Children', *The Family Journal* 17 (4) pp.312-317

Khan, S. (1997) *A Street Children's Research*, Save the Children & Chinnamul Shishu Kishore Sangstha, Dhaka

Koller, D. (2007). *Child Life Council Evidence-Based Practice Statement Preparing Children and Adolescents for Medical Procedures*. Available Child Life Council website: http://www.childlife.org/files/EBPPreparationStatement-Complete.pdf

Koller, D. (2008). Therapeutic play in pediatric health care: The essence of child life practice. Child Life Council, Evidence-Based Practice Statement. Peer reviewed and approved by Child Life Council Board Members. Available at: www.childlife.org.

Lynch, M. (2012) '*Children at Play: an innovative method for studying and teaching nutritional behaviours'* Pediatric Nursing 38 (5) pp.139-143, May-June

Piaget, J. and Inhelder, B. (1962) *The Psychology of the Child,* Basic Books, New York

Play England (2008) Fun and freedom What children say about play in a sample of Play Strategy consultations. Available at: http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/120429/fun-freedom-11-million-fair-play.pdf

Roopnarine, J. L. and Johnson, J. E. (2001) Play and diverse cultures: Implications for early childhood education. In R. S. Reifel & M. H. Brown (eds.), Early education and care, and reconceptualizing play, pp.295–318, JAI, New York

West, A. (et al) (1995) *You're on your own*, Save the Children, London

West, A. and Chen, X.M. (2005) *HIV/ADIS and vulnerability, education and participation: issues of rights, responses and children in or out of school – a growing divide in China' paper presented at Children and youth in emerging and transforming societies* – Childhoods 2005 conference Oslo, Norway

Whitebread, D., Basilio, M., Kuvalja, M. and Verma, M. (2012) The importance of play, written for Toy Industries of Europe (TIE). Available: http://www.importanceofplay.eu/IMG/pdf/dr_david_whitebread_-_the_importance_of_play.pdf

Willow, C. and Hyder, T. (1998) It hurts inside, National Children's Bureau and Save the Children, London

STEP 6 CONSIDERATION OF CONTEXT

If research is not relevant to young children's lives in their context then it is likely that they will not enjoy the research and it will not lead to meaningful results. Researchers will have to work with what is possible considering existing local power dynamics and attitudes towards young children in different settings. This is why we have developed Section 2 of these resources to show a range of different cultural and political contexts and research that has been undertaken for different purposes.

The cultural, political and institutional contexts affect the way in which people work with young children and which methods the researcher may find most useful.. The selection of methods by the researcher will also be influenced by the discipline that they or their research team are trained in or are working with. The acceptability of different approaches and methods and how different forms of evidence are received varies in different professional contexts. Further consideration will need to be given by the researcher to how different methods work within the different spaces that children inhabit, in and out of school, during their work or tasks that they perform in the household. Finally although many of the methods are playful, taking time away from children's playtime needs to also be considered.

Consideration should be given to how methods are applied in a range of contexts and whether they can help to break down (or accentuate) power dynamics. Understanding children's lives includes understanding how different actors including children see their participation and giving them the option to contribute to evidence about their lives, feelings and opinions.

The following section provides a range of case studies on learning from practice in research from all around the world and demonstrates the importance of Step 6: Flexibility to Context.

STEPS TO ENGAGING YOUNG CHILDREN IN RESEARCH

CASE STUDIES OF LEARNING FROM PRACTICE

By
Vicky Johnson,
Roger Hart,
Jennifer Colwell

INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES IN LEARNING FROM PRACTICE IN RESEARCH

This section shows how research that engages with young children is carried out in practice in a variety of global contexts. In each example the research is placed in the context of a project or programme. The different methods that have been used to answer the research questions are then described. Ethical considerations and the flow of the research give the reader an idea of how methods are applied in the context of a project. Each example states how involving young children has led to understanding children's agency. Each example concludes with a commentary on how the research has linked to or informed other processes of research and practical interventions with young children.

The section begins with an account of how young children have been involved in research to understand how harmful cultural practices have affected their lives in Ethiopia (Admassu and Amentie). Methods include: playing games, singing, discussing videos, pictures and posters. The case also discusses how playing in the playground with girls and boys helped to make them feel more comfortable with the research. The research has informed the development of early years provision through CHADET, funded by the Department for International Development.

The 'Young Lives' research team in Peru describe how they have used visuals, child-led tours and interviews, to explore children's understandings of wellbeing and ill-being (Crivello and Rojas Arangoitia). Detailed research carried out by Young Lives in Peru, Ethiopia, India and Vietnam combines qualitative and quantitative approaches in longitudinal research. This example provides details about how the young cohort (5-7 years) in urban and rural areas of Peru defined wellbeing and ill-being, giving context specific indicators for understanding their lives. It also reflects on the facilitation skills needed by adult researchers for involving young children.

Children's roles in households and society were explored in detailed ethnographic research with ActionAid Nepal (Johnson, Hill and Sapkota). This research combined more traditional ethnographic research, observation and open interviewing with visual participatory methods. Speaking local languages, playing games and singing and dancing were some of the ways to build trust and relationships in the research. One of the methods involved researchers accompanying and working with children to make time for girls and boys to be involved in the research – girls and boys as young as 5-7 years old contribute to the work of the household including fetching wood and water, looking after animals and siblings. A wide range of methods was applied including songs, seasonal calendars, daily activities, matrix ranking and mapping.

Participatory group methods are described that help to understand inclusiveness and organisational structure for an evaluation of child clubs for Save the Children in Nepal (Hart, Rajhandary and Khatiwada). The desires of older and young children were taken into consideration. Mapping and 'Movement Ranking Games' and drawings of organisational structure, were combined with simple matrix ranking and skits to understand different scenarios and power play within the clubs. Venns were also drawn to understand interactions with external stakeholders.

Young children's perceptions of the school environment in schools in the East of England and in North India were understood through drawings combined with discussion (Kanyal). Actual and ideal school experiences and environment were explored with children aged 5-6 years. The example discussed the process of negotiating the space to research with the teachers and how the setting affects the application of the research.

In Iceland research to understand children's transitions from preschool to primary school employed photos as a research tool for young children to exercise power, and for interviews to revolve around issues that interest them. The study also examines the power inequalities between children and researchers (Einarsdottir).

When adults in a community in Tibet suggested that the destruction of local water supply was the fault of children, research was initiated that involved the children in understanding what was happening (West). Staff used capacity building in participatory research approaches in order to help them to understand what was happening. The methods included: traditional and imported games; visual methods, including drawing, mapping and diagrams, and interpreting pictures and designs; accompanied walks; small group discussions; plenary discussions including voting and consensus decision-making.

Research to explore the perspectives of street and working children in India was carried out with Butterflies, a national organisation working in Delhi (O'Kane). Games were played that helped to understand how children saw their rights, and puppets were also used to discuss issues concerning rights legislation. Games and visuals were then used to rank and prioritise rights and explore how children can realise their rights.

Visuals also helped to understand what aspects of their program help or hinder the girls and boys who are living and working on the street.

Buzz groups and resources such as cameras, video, audio recorders, a DJ machine and art materials were used to help stimulate discussion amongst marginalised young children about how they understand their own citizenship in a European context (Larkins). At every session groups of young children reviewed the evidence that they had previously generated. Confidence in the young children's ability to guide their own research was particularly important in the research process. Rules for working together were written together and games were not only developed to carry out much of the research, but also to keep up the positive emotions of the group. Performance and site tours also contributed to the methods applied in the research.

LEARNING FROM PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN RESEARCH

CHADET LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF CHILDREN: UNDERSTANDING YOUNG CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON MATTERS AFFECTING THEIR EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA

Anannia Admassu and Girma Amentie

Background

The Organization for Child Development and Transformation (CHADET) is a charity that is engaged in the implementation of a range of development projects designed to improve the situation of vulnerable children in both urban and rural settings in different parts of Ethiopia. Among its areas of focus is the program for the protection of children who are exposed to physical and/ or sexual abuse and exploitation as a consequence of risky migration. Children in its intervention areas (especially girls) are often exposed to early and forced marriage, unpaid or low paid domestic labour, uninformed migration, street involvement and sexual exploitation. Amhara region has the lowest median age of marriage in Ethiopia at 14.7 (EDHS, 2011).

Consultations and project activities have identified early marriage, uninformed migration of girls to urban areas, trapping of girls in low paid domestic work and the poor quality of the learning process as key factors explaining the high dropout rate of girls. A survey, which has been commissioned by CHADET and Childhope in 2011[1] in Amhara state, revealed that 42% of households had experienced the departure of a child within the past 12 months. Of the girl migrants interviewed, 75% were not enrolled in school and 29% illiterate. Over the past years, CHADET had carried out a comprehensive program for the protection of children at places of origin and transit towns before they are exposed to different forms of exploitation and/ or abuse, which might hinder the full realisation of their potentialities.

Most of these children come from families that have very limited livelihood opportunities and extremely low income. Hence the project has offered livelihood opportunities to the poorest families as way of creating a safe space for children at risk to consider alternatives to migration, and assisting them to work with their families to enable them to access education.

In light of very low level of, and knowledge about, the

[1] *A Baseline survey of early marriage and risky child migration in selected Woredas of South Gondar Zone, Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia, 2012, ChildHope and CHADET*

value of education and protection accorded to children, CHADET made efforts to enhance the awareness of the community through employing different mechanisms including Community Conversations (CC), an approach that has been proven to mobilise communities to debate some of the most pertinent issues that affect children in their respective communities, through the production and distribution of leaflets and posters that convey educational messages, and staging entertaining shows using CHADET's music and drama group. It also initiated a close working relationship with schools and all other relevant stakeholders at different levels including local government, religious leaders, police, youth and women's groups as well as agricultural and health extension workers at the level of the grass roots. The major achievement of the previous project was the establishment of a locally grounded child protection mechanism in which Child Protection Committees (CPCs) were established and became operational in the intervention '*Kebeles'* (the lowest administrative unit of government).

Purpose

According to CHADET's own experience, and findings from other assessments made in the Amhara Regional State, young children face multifaceted socioeconomic and cultural problems that can affect both their present and future lives. Access to quality education is hampered by a lack of pre-primary schools for young children as well as an inability of their parents to meet the costs of education. Child labour is also essential within communities for looking after animals, cooking, fetching water and to provide other support on farms.

Having implemented a project focusing on promoting child protection, CHADET had identified education as an essential gateway to a better life, especially for girls. As part of an effort to develop a new project proposal to be submitted to DFID for enhancing girls' education, we facilitated a consultation workshop with stakeholders to update our theory of change and to outline how we can enable girls at risk of early marriage, domestic labour, migration and street involvement to join, remain and thrive in school. 48 schoolgirls and boys, parents, teachers, community and religious leaders, and staff of community-based organisations participated in the workshop which was held in the town of Debretabor (where CHADET's field coordination office is located).

A poster showing the trafficking of girls

This picture shows a joyful girl who has become successful in her education because her parents did not force her to marry.

Having gathered the views of older boys and girls, as well as other stakeholders, we organised a similar session with young children (age 6-8) to have their views and voices that it will be built in the project to be developed. Hence, it was decided that we would conduct the assessment among children who are coming to an ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) Center that was set-up in Alem Ber recently. Alem Ber is a small rural village that is found in Fogera Woreda (district) in South Gondar Administrative Zone of Amhara Regional State.

Our key questions revolve around capturing their insights to questions on the importance of education, domestic labour, child marriage and risky migration. These are key issues that are to be addressed by the forthcoming project.

This is a photo of a girl standing on the edge of a village and struggling with her thoughts about whether or not to migrate to the nearby city.

Design and Methods

A total of 22 children (12 girls and 10 boys) aged 6-8 participated in the exercise. They were randomly selected from children attending the ECCE program in Alem-Ber. A combination of methods were used during the exercise. These included using pictures depicting the issues of early marriage, risky migration and the importance of education. Also video clips, songs and games were built into the exercise to stimulate the children and keep them active during the exercise.

The researchers took all the precautions necessary when undertaking research with children and young people. This was mainly governed by observing CHADET's Child Protection Policy as well as guided by CHADET's Children's and Young People's Participation guidelines. These include obtaining consent from their parents to verify willingness for their children to be involved in the study and to be photographed. The issue of confidentiality of the views of the children was also considered.

Two staff members of CHADET, who have been trained by ChildHope on children and young people's participation as well as child protection, led the process.

Research Process and Flow

Before getting into the issues central to the research, efforts were made to motivate the children to actively participate in the process. Firstly we encouraged the children to play in playgrounds until they felt relaxed. In between the discussions, a space was created for the children to boost their confidence. The children watched a video of a traditional music by Amsal Mitikie, who herself is from Gondar area, and a modern video music about gender, etc. The children sang and actively participated as they felt motivated to join in with traditional songs and dancing. For the outdoor games separate playgrounds for boys and girls were arranged. This was followed by a brainstorming session on the research facilitated by the counselor (psychologist) from CHADET and facilitators (both female) at the ECCE Center. Then we divided the participants of the research into two groups, one for boys and the other for girls.

The objective of the exercise was to understand how children would react to watching the documentaries and seeing the different pictures that signify early marriage, child migration, children's education, etc. This was followed by a discussion session on how they understood the pictures, and we gathered their views/ feedback to questions related to whether or not the problems are visible in their communities, their opinions about the problems, and what needs to be done to change the situation. We believe that these methods helped the children to feel more comfortable, were suitable for young children, and helped gather the information in a non-threatening way.

How the research helped us to understand children

The findings and the feedback that have been obtained from the children are summarised as follows:

- All of the children who took part in the research were aware that marriage takes place in their community. Some of them indicated that their sisters were married off at an early age, although they were not sure of their exact ages at time of marriage. One child from the boy's group and two from the girls' group said their elder sisters were married. The girls expressed their fear that their parents might marry them off against their will in the future. When asked if they were concerned about their sisters who are not yet married, they indicated that their parents might decide to marry them off without their consent. Most of the girls believed that parents, teachers, brothers and the police have a duty and/ or responsibility to stop early marriage while the boys said they don't know who should stop early marriage.
- It was interesting to note that almost all of the children have a positive view of bigger towns and cities as decent places to live. Most of the children have had the opportunity to go to Debre Tabor and Wereta (major towns near Alem Ber) and Bahir Dar (the Regional capital). Most of the children indicated

that they have relatives in those towns and in Addis Ababa, who occasionally pay them a visit during public holidays …*They come to visit us and buy us new clothes. They are neat and educated'* (age 8, female). All of the children said they dream of living in such towns. They think living in towns/ urban areas is good for them. Most of the children indicated that their relatives who come from the cities want to take them back with them. One of the girls even said she wouldn't mind going to Addis Ababa to live with her relatives as a domestic worker. One of the boys and two of the girls said they had their sisters in nearby town of Wereta and the city of Bahir Dar. Seven from the boys and two from the girls' groups said that their elder sisters had gone to the Middle East in search of better life. The views of these children correlates with previous studies carried out in the area.

- Both boys and girls are involved in household domestic chores. The differences in gender roles were reflected from what the children said, i.e. certain tasks such as girls supporting their mothers in making *wet* (stew), cleaning dishes and the house, making the bed, and making coffee in a traditional way (making coffee is ceremonial in Ethiopia). This does not mean, however, that girls are not doing the work that is being done by boys. Both boys and girls are involved in the collection of firewood, going to shops/ market to buy goods, fetching water, looking after the cattle, etc. They also indicated that they are given some time to study and play, at times when they are at home. Most of the children were of the opinion that they need to be given more time to study and their parents shouldn't force them to work. They said '…*some of the work is difficult for children of our age and it should be handled by adults; … we have to stick to our education'* (age 7, male).

- With regard to a question about *girls* in their community and at the ECCE Center, the boys said that '… *males are always strong and girls are weak'* (age 6, male). But they admitted that the student who ranked first in their class is a girl. One boy said '*girls are performing better than their male counterparts in their education'* (age 7, male). Most of the boys said that they think some types of domestic work are the responsibility of girls.

- Another important issue on which the researchers sought information was the views of the children towards the value given to education, and how they found the Center met this interest. All of them expressed coming to school as important for all children. '… *It will help us become big and educated persons* (age 8, female); … *we will become doctors and drivers if we learn'* (age 7, male); '… *our knowledge increases; …we will not always look after animals'* (age 7, male). The participants in the research were also asked if they knew of other children of their age who were not coming to school. They indicated that there are many children who did not get the chance to come to school. From their responses it was clear that children are not choosing this course of action, but that the parents will not let them go to school.

- When asked about what needs to be done to improve access to education for children of their age in their village, they recommended that additional classrooms should be built and more teachers should be hired. Children also suggested that the Center could be equipped with more desks and

blackboards, and that there were not enough books available.

- With regard to the playground, both groups said that it is not large enough for all the children in the ECCE Center to play at the same time. The girls further confirmed this by saying, *'…the playground is not good enough to accommodate all of us and most of the time the boys are not giving us chances to play'* (age 6, female). Therefore, they wanted the project to set-up separate play spaces for boys and girls. They also recommended that the playground should be paved to prevent the dust in the compound from causing health problems.

In conclusion, the evidence generated from including young children in this research created an impact on the project proposal that was developed to improve the situation of children's education in and around the current intervention area. We were also able to gain a lot of new information about the lives of local girls and boys. We found that the responses from children corresponded to what was reflected in the consultation workshops that were held with adults and young people. These include:

- The existence and practice of early marriage in the community and the concern about this for the girls in the community.
- Children leaving their villages and migrating to the cities and abroad in search of better opportunities (this is, in fact, a cause of excitement among other children who stay in the villages).
- Children, especially girls, are required to shoulder heavy responsibility in taking care of household chores.
- The prevailing perception held by adults regarding gender roles and inequalities among men and women is reflected in the views of the children, especially boys.
- Improving the school environment to become more stimulating (establishment of reading corners, making them attractive and nondiscriminatory, i.e. sensitive to the unique needs of girls).

Replication/ Linking to other Processes

Although CHADET had established a mechanism through which children could participate in the development, monitoring and evaluation of its projects, conducting an exercise that created an avenue for children to reflect their views, is of great importance in order to improve the impact of our work and to ensure real participation. We will, therefore, conduct similar exercises among young children in CHADET's intervention areas in other regions of the country. The learning could also be shared with partnering agencies other stakeholders.

This picture on child marriage shows a wedding ceremony of a young girl being seen off by her parents and relatives.

References

ChildHope and CHADET (2012) *A Baseline survey of early marriage and risky child migration in selected Woredas of South Gondar Zone,* Amhara National Regional State, Ethiopia

CHADET (2009) *Child Protection Policy* Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CHADET (2011) *Children and Young People's Participation*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Central Statistical Agency (2011), *Demographic and Health Survey*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CHADET (2005) *Migration Pattern of Children Exposed to Sexual Exploitation*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

EXPLORING CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDINGS OF WELLBEING AND ILL-BEING IN YOUNG LIVES, PERU

Gina Crivello and Vanessa Rojas Arangoitia

Purpose

This 'learning from practice' shares experiences of engaging young children in longitudinal qualitative research carried out by *Young Lives*, an international study of childhood poverty in four developing country contexts (http://www.younglives.org.uk). The case presents learning from Young Lives research in Peru, describing the range of methods used in the early rounds of research to explore different aspects of child wellbeing and ill-being with young children, and other important factors in their lives. This is followed by an extended example of how a 'wellbeing exercise' was carried out with the children, the kind of information that was obtained, and the potential for adaptation and replication. [2]

Young Lives is a research programme being carried out in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh state), Peru and Vietnam to improve understanding of the causes, dynamics and consequences of childhood poverty. The goal is to produce evidence that can be used to inform policies and programmes that benefit vulnerable children and their families. Over a fifteen-year period (2002–2017) Young Lives is tracking the life trajectories of two age groups of children across these countries, a younger cohort of 8,000 children born in 2000/1 and an older cohort of 4,000 children born in 1994. A survey is administered to the full sample of children and households every few years (2002, 2006, 2009, 2013, 2016), and between survey rounds, a sub-sample of over 200 boys and girls participate in in-depth qualitative research which is also longitudinal in its design (returning to the same children and families in 2007, 2008, 2011 and 2014).

[2] *Young Lives is funded by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID) from 2001 to 2017 and co-funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2014 and by Irish Aid from 2014 to 2015. www.younglives.org.uk.*

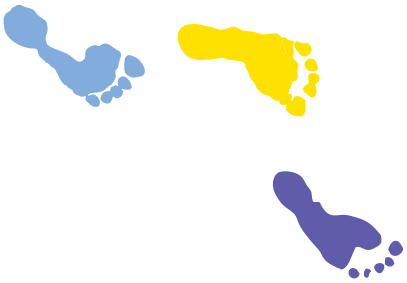
Accompanying children during their work

Design and Methods

This 'learning from practice' reflects on experiences from the qualitative research, especially when the younger cohort was between the ages of 5-7, since this presents particular challenges for engaging them in research. We include some reflections from the latest round of research (2011), when the children had turned nine years old, and the way in which repeating certain methods recorded changes in their views and lives. Such efforts to engage young children as sources of data in international development research are uncommon, and there is a tendency to (only) consult adults who are assumed to be more knowledgeable and articulate about matters concerning children's lives and wellbeing.[3] Qualitative research enables exploration of children's own views and explanations which might differ from adults'.

This strand of qualitative research uses a 'methodkit' approach in the administration of methods, combining individual methods with group-based activities and discussions that can be adapted for different groups of children and contexts. Before each round of qualitative research, the international team of Young Lives qualitative researchers develop a common fieldwork protocol that is piloted in each country, modified, used as the basis for training, and adapted for use in local contexts.

[3] *Although Young Lives is 'child-focused', adults are an important source of data on children's lives, histories and everyday communities. In qualitative research, caregivers and other adults contribute information on children's household circumstances, family organisation and livelihoods, social norms and expectations, community histories and environments, and service provision. Adults cannot, however, replace children as sources of data on children's experiences.*



The first round of qualitative data collection (2007) was a baseline study focused on three themes:

- Local understandings of child 'wellbeing' and 'ill-being' (including everyday risks and protective processes)
- Childhood transitions
- Experiences of services

A second round of research took place one year later to follow up on the children, and to capture their experiences of transitioning to the first grade, which in Peru is expected to happen around age six. Because exploration of wellbeing cross-cut all aspects of the research, in Table 1 we include the full methodkit developed for use in 2007 and 2008 in relation to the younger cohort.

TABLE 1:
Methods Used to Explore Child Wellbeing and Ill-being in Peru (2007 and 2008)

2007

Methods for use with children (aged 5-6)	Other methods
Group activities: Typical day Child-led tour Wellbeing exercise *Individual interview:* Semi-structured child interview Happy day/sad day	*Observations related to case study child:* Classroom and school Home Community *Individual interview:* Caregiver Teacher Local authorities

2008

Methods for use with children (aged 6-7)	Other methods
Group activities: Who's important to me? School transitions Time use *Individual interview:* Semi-structured child interview	*Observations related to case study child:* Classroom and school Home Community *Individual interview:* Caregiver Teacher

The methods in the methodkit that were specifically designed to elicit young children's perspectives on different aspects of wellbeing and ill-being were: a 'Wellbeing Exercise', 'Happy Day/Sad Day', 'Child-led Tour' and 'Who's Important to Me'.

Wellbeing Exercise

The overall aim of this method was to explore what children considered to be a good or bad life for children of the same age and sex, living in their community, including an examination of sources of risk and protective processes. The method was adapted for use with groups of young children so that the group facilitator created a shared set of drawings representing 'good' and 'bad' lives for children in their communities, based on instructions and commentary provided by the children. This generated children's indicators of well-being and ill-being, as well as capturing consensus and disagreement within the group. A detailed description of how to apply this method is included in this resource. (See also Armstrong et al. 2004)

Happy Day/Sad Day

This method elicited information from children about the events or situations that make them happy or sad. It was carried out as part of the individual interview with young children. Children were asked to draw two pictures, one representing a day in which a child felt happy, and another in which a child felt sad. The researcher discussed the drawings with the child, prompting as needed: 'Tell me what the happy day was like for this child'; 'What happened?'; 'Who was with her/him?'; 'What do you think the child will remember most about this day?' The exercise was repeated for 'the sad day', and the researcher asked what would improve the situation for the boy/girl experiencing the sad day. (See also De Berry 2003)

Child-led Tour [4]

This method entails a 'mobile conversation' whereby children guide the researcher(s) around spaces located within their everyday living environments (eg, neighbourhood, places of work, school, etc.). In Peru, the focus was on schooling environments, so the 'tour' and questions centred on children's perceptions of school, their likes and dislikes, and experiences starting school. It was conducted in two sessions. In the first session, the children were asked to guide the researcher around the school premises so that they could create a photo album for new students coming to the school and the important things that they should know about the school to settle in. The researcher photographed the important places indicated by the children, and they were asked questions about their experiences: 'What do you want to show other children your age about this school?', 'What kind of things do you need to know?'; 'Which place do you like most/least?'; 'What do you like most/least about your school?' etc. During the second session, the children discussed the photos (which had been developed) and decided which ones to include in the photo album, along with their captions. (See also Clark and Moss 2001; Docket and Perry 2005).

'Who's Important to Me?'

This method gathered information about children's interpersonal relationships, and who children felt closest to and why. The method was adapted for use with young children in groups so that they drew pictures representing all the people in their lives who mattered most to them. The facilitator then listed individually the people they mentioned on post-it notes. In the next phase, a large sheet of paper with a symbol representing a child in the middle was placed where everyone in the group could see. The children instructed the researcher where the names of the people (eg mother, brother, neighbour, teacher…) should be placed on the paper—the closer to the child, the more important the relationship. The researcher facilitated a discussion with prompts such as: 'Who have you drawn?'; 'Why?', 'Who else is important?'; 'Who do you go to when you have a problem?…Tell me a time when this happened'; 'Who else do you know in your neighbourhood?' etc.

Individual interviews with the children when they were 5-6 years old were useful for building rapport and familiarity (especially within the context of a longitudinal study), although one-on-one interviews may not be their preferred formats for communication (even if accompanied by a family member). It was therefore important to combine this more traditional interview

[4] *Child-led tours were mainly used to generate information with children about their experiences and expectations of transition (i.e, between home, pre-school and school). However it relates to child wellbeing by touching on the themes of children's like and dislikes, their relationships and their views on safety and danger.*

technique with approaches that included drawing, play, photography, and mobile interviews (eg child-led tour).

Research Process and Flow

In Peru, the qualitative research is carried out in four communities in the provinces of Lima (Lima), Rioja (San Martin), Andahuaylas (Apurimac) and San Román (Puno). In each community, six case children from each age group were recruited in 2007 (from the wider Young Lives sample) and they are being tracked over a seven-year period (until 2014). During each round of data collection, a team of Peruvian social scientists, including anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists, spend around three weeks in each of the four communities, working with the case study children, their caregivers, teachers, and other members of the community. They hold group activities early in the visit in order to build rapport and 'break the ice', and then follow these up with individual interviews and observations. Group sessions are held in classrooms (not during school hours) or in community halls, and individual interviews usually take place in children's homes where observations are also recorded [5]. The group activities with children were designed to be fun and interactive, yet informative for the purposes of research. Researchers schedule in playtime with the children midway through the activity which helps to stimulate their energy levels, at the same time respecting that play is an important expression and form of interaction for children.

For example: The Wellbeing Exercise' was run with mixed groups of boys and girls from the younger cohort in each of the four communities [single-sex groups were organised for the older cohort, aged 12]. On a large sheet of flipchart paper and with instruction from the children, the researcher drew four images (a boy and girl who are thought to be doing well in life, and a boy and girl for whom life is not going well). The process of drawing and discussion explored and recorded children's ideas about wellbeing and ill-being.

Reflections and practical learning – Wellbeing Exercise:

- The children enjoyed the fact that an *adult* was listening to and following their instructions. They liked seeing their opinions represented graphically and were comfortable about suggesting alterations when they felt the researcher missed the mark. That someone else was doing the drawing appeared to make the experience less stressful (than if they had to do the drawing themselves).
- Having two facilitators meant that one focused on moving the discussion and drawing forward, and the other recorded detailed notes of the conversation and when necessary attended to children's needs (e.g. visits to the toilet, disturbances).
- Because boys and girls participated together in this exercise, it was necessary to draw four images to represent both genders and wellbeing and ill-being, respectively. Although the exercise flowed well, it was time-consuming, and meant that towards the end of the session children became distracted. Once this was noted, subsequent sessions introduced a short play-break halfway through (after completion of the first two drawings)
- Children of this age group were able to generate indicators of wellbeing and ill-being, but they did not rank the indicators, since this would have prolonged the session even further.
- When generating indicators of child wellbeing, the children tended to mention the opposite of the indicators that they had listed for ill-being; this needs to be kept in mind during the analysis phase.
- Group discussions are useful for generating normative views, but these cannot automatically be related to the actual experiences of the individual participants (unless explicitly articulated as such); the latter are better addressed through individual or family interviews.

How the research helped us to understand children and their agency

Children's participation in the Wellbeing Exercise and related research activities generated useful insights

[5] *All interviews are audio-recorded (where consent is given) and later transcribed (in Spanish, or translated from Quechua to Spanish). Researchers write narrative reports of the group activities and discussion, including verbatim quotes and participant ID numbers where possible. Researchers record structured observations of children's homes, schools and classrooms, and they make fieldnotes based on participant-observation in the community. The corpus of transcripts and reports are coded (with a list of codes reflecting the three main themes of wellbeing, transitions and services) using Atlas-ti, a computer program that aids analysis of qualitative data. Individual researchers carry out in-depth thematic and biographical analysis to answer specific research questions for papers and reports.*

into what they believe constrains or supports their agency and wellbeing. Aged 5-6 years old, they strongly associated 'ill-being' with lack of parental protection, which they explained in terms of parental death, absence and prolonged illness, and violence within the home.

The lack of parents or having violent parents was synonymous with being unprotected: 'nobody shows concern for him', '*he doesn't know if he'll have anything to eat', 'he won't have a place to live'.* Children determined that lack of care was made visible through children's physical appearance, as looking unkempt and dirty, appearing hungry and sad.

Wellbeing on the other hand was associated with protection and with having adequate material and social resources: parental care and their support of children's schooling, family assets like cars, agricultural fields and animals (the latter two associated with rural areas), and children's possession of toys and time and space for play were all emphasised as important to their sense of wellbeing.

For example, in one of the rural sites, the researcher asked the group of children, '*Where does this girl play, the one who isn't doing well in life?' Hector responded, 'She doesn't play… She doesn't do anything'.* Children in the city also linked lack of play with ill-being; Diego, referring to the girl depicted in his group's drawing explained that 'life isn't going well for the girl because her mother and brother have died and because her [toy] airplane is broken.' Christian said, *'she's not doing well because her mother died and she doesn't have any toys.'* Eva added that she has a broken train, that no one cares for her and she doesn't eat anything.

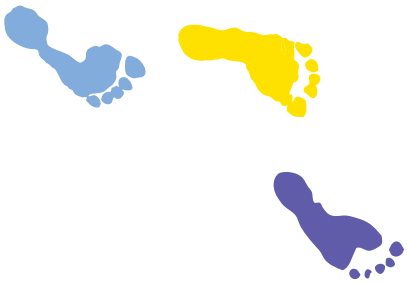
The exercise also generated insights into the types of risks that children confront in their everyday living environments, and the ways in which these differed across urban and rural settings. In one of the cities, characterised by violence, gang crime and drug activity, the researcher asked if the boy in the drawing had a father. Ricardo said, 'A robber shot him and stole all his money'. Then they were asked what the mother's job was: Leticia said that his mom was a market vendor and Jorge said that she worked in the pollería (fried chicken restaurant). All of these indicators reflect the reality of their urban environments and their associated risks.

By the third round in 2011, when the children were between 9-10 years old, there were some notable changes. Children had acquired new skills and were becoming more active in their family roles. Especially in rural areas, they reported increased responsibilities at home and in daily and seasonal agricultural work which they saw as a sign of their 'growing up'. They continued to value leisure time, but play had become a potential distraction in relation to their other responsibilities at home and school (which were key to their definitions of wellbeing), so they had to combine play with other tasks (like running errands or tending the fields). Table 2 lists children's indicators of wellbeing and ill-being aged nine-ten in the different communities.

TABLE 2: Children's Perspectives on Wellbeing and Ill-being, Aged 9-10 (2011)

Illbeing	Wellbeing
Rioja (rural)	**Rioja (rural)**
• Has to work • Wants to harvest but there isn't any produce • They make fun of her/him • Doesn't go to school because s/he can't register • Is pregnant and doesn't want her baby, so leaves it in the park/ feels bad for leaving her baby	• Goes to school • Travels to Lima • Goes out for a stroll with parents • Behaves well • Allows others to borrow toys • Feels good and happy
Andahuaylas (rural)	**Andahuaylas (rural)**
• Doesn't ask permission from mother • Doesn't study at home • Plays in the fields and doesn't help (work) • Washes siblings dirty clothes • Has dirty clothes	• Mother buys utensils or clothes • Likes going to school • Helps mother with the cooking • Is a clean child • Tidies the house • Does well at school because studies
San Román (urban)	**San Román (urban)**
• Parents have died • Is mistreated at home • Has to work • Plays alone • Wears dirty clothes	• Gets along well with family • Studies and gets good grades • Feels good and happy • Doesn't work • Is going to go to university
Lima (urban)	**Lima (urban)**
1. Doesn't have parents love 2. Mother hits him/her 3. Lacks food 4. Faces danger in the streets	• Has love of parents • Parents support studies • Is happy because goes out to play with parents • Helps other children

Source: Wellbeing Exercise (Younger Cohort, 2011)



Replication

The Wellbeing Exercise described here required heavy facilitation by skilled adult researchers, but the method may be adapted and replicated for other purposes, such as local school interventions. For example, in San Román city, young children articulated the widespread nature of everyday violence in homes, schools and neighbourhood streets. One possibility would be to use teachers to facilitate the exercise in schools so that children's perspectives and concerns about different forms of violence could be communicated to other school staff, parents and the wider community. In this case, it could raise awareness about violence in schools and generate possible solutions for increasing safety for children. Conversations about violence in other areas of children's lives could follow.

When the Wellbeing Exercise was used with older children in this study (aged 12-15) it required less adult facilitation, children drew individual (often detailed) scenarios representing ill-being and wellbeing which stimulated group discussion and collective ranking of indicators (of ill-being and wellbeing, respectively). The method could be adapted for use with groups of adolescents to elicit their views on adult femininity and masculinity in their communities, what resources and social supports are needed to transition to adulthood, and how social expectations might have changed compared to earlier generations.

Within the context of a longitudinal study, the Wellbeing Exercise can be replicated at different rounds/ ages to record changes in children's views and circumstances, and explanations for these changes (See Rojas and Cussianovich 2013).

When using elicitation methods (e.g. drawing, mapping or photography) for research, the systematic and detailed recording of the conversations that occur is a top priority, rather than the specific elicitation technique that was used. It is useful to take a flexible approach, especially when working with young children, since their capacities for writing, drawing or sitting for extended periods of time and their preferred ways of communicating may vary considerably across groups and contexts.

References

Ames, P., Rojas, V. and Portugal, T. (2010) *Methodological Note 1 - Methods for research with children: Lessons learned, challenges and proposals from the experience of Young Lives in Peru, Lima*: Grade; Niños del Milenio. [Online, in Spanish] available at http://www.ninosdelmilenio.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/nm1.pdf

Armstrong, M., Boyden, J., Galappatti, A. and Hart, J. (2004) Piloting *Methods for the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programme Impact in Eastern Sri Lanka*, Final Report for the USAID, Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford [Online] available at www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/PDFs/rrpiloting-methods04.pdf

Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2001) *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach*, National Children's Bureau, London

Crivello, G., Morrow, V., and Wilson, E. (2013) *Young Lives Longitudinal Qualitative Research:* A Guide for Researchers, Young Lives. [Online] available at http://www.younglives.org.uk/files/technical-notes/tn26-qual-guide-for-researchers

Crivello, G., Camfield, L. and Woodhead, M. (2009) 'How can children tell us about their wellbeing? Exploring the potential of participatory research approaches within Young Lives', Social Indicators Research 90, pp.51–72

Dockett, S. and Perry, B. (2005) 'Researching with Children: Insights from the Starting School Research Project', *Early Child Development and Care* 175 (5) pp.507-521

De Berry, J., Fazili, A., Farhad, S., Nasiry, F., Hashemi S. and Hakimi, M. (2003) *The Children of Kabul: Discussions with Afghan Families*, Save the Children, USA/UNICEF

Rojas Arangoitia, V. and Cussianovich Zevallos, A. (2013) 'Life is going well': Wellbeing perceptions of a group of Peruvian adolescents' [Le va bien en la vida: Percepciones de bienestar de un grupo de adolescentes del Perú] Working Paper, Lima: Grade; Niños del Milenio. [Online, in Spanish] available at http://www.ninosdelmilenio.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/dt.pdf

LISTENING TO SMALLER VOICES IN NEPAL

Vicky Johnson, Jo Hill and Pashupati Sapkota

Research on which this contribution is based

Johnson V, Hill J, Rana S, Bharadwaj M, Sapkota P, Lamichanne R, Basnet B, Ghimimire S, Sapkota D, Lamichanne R, Ghimire S. (1995), *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an environment of change* (Nepal case study). ActionAid Nepal, Kathmandu

Johnson, V, Hill, J. and Ivan-Smith, E. (1995), *Listening to Smaller Voices: Children in an Environment of Change*, ActionAid, London

Purpose

This research was conducted for ActionAid in order to better understand the roles of boys and girls in households and society. Detailed ethnographic research was conducted over three years (1993-1995) in Sindhuli District of Nepal, in the Mahabarat Mountains, South East of Kathmandu. This was complimented by shorter case studies from other ActionAid country programmes and partners in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Peru, Ecuador, Kenya and Uganda. The research was funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and the Overseas Development Administration of the British Government (now DFID), as part of their 'Population and Environment Research Fund'.

The research employed more traditional anthropological research and explored the use of visual participatory appraisal methods with girls, boys and their families. The project was carried out post UNCRC in an exciting period of time where there was growing recognition that children's voices were central to understanding how to improve their lives. The team was lucky enough to have as its adviser Judith Ennew to whom this resource is dedicated. The research methodology therefore benefited from her experience and in depth knowledge of the ethics of research with children and her previous research with street children, alongside the enthusiasm and dedication of the ActionAid researchers and the local knowledge of context and innovation of the Nepalese researchers who joined ActionAid Nepal for the research period.

Design and Methods

The researchers spent many months up in the hills observing the lives of girls of boys including their play, schooling and work. They worked with children of all ages including young children of 5-8 years who already often had responsibilities in the household. Young children, especially girls, swept the yard, collected water and firewood, looked after siblings and animals such as goats.

The Nepalese fieldworkers spent many hours building trust with the different family members including the children. They did this by playing games, singing local songs, learning the local language, which was often not Nepalese, and dancing.

In addition to observation and open and semi-structured interviews with different members of the households and communities including girls and boys, the following methods were applied:

With children, including young children of 5-8 years old

- **Accompanying children during their work** (see previous page): this was developed by the fieldworkers as children did not always have time to stop doing their daily chores to take part in the research. They would go with girls and boys and help them out with their work while interviewing them about what they liked and disliked about their work and other aspects of their lives.
- **Songs:** In this region girls and boys sing some traditional songs but also make songs up about their lives that can help us to understand what they do and how they feel.
- **Dreams:** fieldworkers asked children to draw who they dreamed of being when they were older and how they felt they could achieve their dreams.
- **Mobility maps:** (see above): so that girls and boys could show where they travelled to in a day, including where they went to work and whether they

went to school. Boys often included school where girls did not as there is a strong gender preference to sent boys to school. The further the line from themselves at the centre of the map, the further they had to go, for example to the forest to collect wood.

- **Matrix ranking** (see next page): this was done to understand what work girls and boys do and whether they like it, and also to understand why they prefer certain tasks to others.
- **Seasonal calendars** were carried out with children to understand their workload over the year. In a rural environment workloads for children change depending on the different periods for planting, harvesting and processing, and also their routes to school depend on flooding in the rainy season.
- **Daily tasks** for girls and boys of different ages and the time different activities take were understood through daily flows and charts.

With all members of the household

- **Mapping** in order to understand the lay of the land and the local environment from the perspective of different family members.
- **Flow charts** in order to understand how different members of the household respond to environmental change.
- **Power and hierarchy charts** in order to understand frameworks of discrimination, such as wealth mapping, charts of how people view hierarchy in and between caste/ ethnic groups.
- **Dancing** to build relationships and celebrate the research.

Ethical considerations

- **Informed consent** was gained from parents/ guardians and from the children themselves.
- **Confidentiality** was maintained, although help from local service providers or community members was obtained where there was an identified risk to any of the children that the team were working with.
- **Fun and opting out**. The process was fun and if it was not then the researchers did not continue. For example there was an idea to do chiapati or venn diagrams to explore power, but children did not seem to like doing these at all! These were therefore not used.

Research Process and Flow

The team who already had experience in ethnographic research were trained in Participatory Appraisal (PA). The team of researchers from Nepal and the UK also co-constructed the methodology from a skeleton for the research that was developed in ActionAid in London for the funding bid. The Nepalese fieldworkers were encouraged to be flexible to the context and the situation as they worked with different children.

Many of the villages were very remote in the high hill areas of the Mahabarat Mountains of Nepal. Researchers walked for two days to reach the start of the area for research and stayed with local people in the community. The researchers carried rice in so that they did not deplete the resources for local people who often did not have much to eat. Researchers slept on floors and balconies so that local people did not have to give up their sleeping areas.

A process of building trust was initiated by developing relationships within the local community. Researchers played with children and learnt the local language, singing songs, eating and dancing with the community as well as helping out with chores that needed to be carried out to free up time for community members to participate in the research. The research was discussed including why it was being carried out. Informed consent was gained from parents and guardians and also from children.

The team analysed using the visual methods in the community and then also pulled information together as a team. When they developed an understanding of

different issues they would triangulate using different methods and verify with the children that they had been working with.

Reference Groups of local policy makers and service providers, and also national and international policy-makers and decision-makers, were formed so that someone was listening to what the children said. The reports were launched nationally and internationally. The information also fed into the local implementation of programmes and support of partners by ActionAid Nepal.

How the research helped us to understand children and their agency

Understanding the perspectives of girls and boys helped us to understand:

- Girls and boys contribute significantly to households coping with environmental stresses
- Increasing economic stress means that there is increasing pressure on children to work and at an earlier age
- Due to the power dynamics within households, it is not enough to focus only on the poorest households. Attitudes towards daughters and particularly daughter-in-laws can make girls, including young girls, feel very negatively about their lives
- Girls had the least opportunities, did the hardest work and had the fewest education opportunities. There was a cultural context of sending boys to school rather than girls as girls were expected to stay at home and carry out work for the household
- Children's roles in households and broader societies, especially young children, are not often acknowledged or necessarily recognised in planning programmes for them. Unless children's roles are better understood by including their perspectives in research we could inadvertently adversely affect their lives

Replication/ Linking to other Processes

Methods developed during Listening to Smaller Voices have been shared widely with international audiences. Researchers from the team continued to apply some of the visual methods in research with Save the Children (see case study by Hill in Nepal) and with the Himalayan Community Development Forum (HICODEF) in Nawalparassi. These methods with children have also been applied with team members in the UK, for example in exploring issues of food poverty with Sustain, Oxfam UK's Poverty Unit and Development Focus and in evaluating the Croydon Children's Fund. See www.developmentfocus.org.uk.

MIRRORS OF OURSELVES

Critical Self Reflection On Group Organisation by the Children's Clubs of Nepal

Roger Hart, Jasmine Rajbhandary and Chandrika Khatiwada

Rajbhandary, J. Hart, R. Khatiwada, C. (1999) The Children's Clubs of Nepal: A Democratic Experiment. Save the Children (Norway) and Save the Children (U.S.) with the Children's Environments Research Group. (Available from www.cergnyc.org)

Hart, R. and Rajbhandary, J. (2003) Using Participatory Methods to Further the Democratic Goals of Children's Organizations. New Directions for Evaluation: Youth Participatory Evaluation: A Field in the Making. Vol. 2003, Issue 98, pages 87–92

Hart, R. and Iltus, S. (2001) Mirrors of Ourselves: Tools of Democratic Self Reflection for Groups of Children and Youth. This video of the research tools produced by the Children's Environments Research Group for Save the Children can be viewed at: www.cergnyc.org

Purpose

While it is important to design methods that are age appropriate, sometimes we need to create methods that can be used simultaneously by children of a wide age range. This was the case in a research project designed to document how the children's clubs of Nepal functioned. Senior program staff of Save the Children (US and Norway) had observed informally that the clubs seemed to be remarkably participatory and inclusive, signaling the emergence of an important new kind of institutional opportunity for children, and so they wanted to learn, in some systematic manner, how the clubs functioned and whether they were as authentically democratic as they seemed? We describe in this case study why and how each of our set of research methods were developed and what their potentials and challenges are for use with children of eight years and younger. These research methods were designed to be interesting and useable for children of the full age range from eight to sixteen years. In doing so we created some methods that could also be used not only with the eight-year-old child club-members but also with young children. It is also important to recognise that when working with children of mixed ages in groups, the young children are often able to think and have dialogue with the older participants at a higher level than they can have in groups made up entirely of their own age group.

Research Design and Methods

In order to fulfill the challenging dual goal of obtaining a national demographic picture as well as an inside account of how the clubs function we designed a two-phased approach: a national demographic survey of the clubs, followed by a program of participatory research and reflection by a geographically and culturally representative sample of clubs, alongside interviews of key informant children and adults in the same communities. While participatory group methods would be the core of our approach, we knew from the start that these would be needed to be supplemented by individual interviews because group methods often hide

important individual differences and issues of power in the functioning of institutions. We also felt that it would be important to obtain the perspectives of those children who were not club members, and their parents, about the place of clubs in their communities. Our proposal to develop participatory methods that children and facilitators in any club could use greatly suited our sponsors because they felt that the tools we proposed to design could also be subsequently used to improve their ongoing monitoring and support of the clubs. In this account we do not discuss the survey phase and the interviewing of key informants because these used standard, well-known, methods.

We designed participatory group methods that would help children to look critically at: the inclusiveness and organisational structure and processes of the club, what role it played in their lives compared with other settings, and how well the club satisfied the desires of the older and young children and boys and girls. We followed the central principles of participatory group methods that they be simple and clear to a group unschooled in the use of such methods, and that the analysis and interpretation of the data be carried out with the group themselves. We also had to design the methods with the knowledge that a large proportion of the children in the clubs had not attended school and were not literate. Some of the participatory group methods were borrowed and modified from the literature on participatory research with adults; others were developed specifically for this study.

The methods were pilot-tested in one club and then used in 22 clubs, sampled from the districts where the two international agencies worked in the mountains and plains of the country. In order to maximise the degree to which children could have a voice in the research sessions we created separate research sub-groups in each club: girls younger than 12 years, boys younger than 12 years, girls older than 12 years and boys older than 12 years.

Understanding patterns of social exclusion through mapping

We used mapping to identify which families and which children in each household were not club members and why this might be the case. Maps were used as a way of displaying household census information because distance from the club was suspected to be one of the important variables. We first asked the children in our pilot community to construct a conventional, Euclidean, map as the base map for the social census. If pencils or crayons are used for mapping it is very difficult for children to create a collective expression that they can all agree upon so we first use loose materials such as yarn and pieces of cardboard and only fixed this with crayons when everyone agreed on the location of all features. Using this method alone even three and four year old children can make rudimentary maps, and five-year-old children are capable of making maps that are accurate enough for others in the community to understand (Hart 1978). It is more difficult however for them to coordinate their spatial perspective with other children, and so some facilitation is required when involving children under eight years of age in this, as a group activity.

The piloting of this method resulted in such a good base map that it remained in the clubroom for over a year afterwards. But it was too slow a technique and so we quickly designed a more streamlined technique that we call 'social mapping'. Social mapping provides a rapid census of a community and enables an analysis of the degree of inclusiveness of club membership. The social map is designed to emphasise distance from an institution such as a club or school rather than spatial location. The base map is simply a series of circles representing five-minute travel distances away from a dot representing the club. Children write their names on a small paper house representing their home. They add information about the demography of their household to their template using different coloured symbols. They then stick this house on the map at the correct distance from the club.

The social map was extremely successful and children of all ages used it rapidly, and enthusiastically discussed patterns of club membership and exclusion. We suspect however that these group-made maps would be more difficult for children under eight years old to fully understand because they rely upon children's understanding of relative distance and coordinating their own mapping with that of other children. But, in line with what we have said in the introduction about mixed ages and group discussion and learning, it would probably be valuable to allow six- and seven-year-olds to be involved in the process of making census symbols for their own home, even though the placement and analysis of the relative distance of their homes on the map would require the assistance of an older child or facilitator.

Categorising and Ranking Participation in Activities through Card-sorting and Ranking and the Movement Ranking Game

If the children are literate, or can at least read one another's names, card sorting is a good method to enable children to show patterns of participation in different types of activities or in different roles. The children place these cards in groups on the floor to show what they do together. They also placed them in order of frequency of participation in different types of activities. By using these cards of different colours to express age or gender children were able to easily see and discuss patterns of involvement and exclusion in activities. But because many children could not easily read each others names we chose instead to use a Movement Ranking Game.

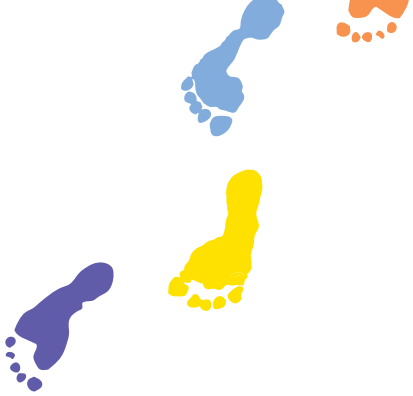
The Movement Ranking Game is an alternative way to enable all club members to see patterns in their different types of participation and roles in their organisation. It is an essential alternative for young children, who are not literate, but it is also more fun for older literate children. Children were simply asked to form lines that expressed the degree of some different quality, beginning with the child who has the most of that quality. The children enjoyed debating noisily while they tried to answer such challenges as "who are the children who laugh the most?" before going on to such useful questions as, "*Who attends the most meetings?*" While it was more fun and inclusive of all ages and levels of literacy, we have to admit that for groups larger than twenty children we found this to be a cumbersome and rather anarchic method compared with the simple sorting of name cards.

Understanding Organisational Structure and Decision-making by Arranging Name Cards

Organisational diagrams enabled the children to portray the structure of the club in terms of different roles and decision-making responsibilities. It used the

same materials as the card-sorting for categorising and ranking, described above: coloured cards expressing different gender and age groups on which the children write their name or an icon to express their identity. The children then arranged these cards into diagrams. They clustered the cards to show which groups of children have different responsibilities and what the relationships of these groups were to one another. First they created a diagram of the official positions in the club, such as the executive structure and committees. They then created a diagram using another set of their name cards to show all of the different things that children do informally and for which the club has no formal recognition or title. This method was rapid and an effective basis for discussion by the children about how they manage to get their voice heard or not in an organisation. It created a good deal of argument about who really did what. We learned from this method that while most established clubs are self-managed, the formal committees tended to be made up of members of the elected executive committee and many informal activities regularly carried out by children went unrecognised.

This kind of conceptual mapping is more abstract than the geographic maps discussed in the first method described above and would be a challenge for children under eight. But with special help from a good research facilitator they could produce such diagrams of their own involvement in decisions and take part in the mixed age group discussion of inclusive decision-making.



Comparing the Benefits of Different Settings Using a Simple Matrix

This method enables children to identify what benefits they feel they get from different settings in their lives. Boys and girls, and younger and older children, can express their different perspectives on the same chart, thereby enabling valuable discussion on why they have different ideas about these benefits. The method uses a simple matrix. It can be drawn on paper or in the dirt.

Categories of settings in the children's daily lives (school, home, work, club, free time, the children's club and festivals) are expressed on one axis in words and pictures. Categories of different qualities of these different settings are expressed on the other axis, again in words and pictures. An initial set of categories was identified through interviews with children in the pilot phase of the project but we also asked each group if there were any other categories of activities that are important to them before we began to score them. With a large group, the matrix needs to be hung on a wall so that children can form small groups in front of it. Places where you get to laugh the most, places where you get to have your ideas heard, make decisions with other children and so on.

The method was very easy for children of all ages to understand and the children were highly engaged in small group discussion while carrying it out. The comparative analysis of the data by the children led to excellent discussion about their different perspectives on the benefits of different settings, particularly across gender lines. We believe this method would also work well with six- and seven-year-old children.

Revealing Decision-Making Patterns through Scenario Skits

It is difficult to get at the subtle ways that adults unwittingly subvert children's own desires and competencies by falling into their familiar patterns of directing and controlling children or reducing children's roles to that of tokens. Some kinds of influence are not readily mentioned in group dialogues because of the adoption of a collective language of self-deception. This is commonly the case in programs that are consciously promoting child participation because adult advisers often naively believe that young people should be entirely free from adult influence! We believe that some adult influence on a children's organisation is not only to be expected, but is healthy. But these influences should also be part of an evaluation. In order to establish a basis for discussion we used drama to reveal the subtle patterns of adult power and influence in the clubs.

We suggested different scenarios and asked them to create a little play about each of them. Groups of children in the pilot community first used puppets but rejected them after concluding that they constrained their acting too much. Performance, particularly dance, was very common for the children in Nepal. In one example of a scenario children were asked to imagine that someone who had just reached the upper age limit (usually 16 years old) wished to stay in the club and then were instructed to make a play about how this person's request would be considered. They had to think who would be involved in the decision and to create the cast of characters. They then gave a performance to show how the decision was made. If the actors got stuck and did not know what to say next they could ask the 'audience', of other club members, for help. After each of the skits, the children who were not performers commented on the accuracy of the performance as an expression of what would have really happened. Then all of the club members were asked to discuss the scenario and to consider whether they could improve on how they might deal with this issue if it were to come up in the future.

This method worked extremely well for inspiring discussion on this subtle issue with eight- to 16-year-old children. We believe that it would also work very well with children younger than eight years old because we have observed how much they enjoy creating performances related to their daily activities.

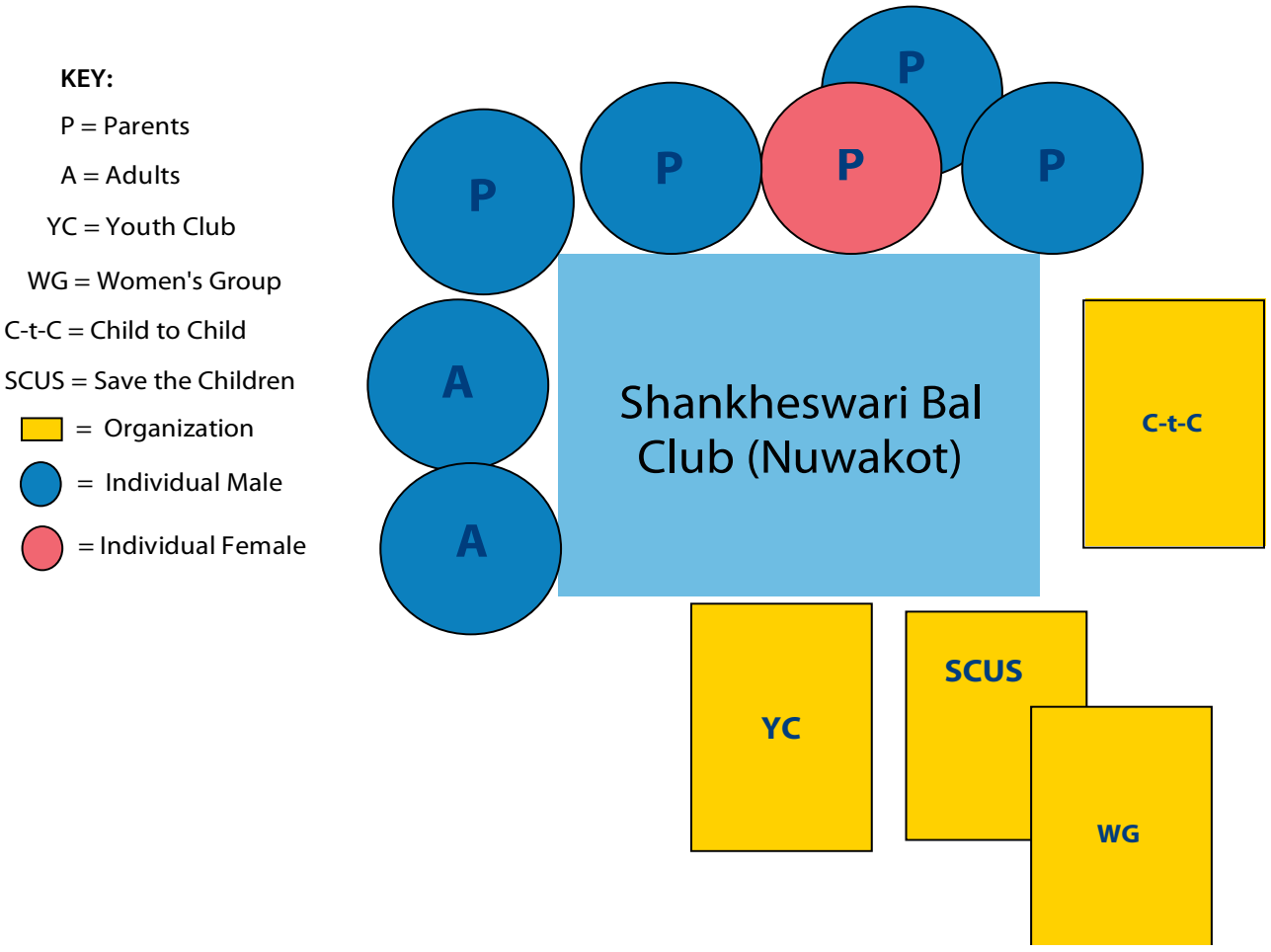
A challenge with this method is that because the performances were time-consuming, there was often insufficient time for the analysis and interpretation of the scenarios by the children; the method itself became too much of the focus.

Comparing Activity Preferences with a Matrix

This method was designed to enable boys and girls of different ages to systematically compare their favorite activities in the club with one another as well as with other activities that they would like to see happening in the club. First of all, it is essential that the list of activities that are to be compared with one another be generated by the maximal number of group members. Each of the four age and gender research groups of a club identified three favorite activities: one that they currently carried out in the club, one that they carried out outside the club and one that they do not do anywhere but wished they could do in the club. Altogether, 12 categories of activities were generated. These were used to create a 12 by 12 matrix. The names of the categories were written along the horizontal and vertical axes. These categories were also identified by different colours and simple picture symbols to make them accessible to non-literate children

We found that the most effective way to engage all of the children in this process and to think openly with the peers in their sub-group was to have them plan short mime skits of favorite activities that they then performed for the rest of the members. The youngest children, at eight years of age, were particularly enthusiastic about this method and we believe this would also be true of even younger children.

Figure: The use of the preference matrix method to enable groups of younger and older boys and girls to systematically compare their club activities with one another.



The matrix was hung on a wall and the four groups of children, younger and older boys and girls, sat in groups in front of it. For each pair of comparisons on the chart each group discussed amongst themselves before choosing which their favorite was. They then placed a coloured dot on the chart to reveal their preference. At the end of all of the paired choices, the scores were tallied up by the children to see what the ranking of activity preferences were for each group. During a recreational activity break a display of these ranked lists of younger boys and girls and older boys and girls was prepared alongside a chart of their current club activities. The whole club then used these comparisons to discuss the degree to which the interests of all groups were being equally recognised.

The use of skits to generate activities was greatly enjoyed by the children and did serve to liberate their ideas, but there was a tendency among some of the young children to focus on activities that they would enjoy performing rather than what was truly a most favoured activity. This needs to be taken into account in introducing the method to young children. Nevertheless, the method successfully gave a voice to both younger children and to girls, and led to a much greater inclusiveness and degree of discussion in each club than had hitherto been known. These were often generative of discussion on possibilities for change within the clubs. For example, in one club a strong discussion ensued regarding club expenditures on football team uniforms (solely a boys activity).

While the eight-year-old children seemed to understand this research process, we believe that young children would find the analysis phase of this research a challenge to both their understanding and their interests. The method was unnecessarily long because the children waited for each group to show their preferences on the same chart. This could no doubt be improved by first enabling each of the different age and gender groups to complete a chart and analyse the ranking of their preferences, only then bringing the different groups of children together to compare their data. In summary, while this was a successful method it requires further experimentation and modification before being used with young children.

Identifying External Influences through Venn Diagrams

Venn diagrams were used to enable children to collectively identify all of the people and organisations that have any influence on the running of their club. The children were given pieces of card of different size, colour and shape to arrange on the floor around their club, as represented by one large piece of card. They were told that they could display these cards to express how much influence different organisations or people have on their club. From this method children were able to rethink how to relate to local organisations and we were able to make some useful recommendations for change, but we do not believe that this would work well with children under eight years of age, or even be an issue that most of them would want to address.

Research Process and Flow

We separated the groups for purposes of group data collection and discussion into children younger than twelve years of age, or twelve years and older. It would also be possible to break up groups into younger age divisions for purposes of comparison and discussion between the age groups. The use of iconic symbols worked well to make the data collection and analysis possible with children who were only eight years of age or who were not literate because they had not attended school. Also, the incorporation of physical activity seemed to greatly increase the interest in the research and the understanding of it, by the youngest children. For example, the use of mime performances to enable children to articulate what categories of activities were valued was very appealing to the eight year old children – and even to their younger siblings, who were not club members.

In this study, issues of exclusion, status and power were included in the methods used by the children but there was a disconnection between what the children discussed and how they discussed it; our methods picked up only what was said. A limitation of participatory group research is that it is typically only a systematisation of what the participants are capable of discussing themselves in any of their group meetings. No record was made with the children of their patterns of talk, such as who never spoke or who spoke only after first observing the responses of someone else, although

one could imagine such research. Even though the children in the clubs had all learned about equal rights to participate, it was obvious during our participatory group methods that children were often waiting for the response of the 'leaders' before stating their own position. Two strategies helped correct for this. First, we broke the club members up into separate age and gender groups, because age and gender seemed to hold a strong influence. Second, we asked children to pause and to make their individual decisions before talking with their group. We were told by SC staff that these strategies enabled children to have a much greater dialogue across caste, ethnic and gender lines than was normally the case in club meetings. These discussions led the children to understand their organisation in new ways, suggesting that these methods could be valuable as ongoing tools for decision making within the clubs.

How the research helped us to understand children and their agency

The children revealed from their discussions of the data that they enjoyed participating in the research about their organisations and found it valuable. What made it possible for the children themselves to initiate dialogues of injustice after analysing their own data was their own prior understanding of their rights because they had all been introduced to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its articles on equality of opportunity. The data generated by the research was valuable in some clubs for inspiring immediate reflection and planning for change by the children. Unfortunately, because this was not longitudinal research; there is no way of knowing how many of these plans reached fruition.

It is unfortunate that, because we were external researchers, we enabled children to see their own patterns of decision making but we did not find ways of sustaining the dialogue and providing opportunities for the children to probe deeper. While generally positive, we recognised a need for a great deal more methodological experimentation. In particular, we felt a need to find ways to enable children to focus on each other's deeds as well as words. Certainly the children were learning from what each other said about their roles and preferences, but they did not comment on how they were working together and responding to one another in our research group discussions. On reflection, it would have been good if we could have had a staff person from Save The Children working with us who could have been subsequently responsible for incorporating the methods into their regular program of development and training of the child clubs; monitoring and helping the children build upon the methods that we had developed.

Replication and Extension of the Approach

While we were successful at supporting the children to see their own patterns of decision making during our visit, we did not have a plan for sustaining the effort. The tools were translated into Nepali and made available, but there was no training of facilitators to work with children or any monitoring of whether the methods were subsequently used and what impact they had. If the kinds of methods described here could be used periodically for self-monitoring, we believe that it would lead to a much a larger number of children becoming involved in the decision-making and management of their organisation. This kind of participation would require that advisers be trained to believe in children's capacities for research, evaluation, reflection and self-determination, and to be trained in the facilitation of evaluation. They in turn would need to train all of the children in participatory group processes, rather than teaching leadership skills to the few.

The Children's Environments Research Group has in recent years been expanding and improving upon the methods described here, through work in many countries with World Vision, Save the Children and Plan International and making them broadly available through a website: http://crc15.org/.

SCHOOL LINKING PROGRAM IN UGANDA

Anslem Wandega and Ruth Birungi

Purpose

The African Network for Prevention and Protection of Children against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) Uganda Chapter is a child rights organisation aimed at protecting children from all forms of abuse. Our interventions are both preventive and responsive in nature, empowering children and communities through advocacy and providing direct services to abused children.

This case focuses on using the school link programme to share learning about how young children (6-8 years) cope with violence in public and private primary schools in developing and developed countries.

This activity is part of the project implemented by ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter and ChildHope UK aimed at reducing violence in 50 private and public primary schools in five districts located in Northern and Central parts of Uganda. Violence against Children (VAC) in schools is rampant with Uganda ranked among the countries with the highest in VAC in the East African region[6] . Important to note is that VAC in Uganda remains largely invisible and some of the common forms are considered disciplinary measures that are socially accepted. Incidences and forms of violence against children vary in each context depending on the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of surrounding areas. In addition, acts of violence are embedded in traditional and cultural practices and consequently many children, especially girls, live and learn in an environment which is largely ruled by fear and abuse[7] . The project works to empower children to protect themselves and other children from violence hence creating a safer school environment. The school linking programme, as part of this project, aimed at documenting how children in Uganda have obtained skills to protect themselves and other children and also enable experience sharing with their counterparts in the UK on how best they can protect themselves from violence. The school linking intervention was piloted in eight schools: four schools based in the UK and four schools based in Uganda, which were matched to generate information on how children cope with violence they and their colleagues undergo.

The purpose of this study was to document lessons from children on protecting themselves from violence so as to inform interventions aimed at reducing violence in schools in Uganda and UK. The research examined the different and common coping mechanisms the children use to respond to violence in schools in a developed country, the UK, and a lower income developing country, Uganda.

The following questions were asked during the research:

- What are the common forms of violence against children that exist in Uganda and UK primary schools?
- What are some of the measures children in the UK and Uganda are using to protect themselves from violence?
- Are there measures in Uganda and in the UK that can be shared between the two contexts so that children can better be protected and protect themselves from violence?

Design and Methods

The following methods were used in this study

Use of recordings and listening sessions

The study used audio recordings to document topics which were shared between Ugandan and UK schools. The radio recording sessions were structured around a testimonial and reporting framework to ensure high

[6] *Literature review on the prohibition and elimination of physical punishments in the Eastern African region (2012) ANPPCAN, Save the Children*

[7] *Baseline Study on Violence Against Children in Uganda (2011) ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter*
estions for papers and reports.

quality usable content. This was produced by the children for their friends in the partner schools to share their experiences.

Use of drawings

Children were also encouraged to draw their situation and how they understood violence in schools. They added a simple description to their drawings to help their counterparts in the UK and Uganda to understand. The drawings complimented the recordings to enable children to understand the perspectives of children in the different countries and what their counterparts were saying in the pictures and radio clips.

Ethical considerations

Consent was obtained from children before they participated in the study. The purpose of the study was explained to them including the potential risks and benefits, and what the recordings will be used for, before they signed the consents. They were also informed that participation was voluntary and they could leave at any point if they felt they wanted to. Teachers and staff were also trained to keep the confidentiality of any information they got from children. Teachers and staff were trained in handling and addressing cases of violence against children reported to them by children during or after the session.

Research Process and Flow

Processes during the recording

The recording was done in school, with the help of a trained focal teacher for the program. Each team of five members recorded separately and the recordings were directly saved on the recorder.

After recording, the ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter officer in charge of the program transferred the recording to a password-protected computer and they were sent to the lead researcher at ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter Secretariat via email.

The lead researcher would then listen to the recordings to validate the consistency of the data collected in each particular session. The recordings were then uploaded

Children listening to the session programme in Uganda.

on Dropbox where they were accessed by the team in the UK. The team in the UK also would do the same and their recordings would be accessed in Uganda through Dropbox by the focal lead research.

Once the recordings from the UK, were uploaded on Dropbox, the lead researcher in Uganda would download them onto a password-protected computer, and send them to the respective districts together with the session outline (for the next session) to the children by email. The team in the UK would also do to same for the recordings from Uganda.

For subsequent sessions the pupils first listened to recordings from partner schools, and the responses would inform their next recording sessions.

One fully trained ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter Staff (facilitator) assisted the teachers in ethical issues regarding the school listening project, overseeing the technical aspects of each session and ensuring that the recordings were edited and packaged to be sent to partner schools in UK.

The focal person at the secretariat received the recordings through mail and listened to the recordings to ensure they fitted with the objectives of the project. The recordings were uploaded via Dropbox, where they were accessed by focal people in the UK who facilitated

sessions in the partner schools. Recordings from the UK schools were also accessed by the focal person at ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter through Dropbox. They were downloaded, sent to the focal officers at the district in Uganda, who took them to the respective schools and groups.

Lessons and challenges picked from each session were discussed by children with the help of the facilitator and this would inform the way the next session was conducted. The lessons learned from each of the sessions were documented. A final report in the form of a radio sound-bite, cue lines, scripts/ voice overs for Radio was produced and used to produce a Radio programme or podcast to be played on radio in Uganda and the United Kingdom to inform children on how to prevent violence in schools.

Children making some drawings during the programme

How the research helped us to understand children and their agency

The findings of the study show that both children in Uganda and the UK experience some form of violence at school. Children in Uganda expressed the use of corporal punishment as the most common form of violence while children in the UK expressed bullying by peers as the most common form of violence.

Children in Uganda and the UK shared ways on how their counterparts can address such forms of violence, and testimonies on how to be assertive and communicate their problems to teachers and parents were mostly shared amongst the groups. *"Hearing that children in Uganda are beaten was strange for me, I was interested in learning and hearing from them how they were coping with this,"* said by one of the girls, aged seven from the UK.

By the end of all the sessions, children were empowered through experience sharing to be assertive and confident to address violence in their schools. Here is an example of some of the expressions from one of the child recordings on the lessons learnt in the sessions: "*I have liked this session because it has taught me to be confident and communicate about my problems. One of our colleagues shared how she told her parents about a child who was teasing her and the parents worked with teachers to address it. It saved her from missing school,*" said an eight year old boy from Apac district.

Three of the four groups in Uganda mentioned that they learnt that responding to child abuse should be a collective responsibility since it is the problem experienced by children everywhere. "*I was surprised to learn that children in UK can also be bullied! I thought that it was only in Uganda where this problem exists. I am happy that we as children can work together to address this challenge,*" said one of the girls in the fourth group from Rakai district.

Replication/ Linking to other Processes

This study can be easily replicated in other areas as a successful method of measuring change in behaviour among children and as a method to create and build confidence among children. Having been piloted with 160 children in the UK and in Uganda, results of the study show that children, when well trained and prepared, can easily learn to express themselves through sharing recordings and drawings. The recordings can also be used for content development for other programmes, like radio programmes, that can be used to sensitise other children affected by similar challenges.

CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS TO UNDERSTAND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN A SCHOOL IN NORTH INDIA

Mallika Kanyal

Key references to original research/ project

Kanyal, M. and Cooper, L. 2011. Young children's perceptions of their classroom environment: perspectives from England and India, In, T. Papatheodorou and J. Moyles, ed. 2012. Cross cultural perspectives in early childhood, Sage, London.

Purpose

The purpose of the research was to understand young children's perceptions of their school environment. Different participatory research methods were used to understand children's views, including drawings. The research was conducted in a primary school in the east of England and a campus school in north India. The same methods were used, yielding similar (yet different) findings. Similarity was observed in children's love for the outdoor space and differences were observed in children's perceptions of their school experiences, depending upon the context in which they were growing up. The study supports the theory of social construction of childhood, and discusses various research methods that can be used to understand children's views, in particular, their perceptions of the school environment.

Using children's drawings as a research method

Children's drawings have been long used to understand varied perceptions of the world around them, for example, in schools and related settings. Drawings, as a research method, however have been seen critically by some researchers. Some believe that children's drawings may not always represent a projection of the perception of the question being asked, but may represent a 'wish' rather than a 'perception'. However, as a researcher it is imperative for us to acknowledge both, 'perceptions' as well as children's 'wish', as by doing so we can enter into a child's mental space.

Children's drawings can be seen as a 'natural' method of enquiry for school-aged children as children are often given opportunities in schools to draw for fun. Schools can be considered as one of the cultural locales of children, as they spend a considerable amount of time in these settings. Children's drawings (of schools) are therefore, much more than a simple representation of what they see before them and can be better understood as the ways in which they are making sense of their experiences. Drawings, therefore, can efficiently be used as a research method, offering insight into children's individual experiences.

Children, in this case, who were 5-6 years old and in year 1, were asked to draw two pictures using a research instrument designed by Armstrong (2007): (i) a picture of their 'actual school experience' and (ii) a picture of their 'ideal school experience'. Armstrong, in her research (2007), used depictions of actual and ideal school pictures to understand children's instructional preferences and learning styles, which offers a great potential to be used as a differentiating pedagogical method. Taking inspirations from this, the method was contextualised to understand children's perceptions of their learning environments. In the 'actual school experience' children were advised to draw the day-to-day activities that they do in their class. In their 'ideal school experience' they were advised to use their imagination and draw the things that they 'would like to see themselves doing in the school'. In order to avoid losing the true meaning of their pictures, the narratives were tape recorded whilst children were actively engaged in the process of drawing (Roberts-Holmes 2008). Each participating child was briefed about this process beforehand and was given time to familiarise himself/herself with the recording equipment.

In relation to resources, skills and training, the researcher(s) only need blank pieces of paper and colouring pens/crayons. Recording equipment may be needed to record children's narratives of their drawings; otherwise, their views can also be scribed.

The researcher(s) need to make children aware that the two drawings can be similar or different. Before the start of the drawing activity, each participating child needs to fully understand that they will be asked to explain their drawings to the researcher(s) and that the threads of discussion of their drawing narrative will be tape recorded/scribed. For the children to become comfortable with the researcher, every attempt should be made to do the activity in a familiar setting, for example, in their classroom. The data only needs to be collected once the researcher(s) establishes rapport with children. The whole procedure needs to be negotiated with the class teacher and the head teacher (and where possible, parents of the participating children). An informed consent also needs to be obtained from the children themselves, before they participate in research. The research tasks can be explained in a verbal as well as written format, using picture cues to explain the process.

This method works well with young children (up to seven years of age). Slightly older children may not enjoy drawings as much. The children need to be given sufficient space and time to explain the meanings of their drawings to the researcher. Also, it is important to listen (and record/scribe) children's voices, as they explain their drawings, whilst actively engaged in the process of drawing. The meaning of the picture may change by the end of the activity.

It is important to carry out the interviews in an environment which is familiar to the children, for example, in their classroom, home, etc. Familiar environment elicit better interview utterances (longer, clearer, more complex, more thoughtful). Interviewing young children in pairs/ small group also helps as they can offer (emotional) support to each other, if needed. Attention also needs to be paid to the number of questions asked as persistent adult questioning can decrease children's competence to make response.

Where possible, interviews must be kept short, to a minimum number of questions and children's voices tape recorded to allow the researcher to revisit their responses at a later stage. Any equipment, such as Dictaphone/ tape recorder, should be shown to children prior to using them. Children like listening to their own voices and should also know how close to stay to the equipment while talking.

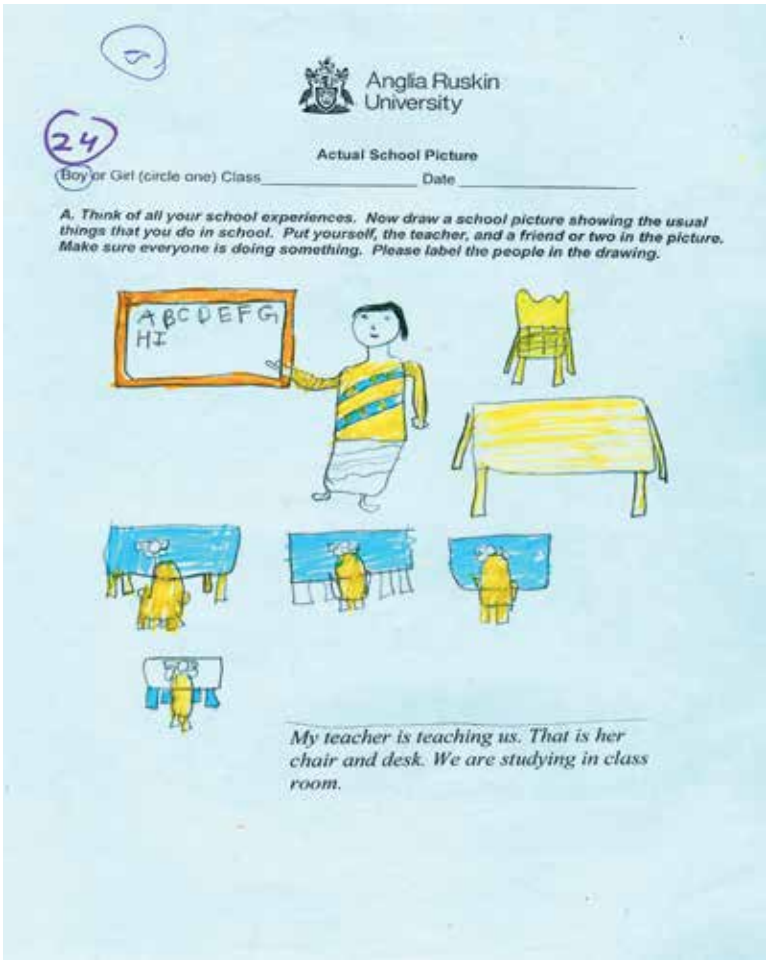
Most importantly, the researcher should establish rapport with children before carrying out any interviews.

Research Process and Flow

Children's drawings (actual school and ideal school experience) were analysed separately, looking closely at the narratives of drawings. An example drawing from each category as shown.

Children's drawings were part of the triangulation method, with the other two methods being children's interviews and the use of cameras and video cameras. For details of the project and a description of other research methods, please refer to Kanyal and Cooper (2012).

Actual school experience drawing

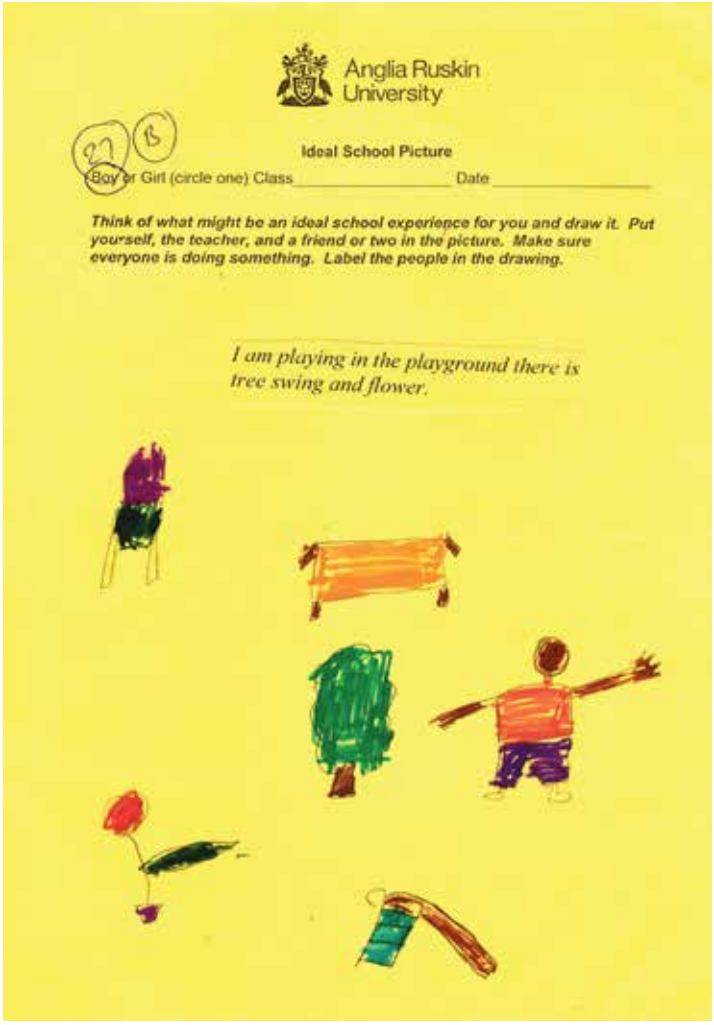


Children's drawings of 'actual school experience' show a majority of them being engaged in doing class work, mainly, literacy and numeracy. The experiences analysed from the actual school drawings were academic driven and represent a traditional view of the classroom. The teacher mostly takes the authority position and stands by the blackboard. The children drew themselves as attending to the teacher's instructions.

Ideal school experience drawing

Contrary to some of the criticism on the use of children's drawings in research, it is evident from ideal school drawings that all children were able to comprehend the guidance given by the researcher and used their imagination to create drawings that filled their gap between the 'actual' and 'ideal' school experience. They managed to fill their imagination with reality choices, as a majority of them viewed themselves playing outside in the playground in their school (contrary to their actual school experience, which was academic driven). Outdoor experiences quite clearly came out as a strong indication of their 'ideal school environment'. These imaginary representations remind us that children as young as five and six have the knowledge of using symbols to represent reality. An example of 'ideal' school drawing is.

The research was also conducted in a primary school in England (with the same age group), yielding similar findings, where children unanimously expressed their wish to be outside in their ideal school drawings. The actual school drawings portrayed similar experiences, which were mainly academic driven, focusing on literacy and numeracy activities. The main difference was the indication of children in India towards wellbeing issues, such as, appropriate facilities for continuous power supply, for example, a generator, and good fans and tube-lights. It is worth mentioning that the research was conducted in the summer time in India, and the local area had regular power cuts, with no power back up facilities available in school (but mostly at homes). Issues like these did not come up in children's drawings in the primary school in England. This highlights the reliability of children's drawings as a research method, as they helped to generate context specific research data. Overall, children were quite comprehensive and confident in narrating their drawings to the researcher. They managed to draw contrasting differences between their actual and ideal school experience. This draws us towards the belief that drawings can be used as a reliable research instrument in understanding children's



everyday experiences. It can be used as an interactive method to promote dialogue between the young people and their teacher/ practitioner, helping the adult to view classroom/school from a child's perspective.

How the research helped us to understand children and their agency

The use of children's drawings helped to understand children's perception of experiences within schools. The narratives helped to get their 'voices' heard without being interrupted by adults. The findings from the research helped to 'celebrate' good practice as well as bring attention to how their school experiences were dominated by academic activities. The findings were passed on to the head teacher and the class teacher(s), who were going to use findings from the project to inform their future planning.

Similar drawings can be used to create an interactive space between teachers and children. They can be used to exchange dialogues and create a shared understanding of the school/classroom environment. Both parties can reflect critically and jointly agree on the priorities of school experiences.

Replication/ Linking to other Processes

Studies like Anning and Ring (2004) and Weber and Mitchell (1995) illustrate how drawings can be used to help educators and other professionals understand the lives of children in school and related settings, for example, to demonstrate teachers' pedagogic styles and children's achievement in schools (Bonoti, Plousia and Fotini 2003).

References

Anning, A. and Ring, K. (2004) *Making sense of children's drawings.* Maidenhead, Open University Press, UK

Armstrong, D. (2007) Classroom visions: *efficient and effective ways to differentiate education*. [Online]. Accessed on January 10, 2009. Available from www.classroomvisions.com

Bonoti, F., Plousia, M. and Fotini, G. (2003) 'Graphic indicators of pedagogic style in Greek children's drawings', *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 97: 195-206.

Kanyal, M. and Cooper, L. (2012) Young children's perceptions of their classroom environment: perspectives from England and India. In, T. Papatheodorou and J. Moyles, ed. 2012 *Cross Cultural Perspectives in Early Childhood*, Sage, London

Robert-Holmes, G. (2008) *Doing Your Early Years Research Project.* Sage, London

Weber, S. and Mitchell, C. (1995) *That's funny; you don't look like a teacher: Interrogating images and identity in popular culture.* [Online] Abingdon, UK: Routledge Falmer. Accessed on February 10, 2010. Available from http://site.ebrary.com/lib/anglia/Doc?id=10058250&ppg=17

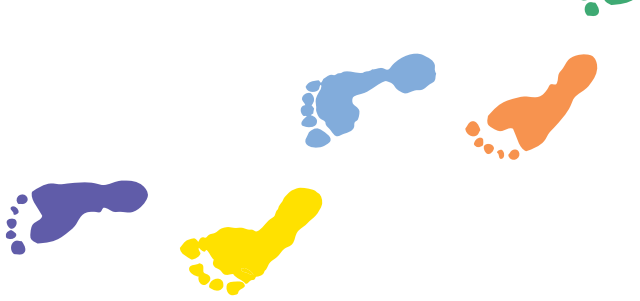
CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES ON MOVING FROM PRESCHOOL TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Johanna Einarsdottir

Introduction/ Purpose

In Iceland children start primary school in the autumn of the year they turn six years old and so move into unfamiliar situations. Preschools and primary schools have different histories and build on different traditions. The main aim of the primary school has always been to teach children to read and write. The first day-care centers in Iceland were, on the other hand, established for poor children during the beginning of urbanisation in the 1920s. As in the other Nordic countries preschool education is regarded as the society's responsibility; initially it was an important aspect of the welfare system, but is today the first level of schooling with the passing of a 1994 law (Law on preschools, No. 78/1994). The term 'playschool' is used for all early childhood programs in Iceland, indicating that free play has an honoured role in Icelandic preschool programs. Children are not required to attend preschool; but according to legislation, all children must have the opportunity to do so *(Lög um leikskóla nr. 90/2008*. [The Preschool Act No. 90/2008)]. Approximately 96% of all children ages 3-5, 93% of two-year-old children, and 35% of one-year-old children attended preschools in 2010. Children can attend preschool from 4 to a maximum of 9 hours a day Most children start preschool when they are two years old (Statistics Iceland, 2011).

The structure of primary schools has also evolved, and the school day is becoming longer. In 1970, special classes for six-year-old children were established in the primary schools, and it became a general practice to enrol six-year-old children in the primary school. These classes were not compulsory, and the children attended only for an hour and a half a day. In 1991, primary school became compulsory for six-year-olds and then the class became first grade (Law on compulsory



schools, No. 49/1991). At the time, the children attended first grade for half a day, either in the morning or in the afternoon. Today, children in Iceland start primary school in the autumn of the year they turn six years old. They attend first grade daily from 9am to 2pm and may attend optional after-school programs. Gradually, the curriculum and the textbooks are becoming more demanding and more academically oriented (Einarsdottir, 2003).

The Ministry of Education now formulates national educational policy and curriculum guidelines for preschools as well as for primary schools. The majority of preschools and primary schools are run by the municipalities. Parents pay approximately 20% of the costs of their children's preschool education, except for the oldest children for whom preschool is, in the larger municipalities, free of charge for at least 4 hours a day.

The current study was conducted with groups of children in two primary schools in Reykjavik at the end of their first year of school with the aim of revealing the perspectives of preschool children on the changes they anticipated would take place when they started primary school, and on the preparation for primary school that took place in preschool.

Perspectives of Children

The theoretical foundations of the study were the ideology of childhood studies in which childhood is viewed as an important period, contingent on culture, time, and context. Childhood studies derive from the Convention on the Rights of the Child which elaborates on the rights of children to participate in decision making that affects their own lives and to communicate their views. Researchers are now attempting to learn about children's knowledge and perspectives from children themselves by using a variety of methods suited to different children.

Design and Methods

The participants were 32 children in the oldest preschool group in two preschools in Reykjavik, Iceland. Data was gathered through individual interviews that were built on photos that the children took themselves in the preschool. The children were given disposable cameras to use for 7-10 days, and could take a maximum of 20 pictures. Most of the children had finished taking all the pictures when the researcher came and collected the cameras so that the photographs could be developed. 2 to 4 days later, the researchers came back with the pictures and talked to the children individually about them. Considerable use has been made of photos as a research tool in research with children. The advantages of using photos that the children themselves take as a basis for interviews, as was done in this study, include the fact that the children exercise more power when the data gathering is at least partly in their own hands and they can decide what to photograph. When the children decide what to photograph it is more likely that the interview revolves around things they find important since the photos direct the interviews, and the children are not only asked questions from the researchers' perspective. Furthermore, photographs and conversations about them can be beneficial for children who choose to express themselves through means other than verbal language. The aim of asking the children to take pictures was not to analyse the pictures or look at them as true descriptions of daily life in the preschool, but rather as an encouragement to, and platform for, conversation between the child and the researcher (Einarsdottir 2007).

Ethical Issues in Research with Children

Researchers encounter various challenges when conducting research with young children. Power inequality between the children and an adult researcher can result, for example, in children trying to please the researcher and give what they think is the right answer (Einarsdottir 2007). This study endeavours to empower the children in various ways: Researchers who were acquainted with the children talked to them in their preschools, and importance was placed on the interviews being informal and resembling conversations. The pictures that the children took provided the foundation for the interviews. The children were shown one picture at time, and emphasis was placed on listening to the children talk about the pictures and their context and, in that way, gaining understanding of how they regarded the preschool curriculum and the preschool staff.

Informed consent was obtained from the municipal authorities, the preschool principals, the preschool teachers and staff, and the children's parents. All agreed, except for parents of one child. Then the study was introduced to the children and their agreement obtained. With young children, informed consent can be

problematic. Many children do not know what research studies entail and may, therefore, have problems understanding what this really means. Therefore it is important to use methods that the children understand to inform them about the study. Furthermore, it is important to consider that there can be many reasons why children agree to participate, including power inequality between a child and an adult researcher. The researcher has to be aware of the messages that children give, with or without words, about their interest in participating in or opting out of the study (Dockett, Einarsdottir, & Perry 2009, 2011, 2012, in print; Dockett and Perry, 2011; Harcourt and Conroy, 2011).

In an attempt to ensure that the children understood sufficiently what was going to happen, an information leaflet was produced in which the study was explained through pictures and a short text that clarified what was involved in the study. The researchers went through the booklet with the children, and explained to them that they could choose whether or not they wanted to participate, and also that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. All the children agreed to participate, and wrote their names on the leaflet in agreement. One child was, however, not interested when the study started and withdrew from the study.

How the research helped us to understand children and their agency

The findings of the study show that the children regarded starting primary school as an important transition period and expected considerable changes in their lives when they moved from preschool to primary school. Most of the children looked forward to starting school. They discussed the formal preparation for primary school that took place in preschool, where during special 'school time' sessions the main emphasis was on worksheets in preparation for the subjects studied in primary school. By seeking the children's perspectives a better understanding of the transition between preschool and school was obtained.

According to the findings of the study it can be assumed that the children regard learning as something connected to the subjects of the primary school. The emphasis of preschool on play, communication, well-being, sustainability and creativity did not seem to hold the same respect with the children. By emphasising academic subjects and worksheets during 'school time' sessions the children gained the impression that this was what they should expect to do when they started primary school. It is interesting to regard the role of the preschool in creating and sustaining this view by setting up special groups for preparation for primary school.

References

Dockett, S., Einarsdottir, J., & Perry, B. (2009) Researching with children: Ethical tensions. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 7(3), 283–298.

Dockett, S., Einarsdottir, J., & Perry, B. (2011) Balancing methodologies and methods in researching with young children. In D. Harcourt, B. Perry & T. Waller (Eds.),*Researching young children's perspectives: Ethics, theory, and research* (pp. 68–81). London: Routledge

Dockett, S., Einarsdottir, J., & Perry, B. (2012) Young children's decisions about research participation: Opting out.International *Journal of Early Years Education*, 12, 1–13

Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2011) Researching with young children: Seeking assent *Child Indidicators Research,* 4, 231–247

Einarsdottir, J. (2007). Research with children: Methodological and ethical challenges. European *Early Childhood Education Research Journal,* 15(2), 197–211

Harcourt, D., & Conroy, H. (2011). Informed consent: Processes and procedures seeking research partnerships with young children. In Harcourt, D., Perry, B. & Waller, T. (Eds.), *Researching young children's perspectives: Debating the ethics and dilemmas of educational research with children* (pp. 38–51), Routledge, New York

Harcourt, D., Perry, B. & T. Waller (Eds.), *Researching young children's perspectives: Ethics, theory, and research* (pp. 68–81), Routledge, London

CHILDREN AND WATER SUPPLY IN TIBET: CHINA

Andy West

Purpose

This learning from practice case study outlines applied research that was part of a project that was designed as an intervention. The intervention was intended to find ways to prevent breakdowns and breakages that were regularly found in a new water supply set up for a village in rural Tibet. Local adults claimed that children were at fault: the aim of the intervention was to understand children's perspectives and circumstances, and to learn and support their solutions to the problem.

Context

The project was requested by staff from a water, sanitation and health office run by Save the Children (an international non-government organisation) in Tibet as part of the China country programme. This work in Tibet, in collaboration with local government, included installing a water supply in partnership with local villagers, and providing health education. In large parts of rural Tibet the use of a river for sanitation and washing increases the risks and problems of disease, and provision of an alternative clean supply is important for health, as well as convenience of a tap located centrally. Two of the three health education workers in the project team were female. The water and sanitation staff, all male, primarily worked with local adults, mainly men, on the design and construction of a piped supply; both women and men from the village were involved in selecting the route and site of standpipes.

They had recently established a piped water supply from the mountainside to a particular village. But the standpipe, tap and drains were frequently reported as blocked, broken and needing repair. Adult villagers blamed children and project staff proposed to set up a club to teach children the correct use of standpipes and taps, and to provide health information. Project staff requested advice and support on doing this, since they were not familiar with participation practice. After discussion with facilitators from the southern China programme office, it was agreed not to presume that local children were responsible for the breakdown, but to first find out what was happening from the children's perspective and then to see what solution they might propose.

Children, age and location

The initial fieldwork sessions with 17 children were conducted at a primary school in the summer holiday with 8 boys and 9 girls aged 8-11 who lived in the village. The school offered the only indoor public space available locally, and also had an outdoor area, and some basic kitchen facilities. The school took in children from more remote villages and settlements without local schools as weekly boarders during term time. The 17 children were all in the penultimate grade or class of the school and lived locally. This grade/ class was identified in discussion with the headteacher on grounds that the children would not be entering their final year, giving a potentially more sustainable initial project, but, being close to the final grade/ class, they would have more status in the eyes of young children. Subsequently, after the initial period of work, many younger children were involved, from lower grades.

Children within a particular grade/ class were not necessarily of the same age. Much depended on when they were entered into school, so the grade/ class was often used as a measure rather than age. Children across the country were said to be traditionally numbered as one year old following birth, and age was often determined more by the name of the lunar birth year than a particular month, which led to classes of children with a biological age range of two or three years at least.

Design and Methods

Approach

The approach to this intervention was threefold. First, staff capacity building in children's participation; second, gaining an understanding of children's circumstances and perspectives; third, facilitating children's ideas for solutions to problems and decision-making on action, and supporting them in any action chosen.

Methods

The process of work with children and methods used were decided by project staff and consisted of: a mix of games that were local/ traditional and imported from outside the village; visual methods (including drawing), mapping and diagrams, and interpreting pictures and designs brought in; accompanied walks; small group discussions; plenary discussions (including voting and consensus decision-making). Selection and use of methods were integrated into the daily review/ reflection.

Training and critical reflection strategy

If the intervention was to have the opportunity to be localised, maintained over time, and repeated, it was necessary to build the competence of project staff in working with children and young people in a participatory way.

Basic training in participation was provided, including discussion of local concepts of childhood and identification of possibilities for children to participate in programme work, followed by experiential learning and mentoring in working with children. After the office-based training workshops, staff designed and planned sessions they would facilitate with children, which were discussed with trainer-facilitators who subsequently observed them in practice. Each session with children was followed by a structured review and detailed planning of the next session in light of the reflection on what had happened. After a series of six half-day mentored sessions working with children over two weeks, the staff team felt able and confident in continuing work with children; the children had also decided they wanted to continue. The process of experiential training incorporating daily review and planning was intended to set a model of practice that would be continued.

Ethical issues

While the use of the school was unavoidable, it presented a challenge because of the way children were used to being treated by adults in that location, from a position of power. The voluntary nature of participation in the project was emphasised at different stages as the children and project staff developed a different type of relationship, so that their consent was both informed and genuine. The role of the project staff team in creating and maintaining a different environment to the rote-learning methods and control exercised by teachers on school days was crucial and needed to be observed and practiced in detail throughout. This included the adult staff working cooperatively, and treating each other, as well as the children, with respect, and taking the boys' and girls' views seriously.

The local language (Tibetan) was used in planning and design with children (and local adults). The training and review sessions were conducted with the external facilitators in English, supplemented by Chinese. The local project team spoke Tibetan as a first language, Chinese as a second and some had English as a third (or fourth). In order for concepts (including that of participation) to be fully understood it is necessary to plan and practice in local language, rather than through translation.

Since the headteacher and his family lived on site, it was also necessary to work with him in order that the different style of facilitation ('teaching') used would not be disturbed, to enable consistency and so that children might not become subordinated if teachers passed by.

Finally children's expectations needed to be checked and engaged, so that they would not be disappointed, and also so that they were able to distinguish the periods in school of participation and those of standard education, and could adjust their behaviour accordingly.

How children were involved

Rather than setting up a 'club', as initially proposed by project staff, during the training it was decided that first we should learn from children about the local circumstances and see what they wanted to do. Children's involvement was intended to be them passing on information, knowledge and views, and making decisions on what, if anything, they wanted to do. This was a new approach for children, and for project staff.

The initial aims of the work with children were:

a) to engage them in a different, participative way (different to the way with which children and most project staff were familiar)

b) to learn from them about the use of the water supply

c) to identify ways of maintaining equipment and supply without breakdown

d) for children to decide what if anything they wanted to do

e) the project team wanted to provide information about health, and possibly develop some peer education practice

Research Process and Flow

The process for children can be divided into three main stages:

1. The initial work engaging with children, learning from them, and children deciding what they wanted to do (set up a 'development group' that would meet and take action regularly)
2. Consolidation of the group which, in the second stage, began meeting and operating on a regular basis
3. Expansion of the development group to be open to all children in the primary school

The activities of children had an effect on the role and work of the headteacher and other teachers in the school, which contributed to the functioning of the third stage.

Stage one: The main activities at first involved developing relationships with the children in which they felt comfortable and confident in expressing their views, and progressing to them making decisions about issues and action. This stage involved daily sessions of engagement, each lasting about four hours including lunch and snacks.

Boys and girls were at first extremely quiet and shy, and little inclined to speak. A mixture of indoor and outdoor games was interspersed with children drawing and describing their daily lives in summer and winter, including the work for which they were responsible. Staff participating in the games was important in showing a different, non-teacher, relationship: traditional games were chosen by the children, and adults introduced some games, some based on training workshop `warm-up' activities. Children also made rules for working together: these were later revised by them at the end of the initial period in the light of what they had experienced.

The visual methods were important in providing a hook for children to explain their circumstances; they were initially shy in speaking and in drawing, being unused to these approaches in school (because of rote-learning and fixed, idealistic standards of drawing).

The adults explained who they were and what their job was by showing pictures and the organisation logo, and the children discussed and interpreted their meaning. This involved some discussion and information-provision about health and water.

Walking through the village enabled children to identify places of importance to them, and later used to explain how the stand pipes and taps were used.

Small group discussions by children (in gender groups), working together on diagrams or agreeing descriptions of differences in life in summer and winter, and in identifying key issues in the village, were sometimes run by children and sometimes recorded and part facilitated by staff. Minimal facilitation was used at a point in the process where some children had become very confident and could dominate others. Subsequently children ran their discussion groups themselves. The revised rules devised by children included `big children shouldn't be nasty to smaller children' and `all should participate, work together' (rough translations).

At the end of this first stage, children decided to form a group they called Yargyay Tsopka (improvement/development group) that would look after the tapstand, improve hygiene practices, improve the village environment, motivate other children not to fight, and provide information and motivation to other children and adults. They agreed to meet once a week during term time and also in holidays and they also identified where to meet.

Throughout this stage the headteacher became increasingly interested in the methods and supportive of the children's group.

Stage two: The group met weekly: the project team visited twice a week, at first in the holidays, then once a week, and later less.

Stage three: After the group had been functioning for a while, with the support of the headteacher, children

wanted to spread the group to whole school. Younger children were invited to join and the group was expanded to include all grades/ classes.

How the research helped us to understand children and their agency

Children provided information about their daily lives in winter and summer in the village, at home and school. They identified places of importance to them in the village including what they saw as safe and unsafe areas (which were different for boys and to girls). Children also identified the cause of problems of breakages and breakdowns – adults who did not use the facilities properly, for example, using the standpipe and area to wash hay which then blocked the drain area.

The information was important in enabling adults to devise strategies for working in other rural communities, and to support children in their group and in the action they decided to take.

Children were able to monitor use of pipe and tap effectively, and teach the correct use to adults. Boys' and girls' knowledge of health practices was also passed on at the standpipe and at home in the family. Children also organised some events in the village.

The intervention changed adults' perspectives of children's agency, including project staff, teachers and villagers. Project staff reported an immediate shift in their perspectives of children, recognising their abilities from working with boys and girls and finding they were able to articulate views, make decisions, and take action. They were particularly impressed with children's analysis and interpretation of the pictures and logo shown by staff.

A short review conducted a year later found shifts in views of children's agency and some adult attitudes and practices. The head teacher reported a `distinct positive benefit', including improved health, and children doing well at school (evidenced by good scores in exams). The school had also been praised by local government for high attendance, better teaching and improvement in general sanitation. The children reported that attitudes of teachers had changed, with some shift in teaching methods and a significant reduction in corporal punishment. Adult villagers reported listening to the children and taking them seriously, for example, as children '*look after the tapstand, tell us not to do laundry and wash grass there*' and also provided hygiene advice; adults reported that illnesses and disease were reduced.

Replication/Linking to other processes

An important outcome from this project was that what was conceived as a water supply issue and action, through taking account of children's views and their broader involvement, influenced changes in the health and protection of children. The Yargyay Tsopa group provided a vehicle for children's interest and engagement in taking action in the community, in turn, having a positive effect on their relationships with adults and shifting adult perceptions. Changes at school were most evidenced in reduced violence, increased attendance, and improved exam results.

The outcomes and learning from this intervention offered the potential for replication when setting up water supplies in other villages, provided time was allocated and appropriate local partnerships could be made. Because of the school base, there was possibility of running similar projects within the education programme. However, the conventions of government partnerships in this region dictated that education and health projects must be run in different areas.

The local government was impressed with the outcomes at the school and the headteacher advocated setting up such groups across the area, and raised this at an education meeting.

Other studies and literature

This project has not yet been written up, except a short note (in West *et al*. 2007), and related newsletter articles (Kaldrun 2003, Soliman 2003, Dolma 2005).

The initial methodology is broadly similar to that which has been used in developing children's own research projects. The initial engagement and relationship building with children in such projects was followed here by children deciding to form a group, whereas in children's research it is followed by children clarifying issues and planning, and doing their own research.

References

Dolma (2005) `Case studies from the children's club at Chubsang school' Save the Children China Programme Newsletter 25

Kaldrun (2003) `Chubsang children's perception of Save the Children's logo' Save the Children China Programme Newsletter 18

Soliman (2003) `Yargye Tsopka: children's club in Tibet' Save the Children China Programme Newsletter 18

West, A., with Chen, Q., Chen, X., Zhang, C., Zhou, Y. (2007) `From Performance to Practice: changing the meaning of child participation in China' Children, Youth and Environments, 17 (1)

EXPLORING STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN'S VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF THEIR RIGHTS: INDIA

Claire O'Kane and Rita Panicker

Purpose

This 'learning from practice' shares experiences of applied participatory research involving children from the Butterflies Programme of Street and Working Children, Delhi, India. In the year 2000 in the lead up to Human Rights Day (10th December) a series of participatory activities on child rights were designed and facilitated with street and working children aged 5-15 years to seek their views and experiences on their rights, and to support them in organising awareness and action initiatives to further their rights.

Design and methods

Butterflies is a grassroots NGO working with and for street and working children since 1988 empowering them with the knowledge and skills necessary to protect their rights as children, and to help them to develop as respected and productive citizens. Through a team of street educators[8] Butterflies is in contact with more than 800 street and working children (at any one time) at different 'contact points'[9] in areas of Delhi where there is a concentration of street and working children. Over 50% of these children participate regularly in non-formal education, health, saving schemes, recreation and other participatory activities.

Butterflies is a rights-based organisation and uses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a method to increase the realisation of children's rights. The principle of children's participation is applied through Bal Sabha (children's council meetings), participatory research, and support for a range of child-led action and advocacy

initiatives. The Bal Sabha informs the design, planning, monitoring and evaluation of Butterflies programmes. Once a month, representatives from each contact point come together for the Bal Sabha. The children elect a chair person and the meeting is presided over by him/her. Each member is encouraged to share any agenda issues, and each of the outlined points is discussed to identify ways to solve their concerns and to take forward action and advocacy initiatives on issues affecting them[10] .

Each year Human Rights Day (10th December) is strategically used by street and working children to increase awareness and advocacy on child right issues affecting them. In the months leading up to Human Rights Day in 2000, a strategy to take 'Children's Rights: Awareness Raising and Action Activities' to the streets was organised by Butterflies to engage street and working children in a range of creative participatory activities to explore their perspectives on children's rights, whilst also increasing their knowledge of their legal rights. Building upon the principle of children's participation the strategy also aimed to support children's ideas for collective action to enhance their rights.

A series of children's rights activities, to engage children aged 5-15 years, was designed to incorporate into the non-formal education programme and to reach out to a maximum number of street and working children attending Butterflies contact points. In order to engage with children effectively, the strategy built upon a series of core activities to be carried out at each contact point over a period of a month. Activities using visual representation, narrative, performance and games were effectively used that were less reliant on literacy skills. These 'core activities' were designed to engage children of different ages promptly, in fun, interactive short sessions thus responding to the needs of street and working children to work in a flexible but consistent manner. Younger children aged 5-8 years old actively participated in the core activities, often alongside their elder siblings or friends.

The core activities were divided into four sessions, to be run at each contact point (where possible on the same day) for four consecutive weeks:

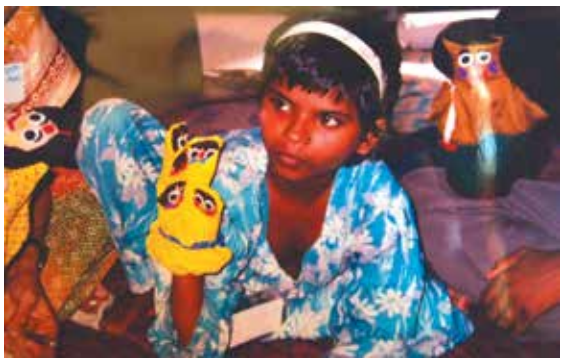
Session One 'Core Activities':

- **'Body Rights'** – a body mapping activity drawing around a child to provide a body to explore children's ideas about what rights they have.
- **'Fishing for Rights'** - an activity in which children catch fish which give them pictorial information about children's rights. Girls and boys share their experiences about how and whether they experience such rights.

Session Two 'Core Activities':

'Puppet Show' - using puppets to raise awareness about children's rights legislation and national legislation concerning child labour and juvenile justice.

'Role-Play of Violations' - opportunities for children to role-play situations where their rights have been violated and to explore which legislations are relevant.



Street working children

Session Three 'Core Activities':

'Ranking of Rights' - an activity to explore children's perspectives on the rights violations they most need to be addressed.

'How to Get Body Rights' - follows on from 'body rights' providing an opportunity to explore children's views of what they can practically do to increase realisation of their rights.

8 Locally employed adults with a commitment to social justice and participatory work with children.

9 A 'contact point' is used to refer to an area where there are a concentration of street and working children where the street educators regularly meet the children. 'Contact points' include the bus terminal, railway station, market places and parks.

10 See O'Kane, C. (2003) "Street and Working Children's Participation in Programming for their Rights: Conflicts Arising from Diverse Perspectives and Directions for Convergence." Children, Youth and Environments 13(1), Spring 2003.

Session Four 'Core Activity':

> **'Children's Participation Balloon'** - an activity using the visual image of a hot air balloon with children in the basket, but with the basket fixed to the ground with pegs to explore children's views about participation, about what helps and hinders their participation.

The street educators, who were experienced facilitators and had established trusted relationships with the street and working children in their 'contact point' areas, facilitated these 'core activities' with street and working children aged 5-15 years, in collaboration with one of the programme coordinators.

At the outset the strategy did not explicitly incorporate participatory research. However, in the very first session when the 'body of rights' and 'fishing for rights' activities were facilitated with children, the girls and boys shared such rich insights, experiences and information that the Butterflies staff recognised the crucial value of systematically documenting the findings. Thus, participatory research was applied as a part of the awareness-raising and action-planning strategy. A publication entitled '*In Search of Fair Play': Street and Working Children Speak about Their Rights* [11] was published to share key findings with relevant agencies and duty bearers to further influence action and advocacy on practice and policy issues affecting street and working children.

Key ethical considerations when applying the child rights activities with children included: informed consent to participate; the importance of active listening and sensitive response to disclosures concerning child rights violations, especially disclosures concerning abuse and exploitation; and the importance of action-oriented follow-up to children's ideas. Street and working children were encouraged to raise 'identified concerns and ideas' through their regular Bal Sabha (Children's Council) meetings to inform programme developments and Human Rights Day advocacy plans to raise awareness and action.

Research Process and Flow

[11] *O'Kane, C. and Sen, I. (2001) 'In Search of Fair Play: Street and Working Children Speak about Their Rights'. Butterflies and Mosaic, India.*

During the (participatory research) activity period over 100 street and working children aged 5-15 years (70% boys, 30% girls) participated in the varied child rights activities across seven 'contact point' areas (Jama Masjid, Kashmere Gate, Fatehpuri, Chandni Chowk, The Inter State Bus Terminal, Connaught Place and New Delhi Railway Station). The children were working as ragpickers, small-scale vendors, shoe shiners, tea shop and restaurant workers, and porters. Some of the children (especially the younger girls and boys) lived on the street or in slum areas with their families, while many of the boys older than eight years were living independently from adults on the streets.

The 'core activities' were designed to engage children promptly in interactive short sessions. By the nature of children's attendance at the contact points, the number of children participating in the activities fluctuated each week. Moreover, whilst some children took part in all of the activities and were part of ongoing reflection and analysis processes, there were also a lot of changes amongst groups of children who participated in the activities over consecutive weeks.

There were interesting differences between children's perspectives at different contact points. Whilst street and working children share some common difficulties, the findings clearly illustrated how the lives and experiences of street and working children were also marked by adiversity reflecting differences in living conditions, working conditions, family background, age and gender.

*Example 1: The '**Body of Rights**' activity was run with groups of street and working children in each contact point. On large sheets on flipchart paper the children drew around one child to make a 'body map'. They used the body to explore and record their ideas about what rights they think children have.*

Children mentioned rights to: protection (from police abuse, bad work, violence, parental violence, verbal abuse and harassment, sale and prostitution, drugs, being falsely accused of crimes), good work (respectable, fair wages, enough work, no work for younger children), education; play; recreation; a home and shelter; family care; health care and healthy living; and to participation (information, to discuss our views and concerns, to speak and protest, to plan, to make friends). Whilst many of the same rights were listed by children at different contact points, there tended to be a particular theme

that differentiated each group of children. For example, in Chandni Chowk the girls and boys talked about their concerns for the rights and care of younger children; in Kashmere Gate the girls and boys expressed their concern about abduction and sale of girls into child prostitution; in Fatehpuri the boys talked about the need for protection from drug abuse; in The Inter State Bus Terminal the boys talked about pressures that they faced from other porters and the needs of children with disabilities; whilst in New Delhi Railway Station the boys shared concerns about police violence and harassment.

*Example 2: The '**Fishing for Rights**' activity involved 'magnetic' fishing for fish, which had images of children's rights. Images of some of the main groups of children's rights (health, education, play, protection, life and support, and participation) were attached to fish shapes. Each child was given a magnet fishing rod (a long piece of string with a large magnet). Due to the paper clip that was attached to each fish, the children were able to 'catch' the fish. The activity began by discussing what each image meant to children, and explained that all children are entitled to these rights. Groups of (up to ten) children were then given rods. Sitting in a circle with the fish in the middle they then went 'fishing for their rights'. Once all the fish had been caught the children were encouraged to share their experiences and views about whether they experienced the 'rights' that they had caught.*

In general, the rights of street and working children are violated on a daily basis by the police, parents, employers, as well as by other members of the community and the general public. Children's life and work on the streets tended to be characterised by experiences of violence, abuse and general disrespect. Furthermore, as a result of their poverty and living circumstances these children were frequently denied access to basic services such as health and education. However, most children were able to experience the right to play. This right was normally realised as a result of children's creativity and their resilience in overcoming adult obstacles, rather than due to adult's support.

For children living with their families their perceptions regarding the quality of care and support that they received from their family was influenced by the degree of violence and work pressures that they faced from family members. For example, many boys in Fatehpuri commented upon the beatings that they got from their parents if they did not earn enough. However, young girls and boys in Kashmere Gate and Chandni Chowk described how they received care, love and support from their parents despite family poverty. They recognised that their parents faced a lot of financial difficulties and thus reluctantly sent their children to work to contribute to the family's survival.

How the research helped us to understand children and their agency

Since its inception the Butterflies programme has identified children as active participants; recognising the importance of their views (as potentially different from adults) in relation to project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Ongoing Bal Sabha meetings, complemented by participatory research, supports project planning which is more child-centred and context-specific. Participatory activities, which were designed to engage girls and boys in interesting ways, allowed important opportunities to listen and respond to girls and boys' views and experiences.

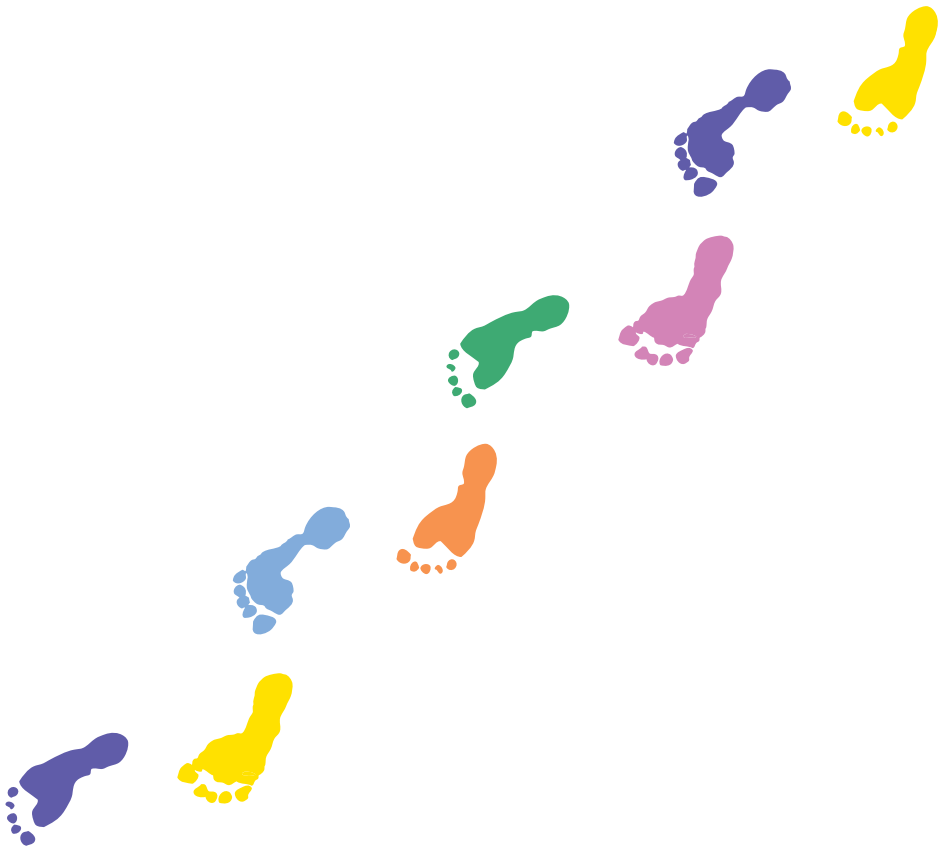
The research findings highlighted the importance of recognising and responding to the daily violations of child rights faced by street and working children, while also appreciating and responding to diversity amongst children's life experiences based on: age, gender, disability, living location and other factors.

The participatory research report was entitled 'In Search of Fair Play' in reflection of children's collective quest for play and justice (O'Kane and Sen 2001). While street and working children faced daily abuses of power, exploitation and disrespect these children exhibited resilience, and a desire for a more just world. The research findings were used to inform the development of relevant Butterflies programme responses, as well as advocacy initiatives to prevent and address: violence, exploitation, drug use, police harassment, the need for family care, play, rest, and access to basic services. In discussing their ideas about how their rights may be realised, street and working children were quick to recognise their own responsibilities, as well as the duties of others (government, police, parents, employers etc.). Duty bearers and citizens need to fulfill their responsibilities and take prompt action if the rights of street and working children are to be realised.

Replication:

Based on the success of the child-friendly participatory activities in enabling girls and boys to learn about, explore and action plan on child rights issues affecting them, a Child Rights Kit was developed for wider dissemination and capacity building among a number of NGOs working with street and working children in different parts of India.

O'Kane, C. and Sen, I. (2001) '*In Search of Fair Play: Street and Working Children Speak about Their Rights'.* Butterflies and Mosaic, India.



CHILDREN'S CITIZENSHIP AND EUROPE: LEARNING FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF MARGINALISED CHILDREN

Cath Larkins

Purpose

This research explored children's perspectives on citizenship; what kinds of rights, responsibilities, status and participation children experienced and want. It was an action research project that supported children to identify goals for change and to try to bring about change. It was also an academic research project looking at the role of the European Union and developing theories of citizenship.

The children who took part were in alternative care, disabled, young carers, minority ethnic, Gypsy/Traveller and asylum seeking. They were living in areas with relatively high levels of poverty. The 55 children were aged 5-13 years (10 were aged 5-7 years old). The younger children were in the three groups in France. These groups took place in a children's home, an after-school club and a refugee reception centre.

The research worked with children in already established groups, with workers who continued to support them to work towards change after the formal research finished.

Design and methods

This research process was inspired by Freire (1973). Each group met 4-8 times, and went through cycles of reflection, planning and action. The research provided resources and methods to suit a variety of learning styles, interests, environments and questions.

The prompt questions, which could also be called generative themes, were based on words that other children had used to describe aspects of citizenship:

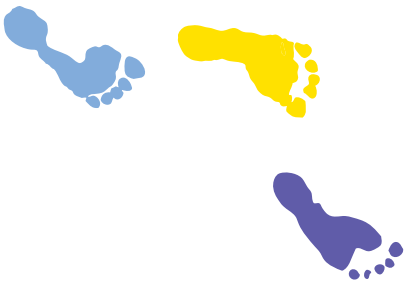
- What do you have/ should you have?
- What are you allowed/ should you be allowed?
- What do you have to do/ should you have to do?
- What can you take part in/ should you be able to take part in?
- What can you choose or decide/ what should you able able to choose or decide?
- What would you like to change?
- What does respect mean and who should be respected?

At the first session, these questions were asked in relation to the physical location where we were meeting. At later meetings, the children chose to think about other places.

To help the groups find creative ways of exploring these questions they used: art materials, video/ still cameras, a printer and audio recording devices. They were encouraged to feel like they could do what they wanted with these resources. However, occasionally staff interfered with children's ownership of equipment. A worker told one child to switch the camera off and save the battery whilst the child was in the middle of taking photos of things he thought were important. Some groups requested further resources, or I responded to the learning styles I observed and provided other materials. For example, in the children's home I noticed children had been singing on previous sessions, so I brought in a digital DJ machine. One child, who had previously not communicated verbally, then sat playing the DJ-ing machine while he discussed the rights that other group members had developed on previous sessions.

At every session the groups reviewed data they had created previously, planned new activities and then took action to increase their understanding of the issues they were focusing on.

The key skill needed in carrying out this work was confidence in children's competence and right to direct their own research. Video making skills were also important, so that I could follow children's instructions and create shorter films to show back to them what they had shown me. This was particularly important when



working with young children, as written accounts of what they had said would have taken longer for them to review.

Fluid Consent

Verbal and written information was given to children and then to parents. The language of this written information was age-appropriate and there were a lot of pictures. Researchers and workers met with children and parents to make sure they understood. Parents were able to refuse their child the opportunity to participate, but only children could opt in. Children signed their consent at the first session. To ensure children could opt out of the research at any time, alternative activities were always available during the research meetings. In the minority ethnic group, mid-session I'd often be told, "I'm just going to eat a pancake now," and the children would come back if they chose, or go and play on computers.

Creating safe space for reflection

The first session started with a game designed to demonstrate that there are no right answers in research, by showing that people see things differently depending on where they stand. The groups wrote rules for working together. When groups broke their own rules, group members discussed solutions on how to resolve any difficulties. Child protection policies of local organisations were followed and the limit on confidentiality was explained to children from the start.

Paying attention to the emotions and body language of group members helped identify potential problems. For example, one day no one in the refugee reception centre wanted to do the research activities, they just sat in a circle or played with other things in the room. After 20 minutes I realised two children were about to leave the centre where they had been living for months. I invited them to discuss this but no one seemed comfortable talking about the issue, so I decided to lift the mood of the group, by playing musical chairs like we had at our first session. When they stopped the game, they then started their usual photo tour activities. But this time their activities focused on group photos and discussions about achieving the right to remain and moving on. Remaining vigilant to emotions was therefore an important way to support children, and it enabled the research to consider fundamental and sensitive concerns.

Research process and flow

I provided structure in the first meeting and gradually reduced this over the next two sessions, following the lead set by the group members. At the first session every group played a game, created miniature people using the art materials and cameras, then asked the prompt questions to the figures or to each other. Some children chose instead to play a board game which used the prompt questions.

The board game was very popular with certain groups and not at all used by others. For the refugee group it provided a good focus for negotiating tensions between different people's answers. In the young carer group, the game provided a way of drifting in and out of the research project, without intruding on the play space of those who wished to not participate in the research at that moment.

Through discussing, performing or creating photos film and art based on these questions, the groups created research data about the issues that were important to themselves. They then developed statements of the rights and responsibilities they had or should have and the things they wanted to change by reviewing their work from previous sessions. For example, at the children's home, the group did collage work and video making. They then gave me instructions on editing videos. The following session, we would then watch a video of highlights from the previous week. As they watched this, they audio recorded comments on the rights and responsibilities they had or should have, based on what they could see. This process gave some control over the research back to the younger children, which they missed out on because children aged under 8 went to bed at 8.30pm, before the research session finished. By reviewing videos of what they had missed at the beginning of every session, and by supporting them to add and describe the meanings of what they reviewed, they were able to contribute to data analysis.

Once the groups identified particular areas to focus on, they asked each other specific questions about these ideas and developed plans for action and who to ask to help them bring about the changes they wanted. In this way they pursued their action research aims. They made videos, wrote reports and shared these with different decision makers. Only one group, the Gypsy/ Travellers, decided to take their concerns forward to a European level.

At the fourth or fifth session I invited group members to take part in map making to help me further in my research aims looking at the EU. About half of them did this, using art materials and sticky labels with every word related to a person or a place that group members had used in the previous sessions, and photographs of people, places and flags where these were available. Groups were then invited to make a group collage with these which represented how near or far away from us these people and places were. During this process we talked about national and European boundaries. Groups used the maps to review the claims to rights, responsibilities, respect and participation that they had generated and to decide which other children should share these rights.

Usually they wanted most of their rights to be shared with all other children in the world. They did not identify specifically at a European level. Although in the after-school club, for example, one child said, 'Countries within Europe should help each other'. Where they made distinctions between different children it tended to be on the basis of need, saying for example, 'Children who did not have toys should be given them', although some of the groups debated the use of gender or age-based rights. For example, in the refugee group, the process of review and report writing involved looking at the summary cards from all the previous sessions and sticking the 'important ones' that people agreed on a mock report laid out on flipchart paper. As two 6-year-old girls were doing this, they expressed disagreement with some of the statements made by a 13-year old boy. As they had the physical control of the glue, they could exercise control over the report content and did not stick onto the report his statements about boys having rights to cars and girlfriends.

One group started creating their own questions and methods on the first night. Other groups took more time. Overall the activities co-created in the six groups were:

Performance:	video interviewing, peer video interviewing and drama.
Art:	mapping, drawing, modelling and collage.
Group discussions:	supported by board games and participatory focus group techniques
Site Tours:	video and photo tours of play/ home/ school
Reflection:	written, video, photo and collage review of the research data

How the research helped us to understand children and their agency

These research activities provided an understanding of how children are active in creating their own citizenship. They described how in their everyday lives they make their own rights and the rights of others a reality, they make social contributions and they challenge norms and accepted standards around the rights, responsibilities and status (Larkins 2013). These research projects also gave a perspective on the relevance of the EU, showing that these children did not limit rights to European children. The EU may have a role in enabling some rights to be realised (Larkins 2011).

The reports and videos the groups created have been used, with varying success, to lobby and bring about change, as shown below

Table 1 – Lobbying action taken and achieved by groups

Group	Examples of Action Taken	Initial Action Achieved
Gypsy Travellers	Report was presented to an MEP	An Assembly member visited the school and committed himself to making traveller site improvements.
Young Carers	Report used to lobby for a homework pass scheme in schools	Three schools have signed up to homework pass scheme.
	Video presented to International Conference	
Minority Ethnic Group	Report presented to club management committee	Workers have been trained in children's rights.
Looked After Group	Report and video presented to staff team	Staff team supported children with more fun group activities.

The refugee group did not wish to use their report for action purposes but asked me to lobby for them. Due to staffing levels and group turnover, the disabled children were not supported to take action.

Replication/ linking to other processes

The Gypsy/Traveller group continued to meet with me, as funding became available from other sources. They started their own research on identity and some of the outputs from this can be seen on www.travellingahead.org.uk

References

Larkins, C. (2013) 'Enacting children's citizenship: developing understandings of how children enact themselves as citizens through actions and acts of citizenship', *Childhood published on line* March 14, 2013

Larkins, C. (2011) 'Can the EU live up to the expectations of its child citizens?' *International Journal of Children's Rights Special Issue: Children and the European Union,* Vol. 19 pp.451-476

This game comprised of 10 copies of each of the cards shown in the table below, four characters taken from a Scooby-Doo board game, dice and the board that is to be found in the pocket in the rear cover of this thesis.

	What would you like to change?
	What does respect mean and who should be respected?
	What should you have or be given?
	What should you be able to take part in?
	What should you be allowed?
	What should you have to do?
	What should you be able to choose or decide?

The citizenship board game

STEPS TO ENGAGING YOUNG CHILDREN IN RESEARCH: LINKING TO THE RESEARCHER TOOLKIT

By
Vicky Johnson,
Roger Hart,
Jennifer Colwell

LINKING TO THE RESEARCHER TOOLKIT

This *'Researcher Resource and Case Studies in Learning from Practice'* has offered a rationale and framework for engaging young children in research. It was designed to serve as the conceptual base for the more directly practical *Researcher Toolkit*. The *toolkit* provides a set of tools or methods that can be selected from and modified to provide innovative and interesting ways of engaging young children in research. We hope that the reader will use the *Researcher Resource* as a guide to build their research projects rather than simply taking methods from the toolkit out of context. It is important for a researcher to design research that responds to the particular children and questions that they are working with and to be flexible in different contexts. Methods are recognised in this resource as just one step in engaging young children in research.