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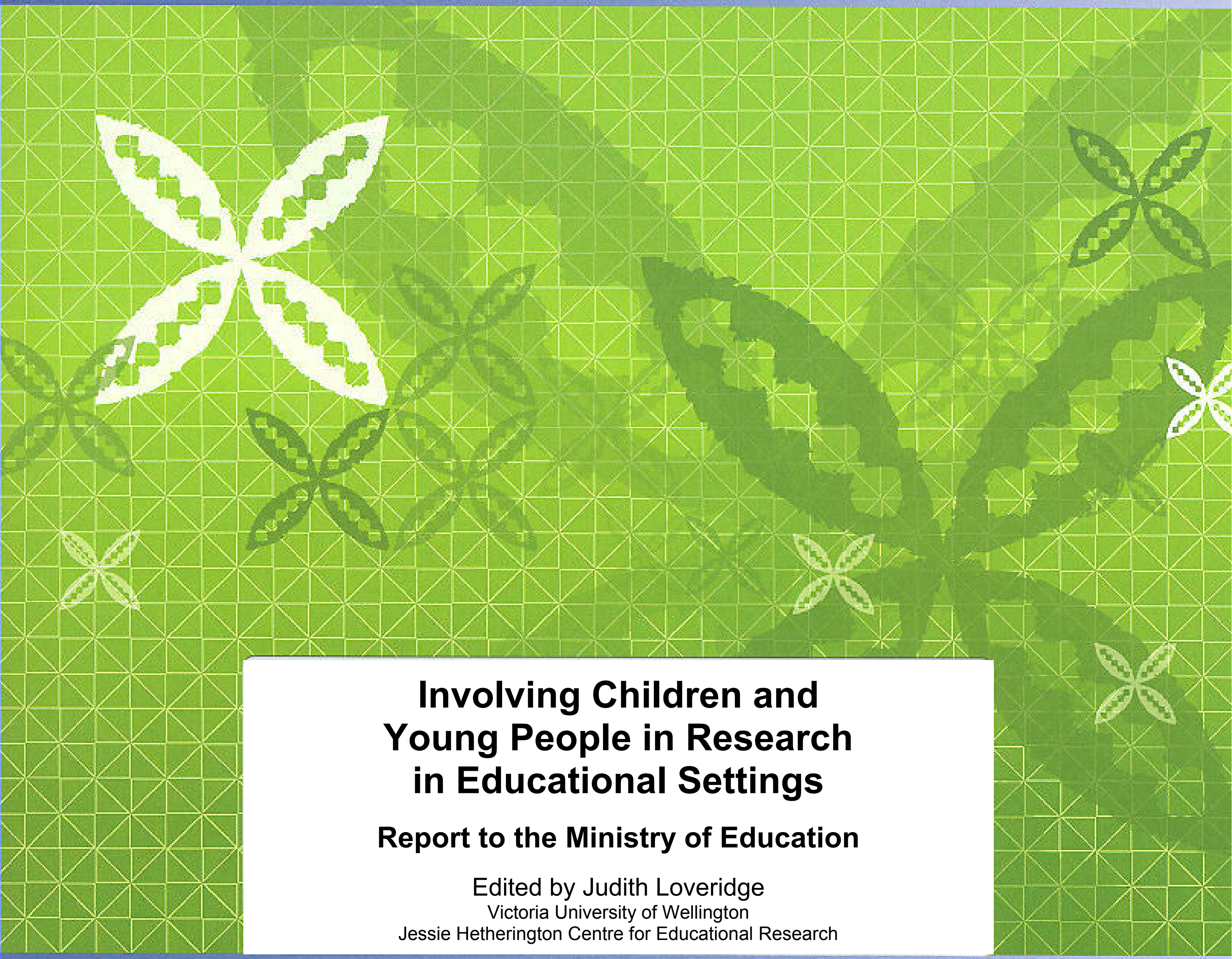

Involving Children and Young People in Research in Educational Settings

Report to the Ministry of Education

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July 2010

JESSIE HETHERINGTON CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
Te Puna Rangahau ki Ako Pai

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CHAPTER 1:
Introduction

Judith Loveridge

Children and young people have been the focus of research for many years.[1] The plethora of theories of learning, motivation, maturation, and the sociology of childhood has been accompanied by extensive empirical research in both natural and experimental environments to investigate various hypotheses about development, learning and educational interventions. Since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC, 1989) there has been a major shift from seeing children and young people as passive recipients to viewing them as active participants in their own learning and development. In the western world, accompanying this change, there has been the development of a raft of policies and legislation that promote 'child voice' (Lewis, 2010) and the promotion of ideas about children being actively involved in decisions and processes concerning their lives. Consequently, the research literature concerning children and young people reflects a growing awareness of the important and unique challenges relating to involving participants in the research process who are not yet adults and whose repertoires may require very different approaches to research about their learning and development (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). The simultaneous burgeoning and growing sophistication of electronic technologies and diverse communication pathways has also generated multiple ways to construct, gather, store, represent, and disseminate data and findings. The ethical implications of these new opportunities for research in general and with children and young people in particular have lagged behind the pace at which the electronic environment is developing and becoming widely accessible.

This report has been written, within this changing research environment, in response to a request from the Ministry of Education Aotearoa New Zealand to develop a document that examines theory, practice and ethical considerations when involving children and young people as participants in research and evaluation projects. As will become evident throughout the report, it is not possible to provide definitive answers to many of the questions and issues that arise in this area. We have instead attempted to 'open up' some of the ethical, theoretical and methodological issues. It is intended that the report will promote informed, mindful, and respectful practices that also meet national and international standards for methodological rigour.

Initial questions and approach to the literature

The following questions guided our initial explorations. As we searched the literature it became clear that some of these questions have been explored very fully whilst others remain areas in which there is not yet a lot of guidance.

- Under what conditions is it appropriate to involve children and young people in research and evaluation in educational settings?
- Does the research need to benefit individual children or children in general? If research can be done with older children should it only be done with older children?

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[1] Throughout this report we refer to both children and young people. Many authors, mainly for reasons of linguistic simplicity, just use 'children' for all those under the age of 18. However, we feel that this nomenclature masks some of the subtleties that arise for different groups, for example, two-year-olds as opposed to 16-year-olds. Some of the sections of the report are concerned with particular educational sectors so we have decided on using children or tamariki when we are talking of participants in early childhood and primary school settings and young people or rangatahi when we are referring to secondary school settings. We have used the term research to cover research and evaluation. The processes involved in research and evaluation are similar and so are the concerns about the involvement of children and young people in research and evaluation. So, for linguistic simplicity, we have used the term research to encompass both.

- What factors should influence a decision to also include younger children?
- What are the particular ethical issues associated with involving children and young people in research and evaluation as opposed to adults?
- What are the particular issues arising from involving children and young people in research and evaluation in educational settings as opposed to other settings?
- What are the issues that are relevant to particular educational settings such as infant and toddler centres, bilingual services and Youth Justice schools?
- What are the issues involved in researching with children from different cultural groups, particularly Māori, Pasifika and Asian?
- What are the issues involved in researching with children who have special education needs?
- What are the issues involved in researching with children from linguistically diverse backgrounds?
- Are the issues the same for involving them in research as they are for evaluation?
- What are the issues involved in using different types of methods with different age groups or groups with particular characteristics or in different kinds of educational settings?
- What are the issues involved with research that involves children and young people expressing their views through ways other than written or oral language, such as art, music or drama?
- What kinds of research designs and data collecting and generating tools have worked particularly well with children and young people with particular characteristics?
- What kind of involvement is required with family and whānau when involving children and young people in research and evaluation in educational settings?
- How does this vary across different educational settings and with children from groups of particular characteristics?

Given the extensive literature on children and young people, we have focused on material published from 2002 to 2009, though we have also included references to earlier work, which is considered to be seminal by those working in this area and/or referenced frequently. We have attempted to scan the literature in a way that allows discussion of a broad range of philosophical, methodological, and ethical issues but also provides specifics about what researchers have actually done, and, where possible, to indicate what has worked and what has not. We do not draw heavily on the literature concerned with children and young people as researchers but we do reference literature addressing key aspects of engaging children and young people actively in research.

Construction of exemplars

The Ministry of Education indicated that this document is intended to inform the practice of Ministry and other educational researchers. To facilitate this goal, alongside our scan of the literature, we also present exemplars of New Zealand research that bring to life, contextualise, and 'exemplify' the debates about and pragmatic responses to involving children and young people in research in educational settings. In choosing the exemplars we followed a number of criteria. We endeavoured to find examples of research across the different educational sectors (early childhood, primary and secondary) which involved both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. We also looked for research that related to particular groups of children and young people, such as children and young people who are Māori, or Pasifika or Asian or with disabilities or hard to reach. The research also needed to be accessible to people reading this report, so was required to be either published in peer-reviewed journals or readily available from university libraries or the Ministry of Education. Once we had selected the exemplars, we then approached the people who had conducted the research to invite them to participate in generating the exemplars. Not all those who were approached were able to be involved in the process at that time so other exemplars were sought. It was more difficult to find pieces of research that fitted all of these criteria than we had anticipated. Although many titles of papers, reports or chapters suggest that they involve research with children and young people, frequently they are about conceptual aspects of doing research rather than reporting actual research data or they involve seeking the opinions of others about things concerning children and young people but do not involve children and young people themselves.

To construct the exemplars, members of the team gleaned as much information as possible about the research from published sources and this was written up according to a template that touched on key aspects of the research process. The people who had conducted the research were then interviewed by telephone. The questions asked during the interview sought clarification of information taken from publications but also asked about issues that had emerged from our scan of the literature as ones that were challenging and engaging other researchers. The material from the interviews was then interwoven with the material from published sources. The exemplar was then sent to the researcher for him or her to check and to amend as he or she felt appropriate before it was released for publication in this report.

The exemplars are quite different from each other, and this is in part owing to the nature of the different projects and their emphasis on different aspects of doing research with children and young people. They are also pieces of research that took place in educational contexts where things do not necessarily go to plan owing to events and ongoing commitments in those contexts that are not related to the research. However, we believe that the variations in the exemplars add to their value in this report. The researchers who generously agreed to their research becoming exemplars for this project have been willing to share what has worked and what did not work. These aspects of research are not frequently revealed in published articles but this information is extremely useful for other researchers.

Unresolved issues but a greater appreciation of the complexities

After an initial period of uncritical enthusiasm, involving children and young people in research is now at a more reflective and questioning phase. As will become apparent throughout this report, this phase has yielded a number of unresolved issues about involving children and young people in research and evaluation. As more research has actually involved children and young people there has been a recognition that their involvement is more philosophically, politically and methodologically complex than first appears. For example, a recent article by Lewis (2010) titled *Silence in the context of "child" voice* discusses the tensions for researchers who are caught between supporting authentic 'child voice' research and having to work in contexts that may have a research agenda that is predetermined, or ethical review and funding processes that do not allow adequate time for consulting with children or young people, or inadequate funding for the time that some methodologies require when working with children and young people in educational contexts etc. Lewis notes that in a climate in which the promotion of 'child voice' has become a moral crusade, if the difficulties and limitations are not discussed then "balanced debate about the practice of 'voice' becomes silenced" (p.16). She then goes on to question the extent to which researchers are able to recognise, note, respond to, interpret and report a child's silence in a context that is so focused on 'child's voice' in an attempt to realise the right of children to express a view in matters that concern them. She advocates for research to be much more explicit and transparent about the way that children's voices and silences are responded to and reported in research. There are many other issues like this that require researcher reflexivity and time to resolve in particular contexts that are explored in each of the chapters.

Structure of this report

There are differences in the impact of various research issues on children and young people at different ages and within the different sectors of the education system, from early childhood education to primary to secondary settings. Hence, this report is structured with different chapters focusing on each of the sectors. The exemplars that relate to each sector are located at the end of the chapter relating to a particular sector. There is also a chapter that focuses on doing research with children and young people who are Māori. This chapter has been positioned after the chapter relating to researching in the early childhood education sector so that the reader will have encountered some of the broader issues around researching with children before being engaged with the particular issues relating to children and young people who are Māori. It is hoped that this positioning will also alert readers to think critically about cultural issues as they read all the chapters. There is also a chapter on researching with children and young people with disabilities and this is located after the chapter relating to researching in the secondary sector so that the reader will already have become aware of issues that arise for children and young people across the sectors. However, there are also commonalities in certain issues and where possible we have cross referenced between the chapters so that those who read the report in a selective way will be alerted to where discussion of issues also takes place in other chapters or in other exemplars. The concluding chapter draws together some of the overarching themes that have emerged throughout the report.

There were many issues in common across all the chapters but the issue of consent for participation in research has been dominant in the literature. Researchers and/or those funding research frequently want definitive answers from those involved in ethical review of research or those involved in producing ethical guidelines about issues like if parental consent is required. If so should it be active or passive parental consent, and at what age is parental consent no longer required? The next section presents an overview of commonalities across strategies related to informed consent irrespective of age or educational setting. Later, each section of the report focuses on the different educational sectors and also includes examination of issues particularly relevant to negotiating informed consent of children and young people. Finally, the exemplars also provide further exploration of how researchers have approached these issues with children and young people at different ages and in different educational settings.

General issues about consent to participate in research

Informed consent is seen by many as the hallmark of ethical research. It is often described as a three-step process involving providing participants with adequate information (including their right to withdraw consent), checking that they have understood what they are agreeing to, and how their consent or refusal to participate is recorded. There has also been increased attention to enabling research participants to check the validity of their specific data. In addition, particularly for longitudinal research and qualitative approaches, checking for ongoing agreement throughout the different phases of the research has also been advocated.

Some argue that “informed consent is a largely unworkable process given that researchers can rarely—if ever—know the full extent of what participation may entail, or predict in advance all the possible outcomes of participation” (Heath, Charles, Crow, & Wiles, 2007, p. 404). Others question certain assumptions underpinning the informed consent process in regarding participants as independent, rational, autonomous beings who exercise control over their lives by making conscious choices (Gallagher, Haywood, Jones, & Milne, 2009). If children and young people are instead, or also, interdependent with others—peers, adults and even researchers—there may be strong if subtle peer group pressures and hierarchical relationship dynamics with parents, teachers and others operating in the context of early childhood education centres and schools that make it difficult to say no to participation. These same dynamics affect the role of parents and guardians in providing consent on behalf of their children.

Conroy and Harcourt (2009) make the point that phrases commonly used by researchers such as “I have come to get your permission”, “I have come to get you to sign saying you agree to be involved in my research” or “I will take your photograph to say that you agree to help me” imply that there has already been some agreement reached, making it even more difficult for children and young people to decline the researcher’s request. Gallagher et al. also suggest that children and young people are strategic and unpredictable so consenting may not be about rational choices but gaining favours or getting out of work. In Australia, the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People (2008) also questions whether children (and adults) make decisions rationally. Instead, consent is seen as particularly vulnerable to expeditious decisions with "an eye to what significant others are doing" (p. 113) and the Commission asks: if this is the case, is consent a choice or a 'pseudo-decision' (p. 114)?

However, those engaging in debates about consent remain committed to finding a way forward. Increasingly, it is argued that finding the way forward does not involve simple, prescriptive solutions and using the 'right' techniques. Rather, it requires a more reflexive approach whereby researchers engage with the issues that are raised in their own work and the context in which it takes place (Gallagher, Haywood, Jones, & Milne, 2009). Finding the way forward also requires that researchers question their own conduct, experiences, values, and assumptions when shaping ethical decisions made throughout the research process, including those relating to consent or assent (Cocks, 2006).

Assent, consent and dissent

There is some confusion in the literature over the use of terms such as consent and assent. Lewis (2002) describes the distinction in the following way: "*Consent* may be given by the child or by another on the child's behalf for (a) the child to be interviewed or (b) the researcher to ask the child to be interviewed. *Assent* refers to the child's agreement to participate in the process when another has given consent… Consent is not in itself sufficient; informed consent/assent is needed" (p. 111). Coyne (2009) indicates that consent refers to a "person's voluntary positive agreement whilst assent refers to a person's acquiescence" (p. 2). She goes on to infer that consent is used where children are considered legally competent to consent, while assent is sought where they are not considered legally competent to consent (see discussion below regarding views on legal age regarding consent). This distinction is frequently alluded to in research with very young children or children and young people with disabilities. Alderson and Morrow (2006) use the term *assent* to refer to passive acceptance or non-refusal. They argue that only the term consent should be used in seeking agreement for research participation because the legal distinction between the two concepts is not as clear-cut as it may seem so that assent may be used wrongly to cover up a child refusing, or seeming not to refuse, to participate.

In contrast, Cocks (2006) argues that the term *assent* recognises the interdependence of the researcher and the researched. Assent implies that the researcher has a responsibility for ongoing monitoring of interactions with the child for evidence of agreement throughout the research process:

> Assent is represented within the relationships between the researched and the researcher, by the trust within that relationship and acceptance of the researcher's presence. It removes the reliance on the child demonstrating adult-centric attributes such as maturity, competence and completeness; rather, it accepts the child's state of being. (p. 257)

These differing interpretations of assent support the importance of establishing the particular meanings authors attribute to these terms in their writing when evaluating their positions as well as the need for researchers checking throughout the research process that agreement to participate in research is ongoing.

Lewis (2002) notes that there is also strong agreement in the research literature regarding the need to acknowledge participants exercising their rights to *informed dissent,* that is, consciously declining to engage or respond to particular questions or activities. This may be difficult to recognise in children and young people with disabilities but ongoing dialogue with those who know participants well is advocated as a way of checking on whether or not the child or young person is assenting to ongoing involvement. Davis reports on how he had failed to recognise that a child's silence was not because of the child's disability but was a choice not to communicate (Davis, Watson & Cunningham-Burley, 2008). An individual's right to silence and to withhold access to aspects of one's world needs to be recognised before it can be respected.

Lewis and Porter (2004) highlight the following questions to address the issues raised in the literature around obtaining informed consent:

1. Does the research involve fully informed consent from participants?
2. To what extent is the participant able to give fully informed consent?
3. Is understanding of consent checked/tested?
4. Does the research involve assent from participants?
5. If others give consent, has the participant given assent?
6. Has an explicit distinction been made between assent and consent in relation to what is given?
7. Is consent/assent confirmed throughout the research?
8. Can potential participants opt out?
9. Have ways of checking for understanding of confidentiality/research purposes been explored?
10. Has a right to silence/privacy (informed dissent) been recognised?
11. Have participants, at appropriate intervals, been reminded of their right to withdraw? (p. 193)

Formal requirements regarding consent

Guidance for researchers regarding the formal requirements for seeking informed consent from children and/or their parents is not always readily available. Powell and Smith (2006) reviewed the ethical documentation from 10 tertiary institutions in New Zealand (eight universities and two polytechnics), eight of which are accredited by the Health Research Council. There was considerable variation in terms of how much reference was made to children and young people in the documentation. Their analysis of the documentation of informed consent provides an overview of what was required nationally in 2006 (see below for more detail). Because ethical codes are frequently being rewritten, researchers are cautioned to check current requirements at their institutions.

Excerpts from the Powell and Smith (2006) analysis of references to informed consent from children and young people (pp. 130-131)

Two of the institutions (Canterbury, Lincoln) have the issue of consent as the sole mention in ethical guidelines relating to children. Both of these institutions require that for projects involving children, written consent must be obtained from a legal representative, parents, or those acting *in loco parentis*. Both institutions also state that children must not be required to participate against their will. One university (Canterbury) says that consent of dependent persons (children) must be obtained as far as possible, and that “children are seen as having rights and that age appropriate consent is required”. However, what constitutes ‘age appropriate consent’ is not detailed, and the statement that ‘children are seen as having rights’ is not clarified or elaborated on. Three institutions (Auckland, Massey, Waikato) explicitly indicate that it may not always be in the child’s best interest to obtain consent from a parent or guardian. For example, one university (Massey) states that consent will normally be gained from a parent or guardian unless there is the potential for harm in doing so.

The age at which it is considered necessary to obtain consent from an adult varies between institutions, as does the flexibility around this issue. Three institutions (Canterbury, Lincoln, Unitec) require consent from a parent or caregiver for all child participants. One of these and three other institutions (AUT, Auckland, Massey, Unitec) consider a participant a child if under the age of 16 years. However, the guidelines appear somewhat more flexible with the latter three, and parental consent is not always required (pp.130-131).

Members of institutional ethics committees are often asked by researchers about the age at which children can participate legally in research without parental consent. In reviewing the literature on the age of consent, it is important to keep in mind that the age of a 'child' versus an 'adult' can be defined differently in different countries or even within different states or provinces within one country. In the literature from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, in legal terms, the competency or capacity of a legal minor (ie, someone under the age of 18) to give consent is judged against a concept referred to as '*Gillick* competency'. The concept arose in the context of consent in relation to medical interventions but is now used more broadly. *Gillick* competency "… is based on the assumption that a 16-year-old with 'sufficient understanding' can provide consent in their own right, and that under such circumstances a parent has no right to override their child's wishes" (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver, & Ireland, 2009, p.27). The Gillick ruling was considered important because of removing an age limit and substituting an emphasis on assessing competence and understanding. However, Coyne (2009) cautions that the Gillick ruling has not been tested in the courts in relation to children's consent to research.

In New Zealand, although there are laws that set ages at which children can or cannot engage in certain activities (see Ludbrook, 2009), there is no law stating that parental consent is necessary for a researcher to talk with a child nor stating a legal age at which children or young people can consent to participate in research without parental consent (Ludbrook, 21.9.2009, personal communication). Despite the absence of statutory provision, should a case concerning age of consent or lack of parental consent in a research context be litigated in court, it is likely that the common law principle (as restated in the *Gillick* case) would be applied. That is, where the child has attained an age and degree of understanding to make a decision that balances the risk of the procedure against the benefits and to make a rational choice, that child is able to consent on his/her own behalf. It is nonetheless important to distinguish between legal requirements and what a community of researchers believe is important for promoting ethical conduct. Further, different cultures may have different expectations around the concept of ethical conduct and consent to participate in research.

Cultural expectations about consent

In New Zealand, the presence of diverse cultures with differing traditions and values requires that researchers address cultural expectations around research processes, not simply fulfil statutory requirements. This is particularly important given that cultures seen as reflecting individualistic versus collectivist worldviews will have different approaches to issues such as consent.

Suaalii and Mavoa (2001) indicate that Pasifika young people are enmeshed in wider family groups in which ethical issues and the passing on of knowledge are articulated in terms of wider family and community, not within an individualistic framework. In this context, a form of passive parental consent (see discussion below) may not be appropriate. The nature of the research would be relevant to decisions about whether or not Pasifika young people would be considered competent to consent to participate. Adequate consultation with community members is seen as part of developing protocols to ensure appropriate cultural procedures inform the research (see primary school ethnographic exemplar). Rucklidge and Williams (2007) indicate that researchers working with Māori young people should also consider whether an emphasis on individual or family consent is appropriate. However, they also caution that it is inappropriate to make assumptions about the strength or orientation of an individual's cultural identity, so initial discussions about whether or not individual or family consent is appropriate should take place with the individual initially. Researchers should also consider whether they need to take advice as to whether hapu or iwi consent is also required (Hudson & Russell, 2009).

To date, the New Zealand research literature has not specifically addressed these issues regarding children and young people from Asian families and how their cultural values may shape expectations around consent processes in research. Williams and Cleland (2007) have written about the concerns and values of Asian people that may have implications for psychological practice, and some of these suggest issues that researchers should be sensitive to when seeking the consent of children and young people from Asian families. For example, family has paramount importance in Asian cultures, particularly with reference to the vertical and hierarchical structure where "one's status in the order is usually determined by age, gender, generation and birth order" (Williams & Cleland, 2007, p. 86). Williams and Cleland also discuss other traditional Asian cultural values, amongst them the desire to maintain interpersonal harmony and respect for authority figures. This would suggest that researchers may be expected to consult with the child's family. They may also need to be particularly mindful that Asian children may find it difficult to indicate to researchers or educational personnel (who are seen as having status and authority) that they do not wish to participate. However, these authors also caution against making stereotyped assumptions about Asian people. Instead, there is a real need to develop an awareness of diverse cultures and the different values generically referred to as Asian, as well as the diversity that can be found within various groups of people originating from one country, such as India or China and so forth.

Powell and Smith (2009) reflect on familial constraints that may be placed on Pasifika children noting that Pasifika children and young people may wish to express individual views; they comment that UNCROC, as a multicultural document, "demonstrates that it is possible to find a position in which cultural issues are respected and children's rights are also upheld" (p. 137). This suggests the feasibility of negotiating the appropriate balance between child and parental consent for different cultural groups in ways that respect cultural issues as well as children's and young people's rights, while nevertheless emphasising sensitivity to the issues and a commitment to consultation with appropriate groups.

Active and passive parental consent

The literature relating to consent on behalf of children and young people distinguishes between passive parental consent and active parental consent following receipt of information about a research project and request to participate. "Active consent requires all parents to return a consent form, regardless of whether they are allowing their child to participate. Passive parental consent requires parents to respond only if they do not want their child to participate in the research" (Tigges, 2003, p. 283). Tigges provides a comprehensive overview of the practical methodological issues related to parental consent for research on adolescent risk behaviour, often carried out by health or youth researchers in schools. Her review draws on literature from the United States but many of the issues raised are relevant to the New Zealand context. In the United States, the use of passive parental response for consent generally results in between 93%-100% of students being eligible to participate. In contrast, when active parental consent is required, participation eligibility drops to 30%-60%, particularly if there is no follow-up request (Tigges, 2003). It is unclear whether those who do not return the forms have just not bothered or are saying no to their children's involvement. Follow-up methods can increase the rate but may prohibitively increase research costs.

In addition to the cost issue, another concern about requiring active parental consent is that this process can limit the representativeness of the sample on the assumption that there are differences in the characteristics of parents who do or do not give active consent, that would introduce bias in the findings. The New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People (2008) reports research indicating that "biases created through the consent process do exist and can be substantial" (p. 112). The consequence of research with biased samples is possible invalidation of research findings and any implications drawn from those findings. Thus, this is a serious issue with respect to research with children and young people.

Tigges (2003) discusses research reported by Ellickson and Hawes (1989) who explored reasons why parents had not responded in a situation requiring passive parental consent; nearly all parents reported they had not responded because they had no objections to the project and were actually actively allowing their child to participate (p. 286). This supports the assumption made by researchers that the system of passive consent works; parents receive the information, understand the system and make a conscious decision about their child's participation. Ellickson and Hawes also explored parental responses requiring active consent and found that only 40% initially responded, with 34% of them giving permission for their child to participate. They followed up and gained a response from 100% of those who had not originally responded, with 87% of them indicating they consented to their child's participation. Of the 60% of the total sample who did not respond initially, 87% indicated it was because they lacked motivation to respond not because they did not wish their child to participate. Again, these findings support those who argue that non-response for active consent processes is not synonymous with refusal. In the section on research involving children in primary schools, there is discussion of local research that involved passive parental consent (Carroll-Lind, Chapman, Gregory & Maxwell, 2006). In the section on research involving young people in secondary schools, a procedure for securing the young person's willingness to participate before requesting parental consent is also presented (Munford & Sanders, 2004).

Ethical ways of working

In concluding her review about the issues of the different kinds of parental consent, Tigges (2003) argues "Some studies, such as those involving more than minimal risk, will require the use of active parental consent….In many other studies, however, risk is minimal and passive parental consent is an acceptable procedure when supported by cogent arguments" (p. 288). Ultimately, researchers need to consider very carefully the nature of their own work, the context in which the research is being carried out, and the characteristics of the particular potential participants in making judgements about the consent processes. With respect to active versus passive consent, researchers also need to consider factors such as threats to the validity of the research, the rights of research participants, and the balance between potential benefits and potential harm. Coyne (2009) also draws attention to the need for researchers to make judgements rather than rely on rules or procedures. She notes that decisions around such judgements are rarely reported. Increased discussion around issues and processes of consent and other ethical dilemmas in the reporting of research would lead to greater transparency about such judgements. This transparency could then provide reference points for establishing ethical ways of working, rather than relying on decontextualised, simple, prescriptive solutions.

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CHAPTER 2:

Involving children in research in early childhood education settings: Opening up the issues

Carmen Dalli and Alison Stephenson

Rationale for involving children in research: Authenticity, listening to children's voices, and participation

> Since we can never crawl inside an infant's mind, it may seem pointless to imagine what an infant might experience. Yet that is at the heart of what we really want and need to know. What we imagine infant experience to be like shapes our notions of who the infant is. These notions make up our working hypotheses about infancy. (Stern, 1985, p. 4)

Stern's statement above from his classic book *The interpersonal world of the infant* takes us directly to the heart of key issues faced by researchers who work with very young children. While others have similarly emphasised that "reality experienced by children and young people in educational settings cannot be fully comprehended by inference and assumption" (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000, p. 61) and thus suggested that "acknowledging that children's worlds are different is a sound starting point" (Greig, Taylor & MacKay, 2007, p.183), the biological and linguistic immaturities of babies and very young children are recognised as creating particular challenges (eg, Greene & Hogan, 2005; Greig et al., 2007). For example, six-month-old children are largely immobile and cannot easily move themselves out of situations in which they are uncomfortable; similarly, children aged zero-five years cannot understand complex or abstract questions and this means that questions put to them have to be crafted to take account of these characteristics.

Within the field of early childhood research, the abiding concern with the impossibility of fully knowing children's perspectives about their experiences, educational or otherwise, has expanded since the 1990s into broader considerations that take account of a range of issues encompassing a greater awareness of:

- children's cognitive, social, technical and moral competences (Dunn, 1998; Gardner, 1983; Johannson, 2001; Singer, 2002; Zevenbergen, 2007), including newborn babies' 'amazing' capacities to communicate through a range of sounds, facial expressions and bodily movements that can be 'read' by responsive adults (eg, Alderson, 2004; Alderson, Hawthorne & Killen, 2005; Brazelton & Nugent, 1995; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009)
- criticisms from the 'new sociology of childhood' that developmental psychology sees children as people *becoming* rather than *being* and therefore as less competent and not-complete social actors (eg, Greene & Hogan, 2005)
- the ethics around engaging (with) very young children in research, including questions about who should decide whether pre-verbal children should take part in a research project, and issues of power imbalances between adult researchers and very young children whose physical immaturity can make them easy captive audiences for research interventions (eg, Conroy & Harcourt, 2009; Greene & Hogan, 2005; Masson, 2004; Robinson & Kellett, 2004)

- the rights of very young children, newborns, or even pre-term babies to being treated as citizens just like older human beings (Alderson, Hawthorne & Killen, 2005; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; MacNaughton, Hughes & Smith, 2007).

As awareness of these issues has grown, there has been a re-positioning of the image of the child away from one that emphasises needs and vulnerabilities and towards one that emphasises their competences and ability to have an impact on others around them. At the same time, researchers have become increasingly creative in their methodological efforts to get 'at the heart' of what they really want: to understand children's experiences in as authentic a way as possible (eg, Clark, 2007; Clark & Moss, 2001; Degotardi & Davis, 2008; Fasoli, 2001; Pascal & Bertram, 2009; Schiller & Einarsdottir, 2009; Sumsion, 2003).

Listening to children's voices: achieving authenticity

The focus on authenticity reflects a number of preoccupations among contemporary researchers working with children in early childhood educational settings. Apart from sharing in the awareness that most educational researchers now have of articles 12 and 13[2] of UNCROC (eg, Darbyshire, Schiller & MacDougall, 2005; Greig et al., 2007; MacNaughton et al., 2007; Pascal & Bertram, 2009; Powell & Smith, 2009; Schiller & Einarsdottir, 2009), since the 1990s the field of early childhood research and of early childhood scholarship generally has been strongly influenced by the allure of ideas from the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. This approach was pioneered by Loris Malaguzzi, an Italian teacher and psychologist who viewed children as "rich in potential, strong, powerful and competent" and with rights to express themselves in what he called "the hundred languages of children" (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998). The term 'hundred languages' refers to all the symbolic ways—such as languages, drawing, sculpting, dramatic play, writing, and painting—in which children represent their thinking and theories about the world. In the Reggio Emilia nidi d'infanzia (children's nests/childcare centres) the children's right to use these different modes of expression is respected and supported, and children are encouraged to re-visit their representations to determine if they capture their intent or if they require modification (Reggio Kids3, accessed 28.09.09). In talking about the role of the adult within this philosophy, Rinaldi (2001) has promoted the idea of a 'pedagogy of listening' through which the many ways that children express themselves can be understood.

Within a research context, the principles behind a pedagogy of listening have been popularised, notably through the work of Alison Clark[4] and Peter Moss from the Thomas Coram Research Unit at the University of London, who with various colleagues have written prolifically on this topic over the last decade, both from a conceptual perspective as well as a methodological one (eg, Clark, 2004, 2007; Clark & Moss, 2001; Clark, McQuail & Moss, 2003; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2006). For example, in a state of the art literature review on listening and consulting with under-five-year-old children, commissioned by the Sure Start Unit of the Department of Education and Skills (DfES), Clark, McQuail and Moss noted the need to debate the principles on which listening and consulting with children should be based, and argued for a "culture of listening where children, staff and parents are respected and listened to" (p.9). Two purposes for listening were identified in the review: (i) listening by those who regularly work with children to enhance children's everyday opportunities for decision-making; and (ii) listening as a one-off consultation exercise about a particular issue, event or opportunity.[5] Listening was defined as "an active process of communication involving hearing, interpreting and constructing meanings; not limited to the spoken word; and a necessary stage in participation in (a) daily routines as well as (b) wider decision-making" (Clark, 2005, p. 491). A

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[2] These respectively assert (i) children's right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account; and (ii) children's right to information and freedom of expression.

[3] Reggio Kids: http://www.reggiokids.com/about/hundred_languages.php.

[4] Clark is now at Roehampton University in London.

[5] This dual purpose of listening has recently been referred to by Schiller and Einarsdottir (2009) as "learning to listen in research and listening to learn" (p.125).

fuller explanation of Rinaldi's understanding of listening is provided in a later work by Dahlberg and Moss (2005) who cite the following statements by Rinaldi:

> Listening as a metaphor for having the openness and sensitivity to listen and be listened to—listening not just with our ears, but with all our senses….
>
> Listening as time, the time of listening, a time that is outside of chronological time…interior listening, listening to ourselves, as a pause, a suspension, as an element that generates listening to others…
>
> Listening as welcoming and being open to differences, as recognising the importance of the other's point of view and interpretation…
>
> Listening as an active verb that involves interpretation, giving meaning to the message and value to those who offer it…
>
> Listening that does not produce answers but formulates questions; listening that is generated by doubt, by uncertainty, which is not insecurity but, on the contrary the security that every truth is such only if we are aware of its limits and its possible falsification….
>
> Listening, therefore, as a 'listening context' where one learns to listen and narrate… (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 99)

Listening to children is thus about acknowledging that "children have a *voice* of their own, and should be listened to as a means of taking them seriously" (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p. 49; see also Langsted, 1994; Morrow, 2005; Woodhead, 1999), a perspective that in Aotearoa New Zealand was brought strongly into mainstream research discussion by Smith, Taylor, and Gollop's (2000) edited collection: *Children's voices: Research, policy and practice.* The contemporaneous introduction in the New Zealand early childhood education sector of the 'child's voice' questions as part of the Learning Stories approach to evaluation practices (Carr, May & Podmore, 2002) gave further profile to this notion. (For further information on listening to children, see Chapter four, p. 73.)

An additional aspect of Dahlberg et al.'s (2006) argument about seeking children's voices in research and practice has been less noticeably present in local New Zealand discussions: this is the argument that seeking the voices of children is a necessary part of the dialogic processes inherent in a democracy and implicit in the participation rights of children as citizens. (See also Chapter 4, pp.71-72). In a similar vein, Prout and Hallett (2003) argue that "hearing children's voice is critical to creating institutions (whether statutory, voluntary, private or in the informal sector of family and community) that are responsive and flexible in their work for children" (p.2); they urge that we need to foster children's active participation in policy and practice at all levels. Within Australia, the same argument has been made by MacNaughton et al. (2007) who used evidence from two case studies to illustrate that young children (including some aged two years or younger) can express their views on issues that affect them. MacNaughton et al. concluded that:

> listening to young children is the first step to regarding children's rights as rights of citizenship, rather than as rights defined—and restricted—by age…Honouring young children's rights to express their views creates more effective policy … and contributes to a healthy democracy which recognises that children's rights are the human rights of any citizen. (p. 469)

Participation

The notion of children's participation rights emerged most strongly as part of the rationale for involving very young children in research in the latter half of this decade (eg, Alderson et al., 2005; Powell & Smith, 2009; Schiller & Einarsdottir, 2009; Te One, 2007). In part, this occurred as a supplementary focus to arguments about listening to children. In an editorial of a special issue of the journal *Early Child Development and Care* entitled *Extending new paradigm childhood research: meeting the challenge of including younger children*, Darbyshire et al. (2005) noted that early childhood research had reached "an important juncture in the development of participatory …approaches with children" (p.468) and that there was broad agreement that these approaches were both theoretically and methodologically 'valuable and legitimate' (p. 468).

Four years on, and reviewing rationales for the continued interest among early years researchers to "make real the participatory paradigm in research with children", Pascal and Bertram (2009) included an emphasis on participation as an empowering experience for children among their list of contributing factors to this type of research, including their own. Pascal and Bertram described their research as influenced by a wish to empower young children and early years' practitioners to "name their world…" (p. 257) and therefore shape it. At the same time Pascal and Bertram echoed Maybin and Woodhead's (2003) warning against uncritically adopting a universalistic and 'westernised' notion of participation. They argued that in contexts where different values exist about children and how they should be raised, a balance needs to be struck between values as "nothing is more culturally sensitive than how families choose to raise their children" (p. 254).

The *Early childhood education researching within Pacific community exemplar* highlights the relevance of such arguments for the local New Zealand context: In discussing processes for gaining consent for children's research participation, Tagoileilagi-Leota, in the *Early childhood education researching with Pacific community exemplar*, noted that from a Pasifika perspective, the parents are the key authority so that once the parents have given their consent, the children's consent is not deemed necessary. This view derives from the idea that the child is not able to be seen as isolated from his/her whānau. Tagoilelagi-Leota noted also that a further implication of the collectivist nature of Pasifika communities is that research methodologies should not isolate children from their parents and teachers.

Robbins (2005) mounts a similar argument in advocating that researchers set research agendas that are culturally embedded and are important to the community of the child, not just to the researcher. Abbott and Langston (2005) add the point that if children are isolated as objects of research from those with whom they have close relationships, there is a high risk that research will provide a one-sided perspective on their lives. Many other researchers argue that children are best understood in context and emphasise the importance of building relationships with staff, parents and children in research settings as a way of getting a holistic perspective (eg, Greig et al., 2007; Powell & Smith, 2009). These arguments bear directly on the issue of how children's participation rights can be honoured. The different nuances in how children's participation rights are positioned within these arguments indicate, however, that there is a tension in how individual participation rights might be negotiated where such rights may be perceived as embedded within the fabric of community or family life rather than as endowments at the level of the individual.

Further issues associated with the continued interest in participatory research methods with children were highlighted by Schiller and Einarsdottir (2009) in their recent editorial of a special edition of the journal *Early Child Development and Care*, entitled *Listening to young children's voices in research—changing perspectives/changing relationships.* Schiller and Einarsdottir focused on the "challenges, paradoxes and dilemmas in relation to young children in research" and asked "whether the pendulum ha[d] swung too far with children's voice seen as *the* most important perspective" (p. 127). Another issue raised was the question of whether, in attempting to realise the aspirations of a participatory paradigm, researchers might be asking too much of children making them into miniature adults (Aries, 1962) all over again. Mannion (2007), for example, reviewed rationales that support 'listening to children' and their participation in policy, practice, and research and warned that "we need to be careful that participation itself or its technologies do not become a 'new tyranny'" (p.417). Mannion suggested that children's participation would be better re-framed as being fundamentally about child-adult relations, and about space and time as contexts that children live in. See Chapter five, pp. 128-129 for further critique of the use of participatory methods with young people.

Methodological considerations

As evident in the preceding sections, debate around appropriate ways of engaging children in research has been extensive. As a consequence, a range of innovative ideas has come to the fore about how researchers might work with children aged from birth to five years, including in the areas of gaining consent, or assent, for their participation in research, and in the design and use of different research methods.

In the case of babies and toddlers, the children's small physical size and the fact that they may be unaware of being the subject of the researcher's 'gaze', have been particular points of discussion, with Alderson (2000, 2004, 2008; Alderson, Hawthorne & Killen, 2005) being one of the foremost in arguing that despite their "essential vulnerable dependence" (Alderson et al., 2005, p.33), even babies born prematurely are "not only actors but agents who alter relationships, decisions and the working of social assumptions or constraints" (p. 47). As a consequence, Alderson et al. concluded that babies', and in particular pre-term babies', participation rights are not only feasible but must be respected in research.

Behind debates about young children's rights to participation lie ethical questions such as:

- who should decide whether young children should take part in a research project?
- whose interest does the research serve?
- what measures can adult researchers take to redress power imbalances between them and very young children?
- what methods will allow young children to have a voice?

These questions relate to issues of informed consent (eg, Alderson, 2004; Dockett, 2009; Greig et al., 2007), the integrity of the research enterprise, confidentiality and protection of children's rights. Within the New Zealand early childhood context Helen Hedges (2001, 2002) has discussed similar questions in relation to the ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, minimising harm and privacy and confidentiality. These ideas are explored further below. See also Chapter six, pp.146-148 for issues of informed consent in research involving young children with disabilities.

Ethics: consents, assents and access

Who should decide whether young children will take part in a research project?

This report has already noted that the terms *consent* and *assent* are often inadequately differentiated in the literature. A helpful distinction of the terms in the early childhood literature is provided by Australian researcher Sue Dockett (2009) in a paper prepared for a think-tank meeting on involving children and young people in research, co-hosted by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People in November 2008. Explaining consent as a legal requirement, and assent as the children's non-legal equivalent, Dockett argued that the fact that the legalities of gaining consent for children's involvement in research may be clear did not diminish the need to also gain assent from children even when children are very young. This position is shared by many other early childhood writers, including Alderson (2004; Alderson et al., 2005) and Einarsdottir (2007).

The concept of *process assent* is also advocated; in other words researchers are urged to adopt the practice of remaining alert to children's response to the research situation at all times and to take action to respect children's signals – as was described in the *Early childhood education participatory methods exemplar*. Through using the principle of *process assent*, children have multiple opportunities to either confirm or withdraw their participation in the research. Dockett's (2009) other suggestions included:

- spending time developing relationships with the children before starting the research so that children feel comfortable about participating in activity with the researcher
- the use of a smiley chart as one example of how young children can be asked to show their feeling about participating in the research.

In making these suggestions Dockett further highlighted that the notion of informed assent is by no means unproblematic (see also Conroy & Harcourt, 2009) and raises issues about how to inform, as well as when to inform, a point noted also by New Zealanders Te One (2007) and Powell & Smith (2009).

A related issue discussed in some early childhood literature is that *of passive parental consent.* As discussed earlier in this report, *passive parental consent* is when parents are required to respond only if they do not want their child to participate in the research (see pp. 8-9). Powell and Smith (2009) have noted that passive parental consent was “not favoured by most Pasifika representatives” (p.136) who took part in their study. Citing the work of Suaalii and Mavoa (2001) Powell and Smith explained that passive parental consent was conceptually rooted in a western individualistic worldview that is inconsistent with the collectivist view of family and community typical of Māori and Pasifika cultures. The authors noted that for this reason “children’s participation rights in research may sit uneasily with Pacific epistemologies” (p. 137), an argument that recurs in the *Early childhood education researching within the Pacific community exemplar*. Powell and Smith highlighted this tension as a challenging one for the New Zealand context but noted also that Garbarino (2000) demonstrated that it is possible to find ways of doing research that respect cultural issues and also uphold children’s rights.

Discussions about consent and assent tend to merge with discussions of issues of *access* with the obvious connection being that without consent and assent, there is ultimately no access by children to research participation, or, from the researcher’s perspective, no access to research participants. Various writers have commented that in effect the consent-negotiating process acts as a gatekeeping mechanism for children’s involvement in research (eg, Alderson, 2004; Greene & Hogan, 2005; Masson, 2004; Powell & Smith, 2009). Additionally, the hierarchy in the process of first asking legally-responsible adults for *consent*, and only subsequently approaching the children for their *assent*, results in children only having a say after others have decided to give them this opportunity.

Te One’s (2007) lively article on her use of participatory research methods during her research in three New Zealand early childhood education settings provides an unusual departure from this established practice. Te One described how, before parents had provided their consent, she provided the children with a small booklet with information about her research and gave them an assent form that could be ‘mailed’ in a ‘posting-box’ file-box; she did this as a conscious strategy to support the four-year-old children’s agency in making an informed decision. This action is a clear illustration of the attitude that Powell and Smith (2009) said was characteristic of the three early childhood researchers interviewed in their study about researchers’ views of children as research participants: Of the twelve researchers interviewed by Powell and Smith, the early childhood researchers were the ones who did not question young children’s understanding of information given to them about informed consent. Powell and Smith’s study provides a very useful insight into the views of a small group of New Zealand researchers about children’s research participation rights; all were experienced researchers who had worked with three to 18-year-old participants.

Other factors identified by Powell and Smith (2009) as affecting children’s access to research participation were:

i. the handpicking of participants by teachers, or by other adults in positions of authority in an educational setting

ii. the need for dual parental consent procedures in cases where parents had separate living arrangements.

Additionally, the auspices of the research and the existence of a prior relationship between the researcher and the early childhood education setting were each identified as able to either ease or hinder access (Abbott & Langston, 2005; Powell & Smith, 2009).

Writing within a British context, Abbott and Langston (2005) reflected that from a researcher's perspective gaining access has also become increasingly complicated owing to the number of checks that any intending researcher must undertake before being able to work with children; they commented that in some cases this made entry to the research context a lengthier process than the actual research itself. This additional complication is unlikely to arise within the context of early childhood educational research in New Zealand as character vetting of researchers is not a routine requirement. Nonetheless, such insights highlight the need for researchers to be aware of local procedures around minimising harm, a key ethical principle that other writers have discussed (eg, Hedges, 2001, 2002).

Table 1 sets out the approach to obtaining consent or assent from young children in key studies included in this section/chapter of the report. In many papers describing research with young children there is no detailed description of the way in which children's consent/assent was gained. The papers referred to in this table all include a description of the process followed in informing young children about the research and/or in gaining their consent/assent. For further discussion of consent processes see Chapter four, pp. 77-79, Chapter five, pp. 112-115 and Chapter six, pp. 144-148.

Table 2.1: Examples of consent/assent procedures in research studies with young children

Consent /assent process	**Age**	**Research examples**	**Comments**
Consent/assent from children	3-6 years	Bone, Cullen & Loveridge (2007)	Children received individual consent forms
	4-6 years	Einarsdottir (2005)	ECE centre authority and parents gave written consent; children informed that participation was voluntary
	2-6 years	Einarsdottir (2007)	Parents, director and school authorities gave written consent; children were asked each time if they wanted to participate
	3 years	Flewitt (2005a)	Researcher discussed research with parents and child, and asked parents to talk about it further with the child to ensure they were consenting to participation. No child consent/assent forms
	4 years	Hedges (2002)	Researcher discussed the project with children before they were given individual consent forms.

Design and methods: the ethics of 'fitness for purpose'

The integrity of the research enterprise: Whose interest does the research serve?

- Who is the research for?
- Who would benefit from knowing what it has to say?
- Who would take action in response to any messages it conveys?

According to Abbott and Langston (2005) these questions are central to ethical early childhood research and should be considered at the beginning of any research with children. They noted that early childhood research is a relatively "recent phenomenon both in terms of its funding and the credibility attached to it" and that a priority is to pursue "fitness for purpose" (p. 38). Elaborating on 'fitness' they argued that ethical early childhood research should use methods and approaches that (i) fit the context in which the child spends their out-of-home time; and (ii) fit the purpose at hand "thus ensuring that the picture revealed is as true and accurate as possible" (p. 39).

Within the context of a rapidly growing repertoire of creative approaches to methodology and in a context of ongoing debate, some consensus is emerging about both principles and techniques to support ‘fitness for purpose’ in participatory research. Reports of children subverting the research agenda by diverting it to talk about topics that were important to them, or taking photographs of what interested them (*Early childhood education participatory methods exemplar*), rather than what was requested, indicate that children have their own ways of signalling what they see as ‘fit for purpose’ (Cook & Hess, 2007; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). This suggests that researchers need to be constantly alert to whether an alternative method of data gathering might be more appropriate.

The following is a list of suggested principles for ethical research design representing the range discussed in recent literature:

1. *Respect towards participant*: Partnership, collaboration and communication are advocated as desired components of the researcher’s attitude towards children and towards those who play significant roles in children’s lives (Abbott & Langston, 2005; Pascal & Bertram, 2009; Sumsion, 2003; Stephenson, 2009). These require time to enable trust to be built and to develop open dialogue (Pascal & Bertram, 2009). Sumsion (2003) argued that a sense of humility, reciprocity and community contributes to establishing productive research relationships with children and also to negotiating potentially problematic ‘pivot points’ that arise from power differences between adults and children.
2. *Attending to power in the research relationship:* Power is inherent in the research relationship (Greene & Hogan, 2005; Masson, 2004; Powell & Smith, 2009; Robinson & Kellet, 2004; Stephenson, 2009; Te One, 2007) and should be addressed early within a project to ensure the ‘ethics of the method’ (Pascal & Bertram, 2009, p.260). Pascal and Bertram suggested the use of *symmetrical dialogues* in which power is symmetrically distributed (see next section). A participant in Powell and Smith’s study advised that “researchers need to adopt a ‘one-down’ position or the ‘least-adult role’…this is the opposite of the authoritative, knowledgeable position expected of adults by children” (p. 138), and Te One (2007) reported that her solution to the power dynamic was that she “strategically chose not to wield the teacher’s power to stake a claim or advocate, or influence children’s choices, unless the situation was potentially harmful” (p. 22). Sumsion (2003) advised close attention to the ‘minutiae’ of research practices and recounted how she adjusted her approach and methods after encountering resistance to her research agenda from the children in her study.
3. *Adherence to an ethical code* that sees children as active participants in their own lives and considers children’s voices as part of any evidence base that concerns them. Pascal and Bertram (2009) argued that researchers need to be ‘answerable’ for the way that children’s voices are represented in their research output.
4. *Attention to how the research funding agency sets the rules:* Funding agencies can determine the nature, form and sometimes outcomes of research. It is argued that the integrity of both the research process and the outcome can be impacted by requirements put on researchers by funding bodies. Researchers need to attend to who sets the research agenda (Abbott & Langston, 2005; Alderson, 2004; Powell & Smith, 2009).
5. *Being critical about who will benefit from the research*: Researchers are urged to consider whether participatory research with children will benefit children or whether it will only serve the researcher’s, or the research funders’ interests (Abbott & Langston, 2005; see also the *Early childhood education participatory methods exemplar*).

Data generation and collation: Methods that ‘fit the purpose’

> ...The question is about the status we accord the child through the methodologies we adopt and the conclusions we draw; and about whether we allow children the space to alter our agenda of presuppositions. (Woodhead, 1999, cited in Pascal & Bertram, 2009, p.260)

The above quotation highlights an aspect of participatory approaches to research with children that is increasingly emphasised: the need for methods to be responsive to children's way of being. This has resulted in approaches that have combined a range of strategies as part of the study method. There is also increasing awareness that researchers need to be prepared to relinquish or adapt planned strategies if 'listening' to children indicates this is appropriate—a point that is highlighted in the *Early childhood education participatory methods exemplar*.

This section first outlines the mosaic approach pioneered by Clark and Moss (2001) as an illustration of the first cohesive attempt to implement participatory research methods with children. Their work has become a key reference point in early childhood research over the last decade, and was influential in the 'symmetrical dialogues' approach recently articulated by Pascal and Bertram (2009), and which is described in the subsequent section. This is followed by an overview of specific strategies that have been used in literature sourced for this review. The section concludes with an outline of other choices of methods, including combinations and approaches that use photography, drawings, observations and other tools.

While the focus in this chapter is on research with children from birth to five years, most of the research located for this review is with children aged four. Where references to older children are included it is because a wider age range was included in the research (Einarsdottir, Dockett, & Perry, 2009). Only a few studies have been located that included children aged three years (Clark, 2004, 2007; Einarsdottir, 2007; Farrell, Tayler, & Tennent, 2002; Flewitt, 2005a, 2005b; Howard, 2002; Stephenson, 2009) and even fewer have included children aged two or younger (Clark, 2004; Clark & Moss, 2001; Dalli, 2000, 2003; Einarsdottir, 2007; Stephenson, 2009). Table 2 provides an overview of the most frequently used research strategies in the studies identified for this review. References and details of the age groups are included.

The mosaic approach: an assemblage of methods

As noted already, the 'mosaic approach' developed by Clark and Moss (2001, reprinted 2005) has become a key reference point for those wishing to engage children aged under five in research that actively seeks their perspectives. The term 'mosaic' refers to the fact that the research approach involves participatory tools from a range of sources in an attempt to create as complete a picture as possible of children's perspectives. The mosaic approach is described as a 'framework for listening' (Clark & Moss, 2001) and involves the use of tools, such as observations, child conferencing, the use of cameras, bookmaking, tours, map making and interviews. Children are offered a choice in how they respond, which allows them some control. Clark and Moss argued that the tools accommodate different learning styles and intelligences and allow children to use different communication modes and different skills. First developed as a two-stage approach, it was more recently elaborated by Clark (2004, 2007) into an approach with three interlinked stages that involve children and others in their lives in data gathering, interpretation and in thinking through future action. In stage one, children gather information and, together, adults and children begin to assess it; in stage two, children and adults discuss the gathered information, reflect and interpret it where possible with the involvement of families; in stage three, adults and children discuss what will happen as a result of the process. The approach is seen to offer a framework that reflects the complexity of children's everyday life that is not easily captured with standard measures. Reflecting on what happened when she allowed a child to lead her to a sibling's room Clark (2004) noted that it was the *process* of using the methodology that increased her understanding of children's lives as much as the actual methods. By providing tools to children, such as cameras, Clark and Moss claimed that children are more able to set their own questions that a researcher who 'listens' will be able to hear and respond to. In a study that focused on finding ways in which three- and four-year-olds could contribute ideas to the planned re-development of their outdoor area (Clark, 2007), the range of methods used included:

- observations
- children photographing important features of the garden, which were then used to make books

- pairs leading photo tours of the garden and recording their own commentary, which led to map-making
- interviews with children in the garden with a toy dog as a prompt
- discussions based around a book made from children's photographs
- interviews.

The outcome was that children's input via this range of sources was then considered alongside the views of teachers and families in making design decisions.

Symmetrical dialogues

The quotation at the start of this section appears at the end of Pascal and Bertram's (2009) article in which they reflected on the challenges encountered and lessons learnt from using participatory research methods in four different early childhood projects over a fifteen-year period. Referring particularly to the *Children Crossing Borders* project, which focused on the experiences of immigrant children in early childhood settings in five European countries, as well as the expectations and values of the children's parents and of their pre-school practitioners, Pascal and Bertram reported how they trialled different methods in an attempt to "rise to the challenge of living out their philosophical and ethical and educational perspective" and create 'symmetrical dialogues', that is "dialogues between researchers and children in which the power is symmetrically distributed" (p. 258). The methods listed as part of this approach are not described in detail but include:

- video-stimulated dialogue
- cultural circles
- critical incident analysis
- story telling and naming your world
- wishing trees
- listening posts
- map making
- guided tours
- focused observations
- photography and film making
- other narrative techniques, such as "narrative boxes with objects, video reconstructions, drawings, photographs, … 'whispering groups', dramatic play,[and] persona dolls" (p.260).

Reflecting on their experiences, Pascal and Bertram acknowledged that working with participatory methods with children was 'tough and ambitious' and that one of the things they learnt was that "we have to explore further methodological techniques to ensure all children can express themselves fully in the dialogues" (p. 261). As they put it: "the issue of children's rights to voice and responsiveness needs to continue to be 'troubled'" (p. 259).

Others using a multiple-strategy approach

Both the 'mosaic approach' (Clark & Moss, 2001) and the 'symmetrical dialogues approach' (Pascal & Bertram, 2009) are noteworthy for the wide range of participatory methods they included. Many other researchers have adopted similar multiple-strategy approaches to the mosaic approach and that of symmetrical dialogues. The following examples indicate the variety of strategies that researchers are combining.

- Interviews, drawings, conversations, and observations were used by Wiltz and Klein (2001).
- Group interviews, children's drawings, children's photographs, and a questionnaire based on a board game were strategies Einarsdottir (2005) implemented.
- Approaches introduced by Dockett and Perry (2005) included interviews, oral and written journals, drawings and photography.

While researchers continue to experiment with participatory strategies, reviewing the range of research studies located for this review showed that some strategies are widely used and that not all of these are participatory. The most frequently used strategies are described in the next section.

Specific strategies used in the reviewed studies

Conversations/interviews

1. **Conversations**
   Informal interviews, in a variety of forms, continue to be the most common participatory research method used with young children. At their most informal, these are interactions between child/children and researcher occurring within the natural flow of children's activities, often with the researcher participating alongside the child (Carr, 2000; Smith, Duncan, & Marshall, 2005; Te One, 2007; Wiltz & Klein, 2001). Here the word 'conversation' rather than interview is used to convey the informal and often unplanned nature of these interactions. Such conversations are valued because they avoid many of the power issues associated with more formal interviews and allow the child to introduce unanticipated perspectives (Smith, et al., 2005). They are often used in combination with participant observations (Hedges & Cullen, 2003).

2. **Individual interviews**
   Interviewing individual children is a frequently used strategy. Einarsdottir (2007) working with children aged from two to six years found individual interviews to be more effective than group interviews with the youngest. Clark and Moss (2001) report children have individual preferences about whether to be interviewed alone or with a friend. However, reservations have been expressed about interviewing children on their own: Carr (2000) suggests that when a child is interviewed in a one-to-one situation with the researcher, it is more likely that a child will give the polite or perceived 'correct' answer.

3. **Interviews with parent present**

   There is some evidence that the presence of a parent may help a child to relax in an interview situation; Smith et al. (2005) found individual children sometimes responded more openly in a three-way interview conducted in the child's home with the parent present, rather than in an individual interview in the centre. In an Australian research study (Farrell et al., 2002), it was children's caregivers who asked children (aged between three and eight years) the researcher's questions about the early childhood education centre they attended.

4. **Interviews in pairs**

   Interviewing children in pairs or groups of three, which is recommended because children are more at ease (Graue & Walsh, 1998), has been used successfully (Carr, 2000; Einarsdottir, 2007). Smith et al. (2005) conclude that interviewing in pairs is probably a more effective way of providing a supportive environment than using groups.

5. **Interviews in a group**

   Interviews with a group of peers were the primary data source in research by Hedges (Hedges & Cullen, 2005), and have been recommended as allowing children greater control over the content and structure of the interaction (Dockett & Perry, 2005). Reports of the difficulty of keeping groups focused on the research agenda (Cook &

Hess, 2007; Hedges, 2002; Smith, et al., 2005) suggest groups of children (rather than individuals or pairs) may indeed feel more empowered to redirect discussion.

6. Photographs as a discussion prompt in interviews

Photographs have frequently been used within interviews as conversational prompts. Children's own photographs of their ECE setting (Einarsdottir, 2005), and of excursions (Cook & Hess, 2007) have proved to be effective catalysts. In a study of teachers and immigrant children aged three to five years (Keat, Strickland, & Marinak, 2009), children's photographs taken in and out of the centre were used as a stimulus for conversation between child and teacher; explaining their photographs was found to increase children's agency and give teachers insight into children's home lives. Richards (in press) used children's photographs and the discussions around them as a central data source in an indepth study that explored four children's perspectives of their art experiences. Photographs of children have also been used. For example, photographs of children were used as prompts in exploring children's thoughts on their learning experiences (Duncan, Jones, & Carr, 2008; Smith, et al., 2005). The researcher's photographs of the setting (Stephenson, 2009) or of other ECE centre settings (Wiltz & Klein, 2001) have also been used to generate discussion.

7. Other discussion prompts in interviews

A varied range of other discussion prompts have also been tried. Picture books (Dockett & Perry, 2005; Te One, 2007) and books created from children's own materials (eg, photographs, drawings, comments) (Clark, 2007) have proved effective stimulants to discussion. Carr (2000) used the structure of a partially completed book as a focus for conversations about learning. A toy dog was introduced by Clark (2007) so children could demonstrate features of their outdoor area; a persona doll was used by Te One (2007) as a focus for discussion of kindergarten rules. Godfrey and Cemore (2005), stressing the importance of play-based conversations, used miniature props to represent the childcare setting and children responded to questions using these; Clark and Moss (2001) also used play figures and equipment with children under two years. Segments of videos recorded in centres were used as conversation prompts by Murfin and Butterworth (1999) and by Pascal and Bertram (2009) in their work with immigrant children and their families.

For further discussion of interviewing children see Chapter four, pp.75-79.

Photography in research with young children

Children's photography has gained increasing prominence as a participatory research strategy. It is quick, easy, likely to engage children, allows them to make their own choices, and to communicate in a way that may be easier for those with limited language (Einarsdottir, 2005) and for those who struggle to respond to abstract questions (Cook & Hess, 2007). Children's photography has also been seen to generate unexpectedly rich data:

> The choosing of subject matter for their photographs, the taking of the photographs and subsequent discussion tended to reveal far more to the researchers than they would have expected using an entirely verbal approach for data collections …. Discussions about the photographs revealed more complex and indepth conceptualizations than we had imagined, introduced topics unexpected by the researchers and offered new suggestions as to what might be meaningful for children. (Cook & Hess, 2007, p. 41)

Clark and Moss (2001) made extensive use of children's photography – children took photographs of 'important things' in the nursery and as part of child-led tours and these photographs were later used by children in making maps of their environment. Clark has continued to use photography with children; older children spent time with younger children and photographed them (Clark, 2004), and children took photographs as a way of sharing their thoughts about their playgrounds (Clark, 2007). Other researchers have built on these approaches. Photography has been used as a way for children to share their thoughts about their ECE context (Einarsdottir, 2005; Stephenson, 2009). Einarsdottir (2005) compared the results of children leading an adult on a photo-tour, with children independently taking photographs, and has also compared the advantages and disadvantages of digital and disposable cameras. Children using disposable cameras had access to them for longer, and were able to use them without an adult's guidance. In a study focused on children's transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 2005), children took individual photographs but also worked in small groups to collectively photograph aspects of the school environment for a book to be given to children when they started at school. Children have also used cameras outside of their centre; they photographed what interested them on visits to art museums in research by Cook and Hess (2007). See also the *primary school auto-photography, science and technology exemplar* and the *Primary school focus groups and journals with Pacific Island children exemplar*.

Drawing

Drawing provides children with an avenue for non-verbal communication that many feel comfortable using, and avoids the need for a child to maintain eye contact with the adult (Dockett & Perry, 2005). It has been used by a number of researchers in interview situations (Einarsdottir, 2007; Einarsdottir, et al., 2009; Wiltz & Klein, 2001) with both the image and the child's accompanying comments used as data; Wiltz and Klein (2001) used the phrase 'picture stories' to prompt children to draw and tell associated stories. Children have used drawing both to express current thoughts and to reflect on past events (Dockett & Perry, 2005; Einarsdottir, et al., 2009). While many children will choose drawing from a range of offered ways of responding, it is reported there are always some children who feel they 'can't draw' (Einarsdottir, et al., 2009).

Other tools

A variety of other tools have been devised by researchers reflecting their particular research focus. A game was devised by Einarsdottir (2007) that functioned as a questionnaire, with children responding to written questions about what they liked and disliked about the early childhood education context. Children could play the game with peers, with an adult reading the questions. A chart of photographs of centre events and activities, used with a set of counters showing happy and sad faces, was used for a similar purpose with children aged from two to five years by Stephenson (2009). Howard (2002), working with children aged from three to six years, explored children's perceptions of play, work and learning; children posted photographs of activities into boxes to categorise them, for example, as either work or play. Finally, children making the transition to school kept journals, with parent support, in a variety of forms, including transcribed records of parent-child conversations, records of role plays, samples of children's work, information from the school, and written entries by children (Dockett & Perry, 2005).

Observation

While this discussion has focused on research strategies that allow children's active participation, the role of observation needs to be acknowledged, because there are studies of young children where participant observation has been a central strategy (eg, Alcock, 2007; Williams, 2001). (See Chapter five, p.117 for a description of ethnographic approaches in research with young people.) Not surprisingly, many studies involving research with pre-verbal children have relied heavily on observation as a data source. For example, Nyland (2009) videoed children under two over a period of 18 months. White, Rockel and Toso (2007) videoed children aged one to two years throughout a single day, and used excerpts in interviews with the parents and with teachers. In a study of three-year-old children (Flewitt, 2005b) children wore lapel microphones and audio recorders and were also videoed. A study of library programmes for children under two years involved observing and audio recording (McKechnie, 2006).

In other studies, observation has been one of a range of strategies used (Dalli, 2000, 2003; Hedges & Cullen, 2003; Stephenson, 2009). For example, in research reported by Bone et al. (2007), which explored young children's spiritual experiences, as well as participant observations, teacher interviews, teachers' photographs and videos, and focus group interviews with parents were sources of data. Dalli used a combination of continuous running records and video-recording of three specific events during each day of data gathering.

Including other voices

A supplementary strategy often used in research with young children, which has been mentioned in passing through this discussion, is including the voices of other people involved in the context of the child participant, particularly the voices of parents and/or teachers. For example, Duncan et al. (2008) interviewed teachers and parents in their study of the relationship between learning dispositions and learning architecture in early childhood education and school settings, and both Dalli (2000, 2002) and Hedges and Cullen (2005) used interviews with parents and parents' journals as a way of gaining further understanding of the children's experiences within early childhood education settings.

Table 2.2: The range of data-collection tools, methods, strategies used with young children, with indicative research examples

Methods	Tools	Age	Research examples	Comments
Informal conversations with children that take place alongside the child's ongoing activities		4 years	Smith, Duncan & Marshall (2005)	
		4 years	Te One (2007)	
		4-5 years	Wiltz & Klein (2001)	Interviews consisted of five questions but were conducted while children worked on activities and merged into natural conversations.
Conversations /interviews with individual children or pairs		Under 2-4 years	Clark & Moss (2001)	Described as 'conferencing'; children could choose to be interviewed alone or in peers.
		4 years	Smith, Duncan & Marshall (2005)	
Conversations/Interviews with groups of children		4-5 years	Dockett & Perry (2005)	Discussions were audio-taped only with children's permission.
		2-6 years (the older children)	Einarsdottir (2007)	Group interviews successful with older children but not with younger.
		4 years	Hedges & Cullen (2005)	Group interviews were a central data source.
		4 years	Smith, Duncan & Marshall (2005)	Describes some of the challenges of group interviews.
Prompts used in conversations/interviews with individuals, pairs or small groups	**Photographs**	2-6 years ('the younger ones')	Einarsdottir (2007)	A photograph of the child taken during the day was a discussion prompt for individual interviews with younger children.
		4 years	Smith, Duncan & Marshall (2005)	Photographs of the children involved in activities.
		2-4 years	Stephenson (2009)	Photographs of the ECE setting.
		4-5 years	Wiltz & Klein (2001)	Photographs of other ECE settings.
	Children's photographs	'Preschool'	Cook & Hess (2007)	Discussion of photographs taken on trips—and the unexpected insights they offered into children's agenda.
		4-6 years	Einarsdottir (2005)	Children's photographs taken in the ECE setting
		4-5 years	Richards (in press)	Discussion around children's photographs was the central data source in this indepth study.
	Books	4 years	Carr (2000)	A partially completed story book was a focus for discussions.
		3-4 years	Clark (2007)	Children's photographs, maps and interview comments used to create a book for a discussion focus.
		4-5 years	Dockett & Perry (2005)	Children's picture books used to promote discussion.
		4 years	Te One (2007)	Used a book, and then posters created from the book as a prompt.
	Toys	3-4 years	Clark (2007)	A toy dog as a prop for children's conversations.
		Under 2	Clark & Moss (2001)	Small play figures and play equipment—referred to as 'role play'.
		4-5 years	Godfrey & Cemore (2005)	Developed a three-dimensional model of the ECE setting that children used.
		4 years	Te One (2007)	A persona doll that talked with children through the researcher.

Methods	Tools	Age	Research examples	Comments
	Video	4 years	Murfin & Butterworth (1999)	Video of the children taken during the day was a focus for discussion.
		3 - 4 years	Pascal & Bertram (2009)	Used video of typical ECE events in five countries as a discussion prompt.
Children's photography		3-4 years	Clark & Moss (2001)	Individuals took photos of what was important to them in the context; this extended into child-led photo tours in which children controlled the photography and audio-taping. Older children also took photos of younger children's experiences.
		'Pre-school'	Cook & Hess (2007)	Children photographed favourite places and activities in the context, and also what interested them on visits to art museums.
		4-5 years	Dockett & Perry (2005)	Group tour with each child selecting places to photograph for a book on the environment.
		4-6 years	Einarsdottir (2005)	Individual child showing researcher special places, while explaining choices, followed by discussion around printed photographs.
		2-4 years	Stephenson (2009)	Children photographed favourite pages within their learning portfolios. Children photographed special places, followed by discussion around printed photographs.
Drawing		4-5 years	Dockett & Perry (2005)	Children drew to convey ideas with records kept of the child's ongoing comments. Children also drew to reflect on their experiences.
		2-6 years	Einarsdottir (2007)	Children drew what they liked and disliked about the ECE context.
		4-6 years	Einarsdottir, Dockett & Perry (2009)	Children's drawing and accompanying narrative was the data. Noted many children selected drawing as a preferred way to respond.
		4-5 years	Wiltz & Klein (2001)	The phrase 'picture stories' used to prompt children to draw and give commentary.
Journals	**Journals (usually kept with parent support)**	4-5 years	Dockett & Perry (2005)	Took a variety of forms (eg, email records, transcripts of conversations and of role-plays, drawings, documents and items relating to school, and children's own written entries).
Questionnaires		2-6 years	Einarsdottir (2007)	A cardboard game used as a questionnaire to discover children's opinions about their ECE setting.
		2-4 years	Stephenson (2009)	A chart of photographs of place/events within the context; children identified positive and negative choices using counters with happy and sad faces.
Observation as central data-generation strategy	**Spending time with children as a**	6 mths-4 years	Alcock (2007)	Ethnographic observations with data gathered through notes and video.

Methods	Tools	Age	Research examples	Comments
	participant observer	3-6 years	Bae (2005)	Reflective paper discussing issues of ethics and validity that arose from her research role as participant observer.
		15 mths-2 years	Dalli (1999)	Video plus note-taking used to gather data.
		3 years	Flewitt (2005b)	Video used plus children wore lapel microphones and carried small audio recorders.
		0-2 years	McKechnie (2006)	Audio-taping and notes used to gather data.
		6 mths-2 years	Nyland (2009)	Video used to gather data.
		18mths-2 years	White, Rockel & Toso (2007)	Video used to gather data.
		15-18 mths	Dalli (2000, 2002)	Continuous pen and paper running records and video data of selected events.
		1-6 years	Williams (2001)	Video and note-taking used to gather data.
Parents' voice	**Interview with parents**	1-2 years	White, Rockel & Toso (2007)	Used excerpts from video of the child's day as a discussion prompt.
	Interview with parents and parents' diaries	15-18 mths	Dalli (2000, 2002)	
		4 years	Hedges & Cullen, 2003	
	Interview with parent and child	4 years	Smith, Duncan & Marshall (2005)	On occasions found the child was more forthcoming when interviewed with the parent and in the home context.
Teachers' voice	**Interview with teachers**	4 years	Duncan, Jones & Carr (2008)	
	Interview with teachers and teachers' diaries	15-18 months	Dalli (2000, 2002)	
Combination of methods		Under 2-4 years	Clark & Moss (2001)	Developed the 'mosaic approach', which included a range of participatory tools: photography, role-playing, book-making, tours, map-making, conferencing plus observations.
		4-5 years	Dockett & Perry (2005)	Data sources included interviews, oral and written journals, drawings and photography.
		4-6 years	Einarsdottir (2005)	Data sources included group interviews, drawings, photography and questionnaire.
		4-5 years	Wiltz & Klein (2001)	Data sources included interviews/conversations, drawings, and observations.

Note: This table provides an overview of the data-collection tools used in research with young children. The studies identified as research examples have been selected because they contain information about the way the strategy was used and/or comments concerning the advantages and disadvantages of using that approach. In each sub-section of the table references have been organised alphabetically.

Reporting research: 'Fit for purpose'

In conclusion, it is important to note that the idea that methods should be 'fit for purpose' has been echoed also with respect to the content and format of research reports: they need to be accessible to a range of audiences, including children and families. Abbott and Langston (2005) made the point that if any research is to have an impact on practice, it is not only policy makers but also practitioners who need to access the findings. Thus the argument is made that reports have to be written to reach all audiences – in effect a re-statement of the argument that the principle of 'fit for purpose' should hold sway (p.46). The example of the Effective Provision of Preschool Education Project (EPPE) study (Sylva et al. 2004) in which both quantitative and qualitative findings were interwoven in the reports, is held up as an example of this principle. Within the local New Zealand context, an example of the same approach is the recent decision by NZCER that the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project output requirements be in the form of a portfolio that include a range of dissemination formats that are accessible to a range of audiences beyond the researcher community (NZCER, 2009).

Table 2.3: Critical areas and questions raised

Critical areas	Questions raised
Balancing children's competence with their essential vulnerability.	What is the line between respecting children's agency and rights to participation and protecting children's vulnerabilities that derive from physical, biological and linguistic immaturities? Who should decide whether a young child should participate in research?
The research funding agency often sets the rules.	Whose interest does the research serve? How can researchers respond to rules set by the funding agency so that the nature, form and outcome of research has integrity, including in the way that the research respects children's rights?
Deciding the research agenda without taking account of children's interest can create resistance in children and diversion from the original research goals. Participatory methods need to also be tasks that have meaning for the child.	How can young children be given a voice in deciding what issues are important to them? How should researchers respond when children resist the research agenda? Can tasks be devised that are authentic for children and useful to the researcher?
There are complex issues in gaining consent and in recognising dissent throughout the research process.	Who should decide whether young children should take part in a research project? How sensitive are researchers to young children's indications of dissent?
Researching the child in context requires culturally embedded research.	How can different cultural values about children's participation be taken into account by researchers using participatory methods? What research practices would enable the research to be culturally appropriate?
There are complex issues around ensuring that respect for young children is an ongoing feature of the researcher-child relationship.	What is the line between observation and intervention? What is the line between the researcher's respect for children, for example, when children express disrespect for each other?
There are inherent power differentials between children and researchers in research relationships.	What measures can adult researchers take to redress power imbalances between them and very young children? How can researchers establish respectful and trusting relationships with children so that children are able to speak, be listened to, and are understood?
There are complex issues around listening to children.	How can researchers be encouraged to adopt a pedagogy of listening? What methods will allow children to have a voice?
Participatory methods may be asking too much of young children and ethical and methodological concerns need to be carefully considered.	Are researchers asking too much from young children? Are participatory methods creating a new technology that turns children into new miniature adults?
There is increasing interest in making research reports accessible to children and others in their context.	How can research reports be 'fit for purpose', including children and their families as part of the audience for the report?

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Early childhood education: participatory methods exemplar

Stephenson, A. (2009). Horses in the sandpit: Photography, prolonged involvement and 'stepping back' as strategies for listening to children's voices. *Early Child Development and Care, 179*(2), 131-141.

Interviewer: Carmen Dalli
Interviewee: Alison Stephenson
Note taker: Mimi Hodis

Background

Alison Stephenson is a senior lecturer and programme director in early childhood education at Victoria University of Wellington College of Education. She conducted the study for her doctoral research. The study was designed by Stephenson and all data were collected and analysed by her with guidance from her two supervisors.

The study was carried out in an all-day centre open from 8am to 6pm and attended by children aged zero to five years. The centre was chosen on the basis of a range of factors that also included stability of staffing (i.e. no recent changes in staffing) and its favourable Education Review Office (ERO) report.

Aims and objectives

The study sought to explore the scope and boundaries of the early childhood curriculum in one early childhood education centre as this was experienced and enacted by the children themselves. In this way it sought to capture the less overt aspects of curriculum, the ‘null curriculum’, that is those experiences that were significant to children but were not planned for by adults and that adults may not even have been aware of.

An aim of the study was to foreground the children’s voices in an ethnographic exploration of curriculum and open up the discussion on the ‘null curriculum’ in early childhood education settings, rather than come up with one single answer to a question.

Access, consent processes, role of parents, families and community

Beyond following the normal ethics application process through the Human Ethics Committee of the PhD-enrolling institution, ethical consent to carry out the study was sought via the management committee of the early childhood education centre, the teachers in the centre, and the families of the children in the centre. The process for the families was that they received a consent form, plus an assent form/s for their child/children with the instructions that if they assessed that their child was capable of making an informed decision they were to help their child/ren fill in the assent form:

> *I asked the families to negotiate directly with the children. So the families got a letter to say that if they felt their child could make an informed decision then they were to read it through to them. And some of them even read the form to their child under one year.... They said “we don’t know how much she understood but we read it through to them”.... Some of the older children—a four-year-old got it and certainly understood what it meant... one of the older children bounced in with it and she told me that they had talked about it and it was obvious she really understood it. And they were aware of who I was by then because I had been in the centre and I had put my photo on the form. (Stephenson, Interview)*

The assent forms for all children incorporated a picture of the researcher; they were shorter than the consent forms for parents and contained a series of five simplified yes/no questions.

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Data collection, tools, strategies

Data collection

There were 50 data-gathering visits made to the early childhood education centre over a five-month period that started in mid-winter and went through to summer. In the early weeks, there were four to five visits a week and frequency diminished as the project went on. Visits lasted an average of two to three hours with the longest visit being nine and a half hours. The article reports on the use of five strategies that each involved photographs. In the overall study reported in the thesis, an additional four strategies are reported that did not use photographs: picture questionnaires; two unfinished books, one called the New Kid book, and the other called the Naughty Book; informal conversations; and observations. The observations were the 'matrix' in which all the other strategies fitted.

The insights of parents of selected children were also gathered during interviews held at the end of the study. Parents could choose the site for the interview, and all chose the centre. Of the six interviewed, one chose to talk in the staff room, and the rest chose to talk out in the centre play areas with children free to come and go as they pleased. Stephenson described it as "amazingly useful" when the child was present as "the conversation flowed around" and in one case the child actually contradicted the parent about what he liked at the centre and was able to give a particularly clear statement that he would have liked to have used a computer at the centre if there had been one – which the teachers were clear they did not want to have.

Tools

In the article and the thesis Stephenson described a range of tools she developed for the study, with some being discarded or amended when they proved less effective than others. During the interview Stephenson explained:

> *Some of them were less effective than others—the unfinished books for example—but the children were definitely drawn to the camera tours of the centre! Putting down counters on their favourite activities—children really liked those. The digital camera was really really useful. (Stephenson, Interview)*

The digital camera mentioned above was used in the first place to take an initial set of photos of indoor and outdoor centre environments. Stephenson then: (i) used the photos in conversations with the children to identify places in the centre; (ii) used the photos as starters for discussion to explore activities that children liked and disliked (eg, water play, dough play, collage, mat-time, rest-time and meals); (iii) asked children to take photos of favourite places; and (iv) took photos of pages in the children's learning portfolios and showed these in quick view to the children; in many cases the children took their own photographs of pages.

By contrast to the successful use of these tools, Stephenson found that the unfinished stories she compiled as the starting point for discussion with children about experiences at the centre turned out to be not very useful. Stephenson explained that she had read about unfinished books in another New Zealand study (Carr, 2000) and had thought the technique would provide a good way of exploring children's perspectives on their learning:

> *I was never hearing the words "learn" used and I was searching for it and I tried to set up situations where they might use it. So the first book was about a child who had come to the centre and I actually had a photo of the centre and I asked the children to suggest all the things they could teach the new child—but they just struggled to think what they could teach them ... they made strange suggestions—like they said they could teach them to stand on the table or to run about the centre… (Stephenson, Interview)*

When the second unfinished story, devised and illustrated by the researcher, proved equally unsuccessful, this strategy was not continued.

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One other instrument was modified in the course of the study: Stephenson planned to use 30 photos spread out in front of the children as starters for discussion to explore activities that children liked and disliked, and the children were given yellow and black dots to stick on the photos they liked and did not like. Owing to the space required to complete this exercise, the photos became a chart with 30 small photos and more counters—20 happy faces and five with sad faces. In discussing the effectiveness of this instrument, Stephenson noted that when doing this exercise, some chose to repeat the labelling and this produced a different layout of sad and happy faces; this suggested the fragility of a single-episode measure. Stephenson makes a strong argument for researchers needing to spend prolonged time in the research situation in order to gain meaningful data. Another strategy that was very quickly modified was getting children to show the researcher their portfolios. Because the first two children asked were not enthusiastic, the idea of photographing favourite pages with the camera was introduced. Stephenson noted: "this proved providential as it provided a pictorial record of the discussions—which were also audio taped".

Stephenson noted also that the interaction with the child while the child engaged with the research exercise was often more significant than the completion of the exercise itself for illuminating the child's experience. As an example of this, Stephenson told how a boy introduced his own artefact, a toy horse, to show what he liked to do at the centre rather than making a choice from the photos of available activities.

Differences in the way that individual children or groups of children participated in the research

Stephenson said that many studies just choose a small number of children as participants and she purposely wanted to involve as many as possible; she reflected that the range of methods used meant that all children had a chance to participate, and in a range of ways.

Stephenson noted that some children established a closer relationship with the researcher than others, and were drawn to her, or the methods, more than others but that most children were drawn to at least one of the data-gathering strategies used. Stephenson added that she was careful to invite children to take part in the data-gathering strategies when they 'appeared at a loose end'. Stephenson reflected that there had been only one girl who had declined to participate when invited; she explained that she had invited the girl to go with her after lunch into the side room so she could talk with her. Instead, the girl chose to go and join the teacher's mat-time, which Stephenson took as a gesture that she did not want to participate at the time. She did, however, participate at other times.

Analysis, reporting back and dissemination

Stephenson explained that her original intention had been to use grounded theory methodology in her doctoral thesis but in the end she decided to use a modified version of the approach, as she was not really aiming to write up a theory from the data. Within the article referred to in this case study, Stephenson explained that she used a layered process of coding the data and identified themes, searching first for the 'scope and boundaries of the curriculum'. When this became too unwieldy, Stephenson eventually narrowed this down to a focus on the boundaries of curriculum, and how children experienced, influenced and enacted those boundaries. Themes at the focus of the analysis were (i) how children understood learning in the centre; (ii) children's use of power; (iii) teachers' use of power; (iv) the null curriculum and other 'themes that were on the outskirts'. N-Vivo 6 was used to code and sort the data, and pen-and-paper analysis was then used to think through and refine connections.

Throughout the data-gathering period Stephenson produced a research newsletter every six weeks. She distributed these to the children's families; sometimes parents gave her feedback that indicated they had read the newsletters but there was no response to the newsletters from the children. The final report of the project was the thesis; conference and seminar papers have been presented, including at the annual meeting of the European Early Childhood Research Association, and at the biennial Monash Early Childhood Research Conference.

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Ethical issues, insights and hindsights

One key issue mentioned by Stephenson is the fact that the teachers at the children's centre had no visibility or voice in the research: They were not interviewed or otherwise asked to provide their perspective on the research. Stephenson said that she "worked really hard in presentations to honour them for their work— because they were silenced" in the research.

A further issue noted by Stephenson related to her belief that it was important that no-one, teachers or children, knew who was or was not participating. Stephenson noted that this created an 'interesting issue' when a child who had a strong presence in the centre returned her assent form with 'No' circled for each question. Stephenson noted that this child was always welcomed, and invited to participate if she was observing but all the data had to be excluded—which created "a really interesting issue".

Other issues discussed by Stephenson were:

i. "not interrupting the children" as she was "really aware that they had their own agenda; and because I was there for such a long time, I was able to do that"; Stephenson noted that in short studies it is really hard to not interrupt what children wanted to do for the sake of research

ii. "not interrupting the teachers' agenda and feeling supportive of the teachers; as a person who has taught, I know what it's like": Stephenson gave examples of ways she used to support the teachers, such as responding to the teachers' request to be present at the centre when ERO visited, and helping the teachers tidy up

iii. "observing children in ways that could be critical of adults—for example, I was observing a child who was being excluded by both the teachers and children". Stephenson said that she felt she was observing things in the centre that reflected badly on the teachers but she was not talking to the teachers about this and this made her feel uncomfortable. An issue of this kind was when a child bit a teacher who then responded by shouting at the child. Stephenson noted that she had not brought the matter up with the relevant teacher though she had written in the thesis about the ethical discomfort that the event had caused her. For Stephenson, writing about the incident in the thesis felt like the only thing she could do; she described this as "giving the child voice" and simultaneously "doing something generically for children like him". But despite writing about this, Stephenson said that:

> *It remains an ethical issue—because if I had talked to the teacher about it at the time, it [what happened] would have changed. But if I had talked about it then I would not have seen what I have seen. So it is really difficult. (Stephenson, Interview)*

Stephenson added the comment that one thing a researcher can do for children in a research situation is to reciprocate the time the child gives you by giving them some time yourself. She said:

> *the children will almost say 'come and play with me' and I would always spend time, just being with children not as a researcher, as some reciprocation for what they have given to you. (Stephenson, Interview)*

iv. the issue of power and who wields it in a research relationship. Stephenson recounted one incident in the study when two girls very clearly contested her power by taking away her pencil and making statements like "that's yukky". Stephenson said that "this is something that happens quite often but we don't write about it". She noted that these instances highlighted the power issues inherent in research with children and the limited possibilities for children to wield power (see American study by Nespor, 1998, where the researcher was tied up by the children and also Smith, Duncan & Marshall, 2005).

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v. responding to teachers' requests for information. As Stephenson explained:

> *Another sticky thing was when a child was having Psych Services come to observe him and the teachers asked me for information about him. And I went to the child and asked him if I could pass on the typed up notes to the teachers—and he said yes. And I've always thought since then that I don't know that he felt he had the power to say no. I said "is it ok if I give it to the teachers?" ... You know when you are in that centre and the teachers ask you for something—mostly I did not give anything to the teachers. I gave it to the child and the child had control over it. My focus was always on the child rather than the teacher or the parents but I did write about this in the thesis because I was always uncomfortable about it. (Stephenson, Interview)*

vi. how to react when you are the only adult who observes children's physical aggression.

What worked well

Things that worked well included spending prolonged time in the centre when gathering data as this allowed Stephenson to gain a more complex understanding of the behaviour she observed and the accrual of a deeper contextual knowledge, which made picking up nuances of meaning more possible. Spending more time in the centre also meant that the children had more choice about when to interact with the researcher.

Taking the child's perspective by observing the child and trying to think like the child was a very helpful strategy. Stephenson noted that it is useful to remain aware that research is stepping out into the unknown and that how a child might categorise centre life might be quite different to the way that adults do. Stephenson noted the importance of:

> *Being there with a really open-minded frame so that you weren't expecting the questions that come and the answers to come; and when they come in the form that they come: What I learnt was that they just ignored my instructions so I guess it's that thing about being flexible about one's strategies, not insisting that they get done in a particular way and then listening in a really open-minded way and taking in what they say in a really open-minded way. (Stephenson, Interview)*

Stephenson noted also that it was helpful to learn to step back from the interaction and from the data (p. 137) to allow time for reflection. Other insights about things that worked well included a comment on the value of combining visual images with verbal language when communicating with young children, and the importance of not mistaking lack of verbal ability with lack of ability to communicate as, Stephenson emphasised, children can find their own props and ways of communicating.

Things to do differently

Stephenson thought that having a more focused project might have made the project easier to manage and that being more proactive as a researcher could also have done this. Stephenson noted that she was:

> *So full of respect and determined not to intervene that I kept saying to myself that I should be using my strategies more often—and I just remember the sense of slight panic thinking I should have been doing something else to get more data but in fact I had lots of data from the children. (Stephenson, Interview)*

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Critical messages for this report

The interview and the study reports indicate the following key messages that have relevance to the focus of this project:

1. A key difference between interviewing children and interviewing adults is that with adults:

   > *you'd only ask them once and you'd take the answer for granted and accept it while with children, because they are not so articulate with words… you have to listen in peripheral ways. I found that each time they would get out the chart of photos and the counters, I was hearing something different each time—and that was something that was really really useful. (Stephenson, Interview)*

2. It was really useful having the digital camera not only to engage children in research strategies but also as a way of very quickly recording their responses in some strategies, ie, the chart of photos and the counters, as well as their favourite portfolio pages. Stephenson noted that it would have been impossible to capture the detail captured by the digital camera in notes or on audio recording. Using the camera to record allowed her 'to go with the flow' of the interaction with the children:

   > *Having the digital camera was also very useful as I would ask them to take a photo of the counters – and they did it. And that's how I got my data because otherwise I was finding they would whip the counters off so the next child could have a go. So you had to take photos… And the photos of the portfolios—what they chose to take photos of – that was really really useful—I got lots of data. (Stephenson, Interview)*

3. A prolonged period of data gathering seems important in order to gather data that is realistic and captures the nuances of meaning that develop for children. Stephenson wrote about this in her thesis as:

   > *Living and working with children for sustained periods might be the route to understanding more of their complex lives within centres. (Stephenson, 2009b, p. 139)*

4. Modification of planned research instruments may be a necessary response to "enable these children to share their thoughts" (Stephenson, 2009a, p.95)
5. A list of 'checking questions' proved useful for this researcher so she could refer to it during the five months of data gathering to check if children's messages were being foregrounded. Stephenson's questions were:
   - have I begun with children's thoughts?
   - how can the ideas of children be included at this stage?
   - what are the assumptions?
   - what questions might a child ask?
   - how can children engage with this topic in a way that interests them?
   - how can I avoid children giving me the answer they think I want?
   - How can I ensure children's own agenda is minimally disrupted?
   - what are the power dynamics in this data-generating situation?
   - how open am I to following the children's lead? (Stephenson, 2009b, p.99).

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Questions that are raised

1. Who sets the research question is an ethical issue that raises issues of power which need to be borne in mind in developing research projects that involve very young children. Stephenson noted that few studies refer to how power differentials have been addressed in research with children under three years old and even fewer studies have looked at this with children aged under two years (Stephenson, 2009, p.97). A question is how to find ways to even out the power imbalance using the communicative abilities of children of this age?
2. How can research that explores children’s experiences in educational settings be carried out in a way that honours the way children process experiences over time? What is the significance of Stephenson’s insights about the need of prolonged data gathering through ethnographic methods? How can the advice for prolonged data-gathering time be reconciled with the normally narrow timeframes for contract research?

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Early childhood education: researching within Pasifika community exemplar

Tagoilelagi-Leota, F., McNaughton, S., MacDonald, S., & Farry, S.(2005). Bilingual and biliteracy development over the transition to school. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *8*(5), 455-479.

Interviewer: Carmen Dalli
Interviewee: Fa'ausalala Tagoilelagi-Leota
Note taker: Mimi Hodis

Background

This paper is one of a number that report on aspects of the outcomes of the Early Childhood Primary Link via Literacy (ECPL) project that was part of a much broader project, Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara (SEMO). SEMO was funded by the Ministry of Education as a way of raising the educational achievement of students in decile 1 schools in Mangere and Otara. These schools had been identified as having low achievement levels on national school entry measures of literacy, with the students' low achievement persisting over their school careers. The project was undertaken by researchers at the Woolf Fisher Research Centre at the University of Auckland.

The paper reports results from the ECPL project that involved the provision of language and literacy professional development for Pasifika early childhood education teachers in the Mangere and Otara areas. The results relate to the bilingual and biliteracy development of a group of Pasifika children from 21 of the 35 Pasifika early childhood education centres in the overall study. The 21 centres had a strong quality programme of immersion in either Samoan or Tongan, the heritage languages of the children in this study. The early childhood education teachers in the centres had received eight two-hour training sessions held at fortnightly intervals. These teachers implemented the goals and objectives of the professional development (PD) in their centres. These sessions were then observed by trained researchers who were speakers of the relevant heritage language used in the centre. They observed teachers during (i) reading, (ii) writing, and (iii) storytelling sessions.

The interviewee for this case study, Fa'ausalala Tagoilelagi-Leota, was the Pasifika coordinator of the ECPL project who also delivered the literacy professional development to teachers of the 35 Pasifika early childhood education centres in Mangere and Otara. She was involved in the research that evaluated the effectiveness of the PD, and was a co-writer of the case study paper. Tagoilelagi-Leota was trained in the delivery of the PD programme by Professor Stuart MacNaughton, one of the initiators of the project.

Aims and objectives

Fa'ausalala Tagoilelagi-Leota explained that the overall aim of the research was to measure the effectiveness of the PD intervention in supporting literacy development in the children's first language L1. She noted that the majority of the 35 early childhood education centres involved in the study were Samoan and offered total immersion programmes; Tongan immersion programmes were also offered while other Pasifika early childhood education centres operated bilingually (eg, centres with predominantly Cook Island and Niuean populations). Another aim of the research was to explore ways that competence in the heritage language (L1) could be supported over the transition to a mainstream school.

Specific objectives of the study were:

1. to trace and describe the development of (i) children's home language (L1 as either Samoan or Tongan), and (ii) English (L2) at four points over the six-month period before going to school, and throughout the first year of school

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2. to explore whether the described language patterns over the study period could be described as incipient/ emergent bilingualism

3. to analyse relationships between children's languages and their literacies.

Access, consent processes, role of parents, families and community

The paper did not provide details about how access to the research/evaluation situation was negotiated but in the interview Tagoilelagi-Leota explained that access to the 'research situation' was gained by providing information sheets and consent forms to the teachers in the PD centres and asking them to approach the parents; thus the teachers "mediated for us with the parents…saying that this study was to assist the children in the transition to school" (Tagoilelagi-Leota, Interview).

The children were not asked for their consent to participate in the evaluation in a direct way but, as Tagoilelagi-Leota explained in the interview, "we tried to make the collection of data as natural as possible". This meant that the measurement tests used in the study were not carried out in separate rooms but within the general early childhood education spaces so that the focus children were not isolated from the ongoing action within the centre and other children could be present in the normal way.

Access to the children in the primary schools was achieved through the researchers approaching the school principals with the parents' signed consent form for their child to participate in the study. The consent forms were subsequently also used to inform the teachers of the parents' willingness for their child to take part in the 'research'. Tagoilelagi-Leota explained that the schools in the Mangere and Otara area were very well informed of the ECPL project as was all the community; when schools outside of this immediate area were approached to participate, the researchers found that it was necessary to provide more information about the project than in Mangere and Otara.

Data collection, tools, strategies

Data were collected through a number of language and literacy testing tools that are commonly used in national literacy tests at school entry. Two testing tools were used to measure language and four to measure literacy (see appendix). All the tools were originally developed in English and all but one (the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—the PPVT) were translated into Samoan and Tongan by native speakers of those languages. The measures were used because they were mainly used by New Zealand schools and "reflected the language skills valued in these schools" (Tagoilelagi-Leota et al., 2005, p.460). The PPVT consists of pictures only and so was not translated and administered only in English; the authors explained that "although not normed in New Zealand, it was chosen because of its widespread usage in similar studies" (p.460). The study noted that the Pasifika translations have not been standardised in any way so that it is not known how the scores obtained relate to typical developmental patterns or distributions. All the tests were carried out once in the heritage language (L1) and once in English (L2) on different days at each of the four assessment periods: at age 4.6, 4.8, 5.0, and 6.0 yrs. All the researchers who administered the tests were fluent in both English and either Samoan or Tongan.

The results reported in this paper relate to one group of Samoan and Tongan children for whom there were repeated assessments at each of four time periods.

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Analysis, reporting back and dissemination

Children's test scores on the different measures were entered into SPSS[1] and correlations drawn between different measures at different time periods. Transcripts of all the audio-taped interactions during testing were translated by the researchers who were of the same ethnicities as the children in the study, and all had an early childhood education teaching background. Tagoilelagi-Leota explained that this was the result of a deliberate decision to 'catch the context' of the data. All the analysis was done through English.

Informal feedback was given to parents in centres and formal fono sessions were also held for all the teachers and parents of the 35 centres in the overall study. Children were present at all these sessions but, according to Tagoilelagi-Leota "they did not pay attention" as "it was too formal for them". With hindsight, Tagoilelagi-Leota reflected that it might have been a good idea to give more attention to providing feedback to the children on the overall study. She noted that the only feedback children got was during the testing when comments of 'good boy' or 'well done' were used if a child was doing well, for example, in writing their names. The children also got a copy of their scoring sheet but there was no other formal feedback.

Feedback to the community was also provided through interviews on Pasifika media, and on Samoan Radio in Auckland, on NiuFM, and on National radio as well as through speaking at national, international conferences and at other venues.

Ethical issues, insights and hindsight

Ethical clearance for the evaluation was sought through the usual university channels. Tagoilelagi-Leota noted that there were no issues encountered during the course of the research that necessitated a change to the planned methodology on ethical grounds.

A further relevant issue is reported in the paper as an initial hesitation by the Samoan and Tongan centres "about the use of English in their centres due to their total immersion delivery" (p. 461). In response, the researchers offered a rationale for the evaluation research based on its ability to throw light on the development of bilingualism and biliteracy within the New Zealand context, and on the value of knowing what happens to the children's bilingualism over the transition to school period. This rationale, and the fact that the researchers were themselves fluent speakers of both English and the children's heritage language, were accepted by the centres.

What worked well

Tagoilelagi-Leota commented that a particular strength of the methods was that they were able to show that the PD intervention did make a difference: In other words, the evaluation research demonstrated that the PD programme "really helped teachers to inform their practice". She reflected also that the project strengthened connections among the close-knit Pasifika teaching community in Mangere and Otara, which meant that teachers were able to share their insights from participating in the PD programme.

In terms of the evaluation outcomes, Tagoilelagi-Leota noted that the results "really stirred up the Pasifika community – it woke up the community" because the project showed a big loss of L1 competence when children started school. This was both a good outcome, in the sense that "now primary teachers know about what the children come to school with" as well as a difficult one, as it was not possible for the researchers to continue the project to see if the loss was regained at a later point in the children's schooling. Tagoilelagi-Leota said that the researchers had been really keen to follow the children to eight years of age when there is international research evidence that L1 competence picks up. The Pasifika community were really keen to know the answer to this.

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[1] Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

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Things to do differently

Reflecting on the methods used in the evaluation, Tagoilelagi-Leota said that with hindsight, there were a number of things that she would consider doing differently, including:

i. changing the content of some culturally unrealistic materials used in the tests. An example provided by Tagoilelagi-Leota was the use of a book called 'Too much cake' in the 'Tell Me' procedure to test language competence. During this procedure the child is required to listen to an unfamiliar story (in this case about eating too much cake) and is asked to retell it using the book. Tagoilelagi-Leota said that the book content could have incorporated realistic topics within the Pasifika children's context and it was difficult for the children to have the vocabulary to retell the story

ii. modifying the measures to align them closer to concepts of literacy as understood and promoted in early childhood education vs solely primary-school pedagogy; Tagoilelagi-Leota noted that she had had informal feedback from Palagi teachers in mainstream early childhood education centres that the language and literacy tests used in the study were too primary-focused and not attuned to the holistic approach of early childhood education pedagogy.

iii. re-considering the fairness of testing children in English when they had attended L1 immersion early childhood education settings and been taught only in Samoan or Tongan. While Tagoilelagi-Leota acknowledged that the study's focus on bilingualism and biliteracy required that both languages be tested, she felt that an issue of fairness towards children was involved that had not been addressed in the study

iv. adapting the methodology so that data gathering did not isolate the child from the community but rather involved the whole community. Tagoilelagi-Leota reflected that in the Pasifika worldview you cannot separate the child from the family and that a methodology that isolates the child was inconsistent with this collectivist and communal position. Thus it would be appropriate to use a methodology that involved the whole community and took the research "from a micro-system endeavour to a macro-level one".

Critical messages for this report

1. The question of whether children should be asked for their consent/assent was not posed in this evaluation research – published in 2005. The interview suggested that if this research were being done now, this issue might have arisen but five to seven years ago, it did not. At the same time, Tagoilelagi-Leota noted that within a Pasifika perspective, the parents are the key authority so that once the parents consent, the children's consent is not necessary. This point relates to the notion that the child is not able to be seen as isolated from his/her whānau.

2. Feedback to children was not expressly planned for; the underlying assumption being that the feedback would be of interest to the adults. Tagoilelagi-Leota noted that it is understood from a Pasifika perspective that the parents will naturally convey the results of the research during their family events; as they would do with anything that happened with their children. It is in these family gatherings that the children hear about their performance in the research.

3. That involving children from Pasifika communities in research that seeks information from, or about, children via methodologies that isolate them from their teachers and parents is contrary to the collectivist nature of Pasifika communities.

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The issue raised by Palagi teachers about the overly primary-school focus on literacy within the study, did not arise in discussions with Pasifika teachers in immersion centres. When asked about this Tagoilelagi-Leota noted that Pasifika parents valued literacy and often put pressure on Pasifika teachers for their children to learn to write. This raises the issue that different parts of the community may value some curricular endeavours more than others. From a research perspective, this raises questions about how to reconcile different community views—which might be underpinned by values that arise from different worldviews or conditions of life—when researchers make decisions about their study focus and related methodologies.

Questions that are raised

- Should research tools be finalised without the input of key informants from the community in which they will be used, including children?
- How can research methodologies be used in ways that do not position children in situations that are unnatural for them, or create disjunction from the ways in which they would normally operate within their communities?
- How can the collectivist way of being a 'child' in Pasifika communities be accommodated in research methodologies?
- How can research topics and methodologies be used in ways that do not privilege/promote some community values/view over others?

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Appendix

Testing tools used in the study

Testing tools (what was used)

Language (English)

Expressive and receptive language skills were tested using tests used in New Zealand schools, i.e:

i. 'Tell me' procedure from the New Zealand School Entry Assessment Battery. Children listen to tester read an unfamiliar story and retell it to an audience using the book. Scored out of 18 with sub-scores for (i) comprehension; (ii) sentence complexity; (iii) vocabulary; (iv) organisation/story coherence; (v) expression; and (vi) content/main points covered. Has high reliability and validity.

ii. Peabody picture vocabulary test (PPVT) to assess receptive language. Not normed for New Zealand but used extensively in similar studies.

Literacy (English)

Tests used widely in New Zealand schools for literacy development; come from Clay's (1993) observation survey of early literacy achievement:

Concepts about print (CAP) test: for knowledge of aspects of written texts eg, front and back of book; directionality and one-to-one correspondence. Twenty-four graded items with most difficult ones being asking children to identify changes in the order of words and letters in sentences.

Letter identification test (LID) measures knowledge of letter names, letter sounds or words using 54 upper case and lower case letters.

Word recognition test (WORD) of 15 words that have high frequency in first core series of books used in New Zealand classrooms.

Writing vocabulary tests (WRVOC): recording the number of words able to be written in 10 mins; each correctly spelt word = 1 mark; highest level is 81 and above.

Language and literacy measures (heritage language – Samoan or Tongan)

The 'Tell me' procedure and the literacy tests were all translated into Samoan and Tongan by fluent speakers who were familiar with the use of the tests in English.

Multiple translations were made and final consensus agreed where differences were found in the translations; the tests were field-tested for appropriateness.

CHAPTER 3:

Involving children and young persons who are Māori in research

Pania Te Maro

This chapter draws on past and present work to address questions about the involvement of Māori children and young people as participants in educational research. The intention is not to provide solutions, checklists or recipes; rather the aim is to delve into the complexities and messiness of doing research that involves children and young persons who are Māori as a way of opening up the current debates to a wider audience and to promote informed discussion in this area. Therefore this review considers:

- how past and present frameworks for Māori research are linked by underlying issues of ethical responsibility that are embedded in cultural paradigms
- how researcher culture, paradigms and knowledge are integral to the way the researcher is positioned within research involving Māori children and young people as participants
- the participants' roles in the ethics of the research.

The review builds on work done by indigenous Māori researchers and theorists who have contributed to discussions about appropriate ways of conducting research within Māori communities.

Over the last two decades, writers such as Bishop (1996, 1999), Graham (2009), Smith (1990), and Tuhiwai-Smith, (1999, 2005) have advanced our understandings of Kaupapa Māori research frameworks, including how these apply to, and are affected by, mainstream educational interests and issues in Aotearoa New Zealand. One of the challenges for the next decade will be to expand this work with reference to appropriate directions for research having implications for Māori children and youth. This will require the incorporation of multiple identities—cultural and age-related status—into the mix of making appropriate ethical and research design decisions.

Underlying issues in past and present frameworks

Mutch and Wong (2005) note that, "real research is often confusing, messy, intensely frustrating, and fundamentally non-linear" (p. 44, citing Marshall & Rossman 1999, p. 21). Nonetheless, the point is one that bears repeating, as it is what the early work of Bishop (1996, 1999), Smith (1990), and Tuhiwai-Smith (1999a, 1999b) highlighted when they started to draw attention to the particular ethical responsibilities that researchers working within Māori communities needed to take on. Smith (1999a) elaborated on these responsibilities in her seminal monograph, addressing research generally rather than specifics of educational research or research involving children.

Recently, Māori and bicultural researchers have expanded these earlier conversations around Māori research to incorporate alternative approaches (eg, Eketone, 2008; Graham, 2009; Hudson & Ahuriri-Driscoll, 2007; Ritchie & Rau, 2008; Webster, Walsh-Tapiata, Warren & Kiriona, 2007). In particular, Hudson & Ahuriri-Driscoll (2007) have called for the further development of Māori ethical frameworks and argued for the need for processes and outcomes based on Māori perspectives and on Māori positions on issues and concerns. They also called for a framework that is: consistent with Māori values and beliefs; validates Māori knowledge; is widely acceptable to Māori communities; and supports Māori aspirations.

Both the older frameworks and the alternatives emphasise key underlying issues of researcher ethical responsibility, including the need for researchers to recognise:

i. their multiple positioning when undertaking research in indigenous Māori settings
ii. the disciplinary paradigms that researchers operate from
iii. their cultural schema
iv. what their levels of knowledge of Māori might mean for their ethical practices in research.

This review begins with a broad overview of ethical frameworks for conducting research that involves Māori and indigenous peoples. This is followed by an outline of guiding principles for working with Māori and indigenous children and young people, particularly in education, with illustrations from relevant examples. The review concludes by integrating ideas towards providing a platform for further debate.

Ethical frameworks for indigenous Māori research: the past and the present

The early frameworks proposed by Tuhiwai-Smith (1999), Smith (1990), and Bishop (1996, 1999) identified distinct concepts seen as necessary components of ethical practices in research involving Māori. In the following set of culturally specific ideas proposed by Tuhiwai-Smith (1999, p. 13), the emphasis is clearly on an attitude of respect as an integral element of kaupapa Māori research practices:

> Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people)
>
> Kanohi kitea (the seen face, that is – present yourself to people face to face)
>
> Titiro, whakarongo ... korero (look, listen ... speak)
>
> Manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people, be generous)
>
> Kia tupato (be cautious)
>
> Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of people)
>
> Kaua e mahaki (do not flaunt your knowledge, be humble).

Approaching the matter of respect from a different angle, Bishop's (2005) Kaupapa Māori Educational Research framework highlights the power dynamics inherent in research relationships and argues that researchers should be aware of this dynamic at all times. Bishop proposes questions that researchers can pose around the issues of (i) the initiation of research; (ii) who benefits from the research; (iii) who is represented in the research; (iv) what the data legitimise; and (v) the accountability of the research. These issues, and associated questions, are summarised and listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Questions to address in examining the extent to which research adheres to a Kaupapa Māori framework

Power issue	Related questions
Initiation	Who has initiated the research? Do the research participants have power to be decision-makers within the project?
Benefits	Does the research support Māori and Māori endeavours and aspirations?
Representation	Whose voice, interests, needs and concerns are heard?
Legitimisation	Is the data legitimate, valid and robust from a Māori worldview?
Accountability	Who shares in the knowledge? Who distributes it? Who controls the knowledge?

Bishop further proposes that researchers can position their ways of working within communities as *metaphors* that derive from Māori ways of being and that have a comfortable fit with kaupapa Māori. These metaphors are: whanaungatanga; collaborative story telling; participatory consciousness; whānau of interest; somatic knowing; spiral discourse; hui; and that research be participant-driven.

Clearly, both Bishop and Tuhiwai-Smith have much in common in terms of positioning respect and power-sharing as key conceptual tools for working with Māori in research situations. In the hands of Smith (2003) these conceptual tools take on further dimensions, including the idea that research with Māori must also be 'for' Māori. In his keynote address to the Alaskan Federation of Natives, Smith described key responsibilities for demonstrating research conducted from a sound theoretical frame in indigenous settings, including recognition that research:

> Is a potentially useful tool for assisting positive transformation of our indigenous conditions;
>
> Is useful in the right hands and potentially destructive in the wrong hands. Thus the onus is on the person making decisions about the research in consultation with the community to assess its relevance and usefulness;
>
> Is transformative because the 'status quo' for most indigenous contexts is not working well and needs to be improved;
>
> Must move beyond the homogenising position of seeing 'struggle' as a single issue and towards a view of 'struggle' as multi-faceted and thus as needing adaptable approaches to develop multiple transforming strategies;
>
> Should be accountable to the community.

Another recent framework is Eketone's (2008) native theory, combining research responsibilities with researcher responsibilities and behaviours. Eketone suggests that while critical theory has been a useful tool for Māori to critique the marginalisation of indigenous people in research and to strengthen the positioning of Māori out of oppression and into conscientisation and self-determination, it nevertheless continues to place Māori in a position of deficit *otherness* where comparison is made to the more powerful *other*. Eketone also discusses constructivism as the construction of knowledge through social construction of the world. Constructivism may seem to be a suitable research approach for Māori communities but Eketone cautions that this is an epistemology rather than a substantive theory. He suggests that critical theory and constructivism when brought together with kaupapa Māori, create native theory. Native theory is a critical stand for Māori development on and from Māori concepts, likely to serve as an authentic base for research involving Māori children and youth.

> Māori development and advancement is about practice and research that supports us as Māori to develop, not in relation to others but to be where we want to be and to do what we want to do.
> (Eketone (2008, p. 10)

Native theory can also be seen to support development in a way that Māori know to be ethically robust according to Māori systems of knowing, understanding and doing. Ethically native theory means constructing research that has a focus for development, from kaupapa Māori perspectives, for results that are beneficial and advantageous to Māori needs and aspirations, including when working with children and young people. These are issues covered in this chapter that are reflected in the exemplars.

While Eketone explores frameworks for research through an interface between kaupapa Māori and two western theories, Graham (2009) explores traditional and contemporary interpretations of whakapapa as a research methodology rather than starting with western theories. Whakapapa as a framework legitimates Māori knowledge and ways of knowing and of acquiring new knowledge. Whakapapa is organisation of knowledge in respect of the creation and development of all things as never ending and as the link between the past, the present and the future. In terms of ethics, whakapapa is an identifier of who you are, where you are coming from and how you will be accountable to a community through your affiliations and bonds. Researchers who incorporate whakapapa in relationship to research are challenged to demonstrate their positioning and ethical behaviour around how they design and implement research and with whom they interact before, during and after research. Graham, Meyer, McKenzie, McClure, and Weir (2010) provide an example of research that must by necessity straddle the intersection between kaupapa Māori research ethics and mainstream evaluation expectations, where the research agenda is driven not by Māori but by national policy or government initiatives. Graham and his colleagues acknowledge this mainstream context and are transparent about the extent to which each aspect of a kaupapa Māori research approach was reflected in research decisions, thus modelling researcher reflection and responsiveness to Māori.

‘Hei Korowai’ (*as a cloak*) is an indigenous ethical framework for the engagement of Māori research participants described in Taiwhati, Toia, Te Maro, McRae, and McKenzie (2010) as it was used in research on professional development for teachers in wharekura. Hei Korowai is based on Māori academic researcher understandings of Māori epistemology. It is a framework that informs the team about their responsibilities and ethical practices, relevant to any research community.

- The vertical strands (whenu) of the ethics korowai are identified as knowledge, customs, language and worldviews. They represent who people are as Māori researchers.
- The horizontal strands woven from the left of the research korowai (iho) reaffirm researcher bonds to the heavens, its principles, its knowledge of universe and beyond, the spiritual realm, and the unspoken beyond. The team identified that this whenu was not included in research and ethical frameworks at the time of writing Hei Korowai and that it is possibly one of the elements missing from other frameworks. For the team this speaks to a researcher’s commitment to spiritual integrity and recognition that there is a larger force that holds us to behaving with integrity—because of belief in it—tika and pono (rightness and belief).
- The horizontal strands woven from the right (aho) are the strands that belong in the physical now, the reality of day-to-day living and practices … the processes and thoughts that lie within the realm of mankind, including each of our flaws. This speaks to a researcher’s recognition of cultural schema, biases, assumptions and human-ness.
- In the spaces where iho, aho and whenu meet and twist and bind are aroha, wairua, whenua and te reo, which are also inextricably intertwined. Graham’s (2009) whakapapa framework would exist in these spaces as whakapapa binds you to do right according to your links with others. A Māori researcher does not stand alone; they carry also the responsibility of their iwi, hapū and whānau with them.

This is a very brief synopsis of Hei Korowai, a taster of the ideas and concepts included. The Hei Korowai writing team considers the ethical codes and regulations to be far more binding and far-reaching, with greater consequences than ethical codes that might be imposed by a western university’s human ethics review committee, for example. Sharing frameworks such as this can create space for Māori as equal partners in adherence to the ethical regulations and codes of conduct, which must be abided by in application to work with Māori in research. Presently there is no space for indigenous ethics, and current western frameworks do not necessarily serve the needs, aspirations, or worldviews of marginalised and vulnerable communities (Smith, 2005). If this is so for Māori, it is particularly more so for Māori children and young people.

Tikanga is another binding element that Webster, Walsh-Tapiata, Warren & Kiriona (2007) speak of in their research with iwi and rangatahi. Tikanga is the way that individuals or collective groups do things—customs, habits and actions. Tikanga are the guidelines for doing what is right (Mead, 2003). Webster et al. define tikanga in their research context as being iwi-specific safe practices that guide researchers. In the case of their research, tikanga is also negotiated in terms of rangatahi terrains and what fits with their young participants' knowledge and use of tikanga. They see tikanga as purposeful choices, which are reviewable as ideas develop through research. Tikanga then is constantly reviewed and negotiated ensuring continued appropriateness and rightness in accordance with iwi and research participants. For Māori, Iwi are the highest authority for giving ethical permission to researchers, not an institutional body.

Tassell, Herbert, Evans, & Young (2010) discuss the assumptions inherent in codes of ethics for professional practice and research that actually have their origins in western values systems and belief structures, including rights to privacy, informed consent, avoiding conflicts of interest, and regarding the individual as the unit of primary responsibility. For indigenous cultures, interconnected collectivist and kinship organisational structures can be in conflict with western ethical codes of conduct. Who gives consent to participation in research and how the research contributions of participants are used to benefit them rather than solely contributing to 'knowledge' are complex issues for research involving Māori children, who are part of the larger iwi as well as being part of a whānau. Smith (2005) emphasises that ethical boards in institutions generally do not have a deep understanding of indigenous needs and are "*representative of narrow class, religious, academic, and ethnic groups rather than reflecting the diversity of society"* (p. 100). She describes what it is like for marginalised and vulnerable groups who are not usually represented on such boards or, when they are represented, have a 'muted voice' as one or two persons amongst many. The many may accept that there are indigenous ways of carrying out ethical practices but, through lack of deep or true understanding, are unable to shift from their dominant western views of ethics and society. Institutionalised ethics committees/boards are increasingly being challenged to review current practices and frameworks for decision-making. Beginning with rigorous consultation with indigenous groups to reform institutional regulations and codes in order to better include and reflect the epistemologies, protocols, needs and aspirations of indigenous communities. In doing so, ethical codes and regulations of institutions would be reflecting their bicultural responsibilities in a manner benefiting not only indigenous communities but also all communities.

Consideration of ethical debates and frameworks for research undertaken in Māori contexts as well as looking at newer emerging frameworks, lays the foundation for what is expected of researchers conducting Māori research. The next section will examine how researcher positioning, the cultural schema of a researcher, and the knowledge that a researcher brings to research contexts can impact the ethical values, beliefs, and practices in Māori contexts and with Māori children and young people.

Researcher positioning

Kidman (2007) explains researcher positioning in terms of institutional structures and disciplinary paradigms rather than as personal bias. She discusses researchers needing to become "*consciously aware of mediating structures within their own disciplines, which govern their thinking and professional behaviour".* (p.8*)* Kidman exhorts researchers to clarify their positionality with respect to the phenomenon they are investigating. She also argues the need to integrate localised theory more fully with imported theory, making stronger efforts to work with Māori to better recognise and understand what community means in Māori social organisations—as opposed to mainstream ideas about community in social science research:

> Researchers can expect a difficult time if they have not questioned their own academic theories and assumptions about Māori communities in advance of designing their methodologies. (p. 23)

Therefore when considering ethical practices with children and young people who are Māori, researchers need to identify what they are looking for, why they are looking for it, who they are doing the looking for and, most importantly, what lenses they are wearing. It is acknowledgement of default settings – the place where information received is instantly sent; the first connection, choice or decision made when a word or a topic is mentioned; the file where it is scanned, processed, and regurgitated; a setting steeped in cultural schema and assumptions. Alongside institutional and paradigmatic default settings, researchers' cultural settings have a profound effect on design, implementation, analysis, and writing up of research, as well as whether outcomes are seen as valid in the eyes of those being researched. If positioning is not clearly identified prior to research, interpretations of findings are at risk for bias. When children are involved, they do not necessarily have the tools with which to analyse and critique or deny researchers' findings or analysis of data. The danger is that children and young people believe what a researcher has concluded or generalised, which has very real potential for harm.

When claiming to be objective an acknowledgement needs to be made about taken for granted beliefs and values. Can researchers (including Māori) see a Māori world through the eyes of their participants? What do they hear when a Māori person or community talks, how do they interpret what they hear? In addition to the influences of one's own culture, values, beliefs and understandings, Kidman emphasises the role that one's discipline and approach to research can also play in affecting research processes and outcomes. Smith (2005) presents an example of this when she examines the default settings attached to the word respect, which is a major principle in ethical protocols for research with human subjects. She speaks about respect and being respectful as an apparently universal value, yet the *"basic premise of that value is quintessentially Euro-American",* interpreted and expressed in different ways based on methodology, theoretical approach, institutional requirements and even individual idiosyncrasies and 'manners' (p. 98). Tassell et al. (2010) emphasise as well that in te reo Māori, the word 'respect' has several different translations, all of which begin with the prefix 'whaka' to signify a relational dimension beyond the feelings of a single individual. If a seemingly straightforward English word like 'respect' can have multiple facets according to individual interpretation, how will an individual cope with meanings of Māori concepts, from a language and culture that are not personally experienced?

Researchers will need to firstly recognise their default settings and then override them, not just acknowledge them. To do so they will need to have either a degree of knowledge and understanding of what they see and hear in Māori contexts or they will need experts alongside them to help them to interpret what they see or hear. Therefore carrying out ethical research with children and young people who are Māori requires a consideration of personal knowledge and positioning in terms of kaupapa Māori, Māori communities, Māori worldview and possibly Māori language. Alongside this it must also be remembered that being Māori is not a homogeneous grouping. The diversity of Māori is expressed by Penetito, Yates, Reid, Higgins, Selby, Taipana, & Wikaira, (2001) who assert that, "*There is no single Māori reality and that Being Māori is informed by diverse Māori realities*" (pp. 4-5).

For example, a student reported displeasure at meeting someone who did not look her in the eyes when greeting her. If she were a researcher, immediate analysis of data would contain negative and skewed connotations about her research subject because she lacks the knowledge that it is rude in certain cultures or families to look people in the eye. What assumptions do researchers make about events through lack of knowledge and then adapt the event to fit with their knowledge frameworks, colonising participants' actions, words, feelings? If Māori children and young people behave in certain ways or say certain things will a researcher know enough about Māori to analyse their data? Does following up and consulting with children and young people guarantee that the children will be able to clearly and finally declare and articulate that what the researcher has written or says to them is what they meant or want to have recorded permanently?

How much can one infer, hypothesise, and make premises about what one really knows nothing about or has slight knowledge, is a challenge introduced by one's positionality as 'outsider' versus 'insider' If the researcher lacks insider knowledge and understandings of the philosophical, epistemological, lived experiences, and historical principles of underlying events being observed, can one report these authentically? Insiders tell the stories of those who have lived it based on having had those experiences. On the other hand, being Māori is not one single cultural identity: many iwi reflect diverse identities, and Māori have other identities as well, such as gender and age. By definition, any research project involving children will entail an 'outsider' adult attempting to learn about and understand the (insider) world of children.

Arguing that only insiders can do research and interpret findings with particular participants could lead educationalists up very narrow pathways indeed or even preclude research altogether. Nevertheless, researchers must appreciate both the strengths of their perspective as outsiders as well as their limitations, including recognition of situations where the interpretation of findings requires further input from insiders. For example, when te reo is used as a vehicle of communication and a researcher does not understand te reo, or the researcher lacks sufficient knowledge to interpret correctly, how is validity guaranteed?

Participant roles and consultation

Researchers need authentic eyes, ears and voice when carrying out ethical research involving Māori children and young people, therefore expertise from the community 'being researched' is a requirement. This section discusses aspects of working with the Māori community as identified in the literature.

There is a clear and consistent message that kaumātua of any community should be consulted and included in research endeavours. Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson (2003), Hudson & Ahuriri-Driscoll (2007), Ritchie & Rau (2008), Webster et al. (2007). Kaumātua have advisory and support roles as the research continues, and ensure that data and data analyses are valid in the eyes of community/s. Ritchie & Rau (2008) included on their research team kaumātua with strong iwi links and whakapapa to the area knowledgeable about local protocol and processes. In this study kaumātua also had experience and knowledge of the research context having previously worked in it and acted as participant researchers. Graham's (2009) study of Te Aute College provides an exemplary model of how these principles can be reflected in the conduct of educational research involving Māori youth as participants in research.

In some situations it is not unusual for a community to endow upon a person of another iwi the status of kaumātua in their rohe. Kidman (2007), and Bishop (1997) talk about research whānau. Research whānau may or may not include whakapapa links, and/or there may be links that are based on living in an area with a particular community over extended time or having done work with/for the community. Eketone and Graham caution us to be aware that those named as kaumātua must be those who have been given mana by the community. Therefore in ethical terms, choose your advisory groups wisely and watch and listen to the politics of groups to know whether you have made the right choices, as Kidman (2007, p. 22) states:

> Researchers who are not community members need to identify, and work alongside those community organizations that have influence amongst its members, and these groups may not necessarily be the ones that are the most visible or obvious to outsiders.

This raises the point of ethical consideration regarding levels of consultation with Māori. Smith (2005), Fitzpatrick (2005), Hokowhitu, (2004), and Salter, (2000) raise issues about authentic and sufficient consultation with Māori. Despite citing its foundation as Durie's whare tapawhā, the health curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education (1999) has been critiqued as an inappropriate and watered-down version of the concepts espoused in that model. The concept of ako and how ako is articulated illustrate how a cultural concept can lose its full richness and meaning when misappropriated and misused and/or misunderstood (Lee, 2004); the concept of tuakana-teina is another example (Toia, 2010). Whenever such terms are used in research without full understanding, there is risk of damage to not only the language but also the cultural conceptualisation of the language. This in turn can be seen as an academic, modern form of colonisation in misrepresenting and misappropriating peoples' worldview.

Consultation must happen with knowledgeable people to guide the researcher into the rich and deeper understandings of words as full and meaningful concepts (Ritchie & Rau, 2008). Cultural advice on research with Māori children and young people can help to avoid misunderstanding, misappropriation, and/or misuse of concepts that could incorrectly situate tamariki (children) views and language in western rather than Māori terms. If those who write, create history, the ongoing (ethical) impact will be on our future tamariki who read the history and try to understand their Māori world through an incomplete and skewed lens. It is the perusal and final assessment by the community of the researcher and one's commitment and character that determines consent, through a grass-roots-up model rather than a 'bottom-up' model.

Children and young people who are Māori as participants in research

While there are rich sources of information available for discussion about Māori and indigenous ethical research practices and frameworks, there is little available for guidance when research participants are Māori children and young people. A body of literature exists for children of early childhood age, espousing that the voices of children should be heard, and children's perspectives should be gathered and included respectfully. Ritchie and Rau (2008) state that, *"the ominous challenge remains for researchers, in seeking to elicit and honour children's voices, as to how we can find ways to understand children's worlds through adult eyes"* (p. 4).

The commitment to collecting voice from young people is echoed in Webster et al. (2005, p. 179), *"Rangatahi Māori should not be denied the opportunity to exercise agency over their lives…"* The inclusion of rangatahi as participatory action researchers has meant that, ethically, adults have needed to redefine their roles in research to allow the rangatahi room to authentically locate themselves in tikanga, the tikanga of their iwi and of their rangatahi (teen or adolescent) 'terrain'. Rangatahi have informed the research protocols, what needs to be in place for the other rangatahi who are the research participants to feel comfortable with being researched. Mere Berryman (personal communication, 2009) noted one of her major criteria, as a researcher working with intermediate-aged children, was to listen and to hear respectfully, which is reiterated in contemporary generic guides to research with children (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). Another factor in the *Researching with children and young people who are Māori exemplar* was that young people will change the direction of research, which requires researchers to be flexible. From young children to adolescents, opportunities must be provided for their voices to be heard. When they do talk and articulate their perspectives, listening respectfully is evidence that researchers are sincere in saying they want to hear what young people have to say.

Ritchie and Rau (2008) and their co-researchers had to re-think their methodology for collecting child voice because it did not suit the philosophy of centres and centre teachers who were collecting data. Centre philosophy was to have children instigate conversations according to their interests, therefore it was hard for teachers to ask deliberately crafted questions. A solution to that was to use photos, pictures and situation dolls to stimulate conversation. Children were also grouped together to have conversations rather than one-on-one interviews. What also occurred was that teachers would have no contextual background for what children were saying. Therefore parents were invited to sit alongside their children. Parents were able to clarify what their children were saying and to give a context to their utterances. Therefore, if you want to know more, set up stimulus and when you want to be sure about what the children are talking about their whānau may be of assistance.

When scholars discuss being indigenous and being placed under microscopes to be examined by others, there is a risk that children are indulgently, or patronizingly or scathingly scrutinised by that other, who is given the name of western researcher, or coloniser, or imperialist, or even insider/outsider researcher. What power do tamariki have in research, even when the community is consulted? Who consults the children in a way that gives them an authentic chance to say yes or no? Because children are children and researchers are required to gain permission from their elders, does this give the right to go striding into their worlds asking all sorts of questions in whatever way they are asked? When researchers have the power in research relationships with children and young people is it the same as colonialist researchers making judgements about the uncivilised and inferior indigenous peoples? Once again, there is not enough information about robust, valid ethical frameworks, systems, rules and regulations for researching children and young people who are Māori. However, frameworks for culturally responsive teaching and learning with Māori children have been created by educationalists and researchers, which have very strong parallels with ethical frameworks and could inform the design and implementation of ethical practices.

Bishop et al. (2003) discuss a framework of metaphor to 're-image' (p.12) education. The use of metaphor could also be the framework that re-images research ethical practices with Māori children and young people. Using the work of Elbaz (1983) and Heshusius (1996), Bishop et al. discuss how teachers (replace with researchers) use metaphors – images that they hold that are their assumptions, principles and practices about how reality fits together. They then say that the images direct actions, rules of practice, prescriptions for action and how researchers reflect on their experiences are driven by their metaphors. This is a similar idea to default settings and cultural schema discussed earlier in the paper. In order to transplant ideas and seed the beginnings of an ethical framework, this review synthesises suggestions by Bishop et al. (2003), Bevan-Brown (2009), Hawera & Taylor (2007), and Macfarlane (2009) for good teaching and learning pedagogy. The ideas about how teachers might best care for the needs of Māori students seem to nourish ideas about how researchers might image and action their ethical practices.

Bishop et al. (2003) provide metaphors for power sharing in schools. Bevan-Brown (2009) identifies aspects that teachers and others need to consider when identifying whether a Māori child is gifted or talented. Macfarlane (2009) discusses solutions to the failure of school systems to meet the needs of Māori students. Hawera & Taylor (2007) discuss research approaches undertaken with young participants. For each set of ideas where the teacher is the focus the word teacher has been substituted with researcher. Reference to schools has been replaced as reference to research. There is no doubt that many of the points will fit across and in other areas in a more holistic manner. For this review the categories are examples or ideas. The recommendation is that more work be undertaken to develop and grow a robust, framework that caters for diverse contexts and communities of Māori children and young people. The ongoing review and development of the framework would necessarily be an iterative and organic process. Table 3.2 includes some examples of how this might look in research with Māori children and young people.

Table 3.2: Classroom (best) Practice as a Framework for Research (best) Ethical Practice

Tino rangatiratanga (relative autonomy/self-determination)	Taonga Tuku Iho (cultural aspirations), whānau (family), and kaupapa (collective vision, philosophy)	Teacher/researcher skills, knowledge, methodology and pedagogy
Bishop et al. (2003, p. 12) "the right to determine one's own destiny, to define what that destiny will be and to define and pursue means of attaining that destiny." Parent and student involvement in learning can be matched to research with an emphasis on students having more power. Researchers: • are not afraid to share power • need to pay attention to the vision, understanding, motivation and purpose behind what (students do) and to the process involved. This requires researchers to discuss students' work with them	**Taonga Tuku Iho** Bishop et al. (2003, p. 12): "used in its metaphoric sense as meaning cultural aspirations Māori people hold for their children and includes those messages that guide us in our relationships and interaction patterns." **Whānau** "When imaging or theorising [research] interactions in terms of … metaphoric whānau relationships, [research] interactions will be fundamentally different from those created when [researchers] talk of method and process using machine or transmission metaphors to explain their theorising/imaging. **Kaupapa** "students achieve better when there is a close relationship between home and [research team] in terms of aspirations, languages and cultures… suggest the need to develop a common set of goals and principles and practices, which … ensure that all children will benefit from [research]. These concepts have been integrated under three headings of culture, potential and relationships. **Culture** • Caring for person (socio-culturally located). • Connecting to culture…	• As well as being professional and highly skilled, 'researchers' are positive. • They perform with confidence, which gives children confidence in them. • They bring a certain energy to their 'research' that creates a sense of meaningfulness and purpose. • 'Researchers' understand the various worlds that the children live in. • Patience. • Creating a secure, well-managed 'research' environment. • Insisting on effective 'research' interaction. • Procuring a repertoire of strategies. • Arrange small, informal group meetings of parents and 'researchers' to discuss the 'research' the involvement of the child, and other topics important to Māori.

Tino rangatiratanga (relative autonomy/self-determination)	Taonga Tuku Iho (cultural aspirations), whānau (family), and kaupapa (collective vision, philosophy)	Teacher/researcher skills, knowledge, methodology and pedagogy
• are aware of systemic issues, matters of power and control, and other influences and are taking them into account in order to ethically study the child and what is relevant, real, valid and that this will be a determinant in the analysis of data.	• Have a socio-cultural consciousness… Villegas & Lucas, (2002) • Working with parents, culturally relevantly… • Observation is carried out within a culturally responsive environment by (researchers) who have a sound knowledge of Māori culture and Māori perspectives. • Culture has an influence on how (giftedness) is manifest. • To help accurately identify (gifted) students from diverse cultural groups use of checklists and rating scales to focus observations. **Collections of characteristics/indicators and behaviours specifically** • Focusing on characteristics/indicators of children from ethnic minority groups. • BUT they often lump quite diverse cultural groups together. • They tend to encourage cultural stereotyping. • They can be quite limiting as they usually focus on a narrow range of characteristics/indicators. • Use culture-specific lists to raise cultural awareness and use ’in conjunction with’ not ‘instead of’ other more comprehensive lists. • Use appropriate, authentic cultural lenses. • Lists of culturally appropriate characteristics to inform and guide identification have been compiled using an appropriate cultural lens in their application. • Observations = identifying and analysing characteristics through a cultural lens – humour in one culture is not funny in another so when making generalisations, what cultural lens are they based on? • It is unlikely that students will confide in researchers they do not trust, or share cultural knowledge when they know it is not valued. • Ensure samples collected are assessed through an appropriate cultural lens. • Parents know their children better than anyone else and so potentially they are a valuable identification source – be aware of cultural constraints about how parents describe their children (kore whakahīhī). Collect information from parents in an appropriate fashion – informal discussions, child profile sheet, face to face discussion at parents’ request. Researchers having good, trusting relationships with parents. • Extend requests for inclusion of children to the whānau members and the Māori community. Nannies, koro, aunts, uncles, cousins, kōhanga reo whānau, cultural group tutors … potential sources of information about Māori children. This is helpful when researchers have insufficient cultural and reo knowledge (to accurately analyse findings).	• Observation as the principal method of identifying (gifted Māori children). • What exactly will ‘researchers’ be looking for in their observations? • Developing relevant lists of characteristics/indicators from scratch or adapting published lists to reflect the unique circumstances of the ‘research’ community. • For analysing results researchers need expertise to make judgements, inferences, premises and generalisations about the data. • Does the research environment actually have the conditions to give a fair representation of what the research is seeking to reveal? Therefore are the results going to be valid and robust? • Recognise that Māori, therefore Māori children and young people, is not a homogenous group, while issues may be common to many Māori, they will not apply to all. • Māori approaches are more holistic and intertwined – are the research approaches? • What expectations (what lenses) is the researcher taking with them into the research with the tamariki? • Are they researching the ‘child’ or are they aware of all and everyone that is that child? (individualistic v the Māori worldview that we are the living faces of our ancestors whom we carry with us at all times). • Students interviewed individually in their choice of language, in a quiet place, away from the classroom. • Told that the interviewer was interested in finding out their thoughts about their learning. • Maintaining the integrity of kaupapa Māori educational initiatives if doing research in kaupapa Māori educational settings – kōhanga, kura. • Ensuring the research will benefit the participating community. • Formal welcome, children seeing the researchers before they are interviewed or taken through assessment tasks – whanaungatanga. • Having experience in the field that you are researching.

Tino rangatiratanga (relative autonomy/self-determination)	Taonga Tuku Iho (cultural aspirations), whānau (family), and kaupapa (collective vision, philosophy)	Teacher/researcher skills, knowledge, methodology and pedagogy
	• In giving information researchers should be sensitive to the child's cultural context. Gather information using methods in which students do not feel as if they are being boastful but that they are sharing their (ideas) with someone who is genuinely interested in them and their opinions. • Testing and results of testing. Know that the 'tests' are culturally fair and culturally appropriate. Are you testing for how well they test? Are you relying on one type of test? Does that give best information for analysis? • Having an advisory committee, which includes people actively involved in the kaupapa to provide authentic cultural advice. **Potential** • Caring for performance of student (socio-cognitively located). • Identifying and transforming the potential of young Māori. • Have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds… • Work against a self-fulfilling prophecy that Māori children are 'deficit'… • Recognising potential. • Children will vary in the extent to which they have had opportunities and encouragement to develop and display their (gifts and talents). So thinking about variables. • Those doing the identifying must be aware of cultural differences in this respect and be vigilant in their search for potential (giftedness). • Researchers be aware of the opportunities children have been exposed to and the possibilities for potential (within design and analysis methodological approaches). **Relationships** • Relationships are crucial. • Respect reciprocal. • Participated, shared their lives, feelings, failings… and vulnerabilities. • Pre-existing relationships with the people involved is effective. • Kanohi-ki-te-kanohi approach to people being involved reinforcing/forming/recognising relationships and presenting to the whānau whānui.	

The ideas from Bishop et al. (2003) who provide metaphors for power-sharing in schools, Bevan-Brown (2009) who identifies aspects that teachers and others need to consider when identifying whether a Māori child is gifted or talented, Macfarlane (2009) who discusses solutions to the failure of school systems to meet the needs of Māori students, Hawera & Taylor (2006) who discuss how research approaches undertaken with young participants have been collated, had the words 'teacher' and 'school' replaced by researcher and research. The purpose for this is to highlight concepts that are transferable from best practice in teaching to best ethical practice in research.

Table 3.3 provides a summary of the critical issues that have been discussed in the review, pinpointing questions arising from these critical issues for consideration by researchers.

Table 3.3: Critical issues and questions for research with Māori children and young people

Critical issues	Questions raised
Doing research in a Māori world involves a range of complex issues that challenge taken-for-granted Euro-American/Western meanings about research.	How can researchers shed dominant Euro-American taken-for-granted meanings in order to be open to indigenous meanings that operate in the research context?
Power dynamics are inherent in the research relationship and need to be carefully negotiated in Māori and indigenous settings.	How do we authentically negotiate power relationships with children and young people?
Taken-for-granted beliefs can create a filter of cultural values that need to be challenged.	How can researchers attain a working knowledge of what they are seeing and hearing in Māori contexts to avoid colonising the participants' actions, words, and feelings? How can Māori voices not be 'muted' through taken-for-granted beliefs that may sit within a research agenda?
Māori ethical frameworks and institutional frameworks.	How can institutional codes and regulations that govern research in the non-Māori world work with Māori ethical principles to ensure the research has integrity in both worlds? What would be appropriate processes to enable a review of institutional ethical codes to enable this to happen?
Being a Māori researcher in the Māori world is about *whakapapa.*	How well does the researcher understand their position in relation to the research context? How does the design of the research respect the researcher's position within the research context? With whom should the researcher interact before, during and after the research process?
Recognising and challenging default settings in the researcher's discipline is central to working in Māori research settings.	How can researchers become aware of structures within their disciplines that govern their thinking?
Flexibility is needed in research methodology in Māori educational settings in order that the methods do not work in opposition to the setting's pedagogical philosophy.	What knowledges should the researcher bring to the Māori research setting and how can the researcher respond flexibly to the pedagogical context of the research?
Issues of validity need to be addressed from a position of shared understanding of philosophical, epistemological and historical principles as well as from lived experiences.	How can research attain validity when the researcher does not have shared understandings, language and the experience of oppression with the researched?

Summary

The literature indicates that various frameworks have been developed for ethical practices for Māori children and young people who are research participants. These different frameworks provide a starting point for synthesising flexible, contextually responsive systems and processes to meet the needs and issues covered in this review. The development of a framework specifically focused on research with Māori children and young people is a work in progress and will also require institutional changes so that Māori research can take an equal and rightful position in decisions about, and reviews of, researcher ethical practice.

Top scholars, researchers and theorists have built a corpus of relevant theory and frameworks for ethical practices with Māori and indigenous communities. Nevertheless, we have not reached a position where Māori ethical frameworks sit alongside institutional codes, regulations and policies that make decisions about research with Māori. This has far-reaching implications that are compounded when we consider that the most vulnerable people in our communities, our children and young people, are absent in most of the discussion and debate about what constitutes sound ethical research practices.

We have had nearly two decades of discussion, debate, review, new growth and evolution of ideas about ethics for Māori and indigenous peoples but the literature reveals that the struggle for autonomy and validation still exists. If this is so for adult research communities, then it seems more so for children and young people and their whānau. Unfortunately the recipes, checklists and frameworks to constitute robust and valid ethical guidelines for working with Māori children and young people exist primarily in small patches of work, rather than as a comprehensive collection, collaboration of ideas or full understandings of principles and practices reflecting those principles. What currently exists is not yet adequately informed through kaupapa Māori, Māori worldview, epistemologies or aspirations.

This review serves to highlight the need for further reflection and discourse with those who have already begun the process taking a place at the helm of steering groups that specifically focus on guidelines for Māori ethical frameworks. It also highlights the need for institutions to review current practice to allow room for Māori and other indigenous frameworks to operate in practice, and enhance what currently exists.

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Researching with children and young people who are Māori exemplar

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Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Tiakiwai, S., & Richardson, C. (2003). Te Kotahitanga: The Experiences of Year 9 and 10 Māori Students in Mainstream Classrooms. Ministry of Education.

Interview details:
Interviewer: Pania Te Maro
Interviewee: Mere Berryman

Background

Two reports were referred to by Mere during her interview. In order to create a useful and rich exemplar of ethical practice by a Māori researcher working with young Māori research participants, both reports have been referred to. This exemplar weaves together practices referred to by the researcher that involve two different age groups of young research participants relating to different settings, contexts and themes for research, giving an overview of the practices from either research project.

The first project, Hei Āwhina Mātua, arose from a need to carry out local research into behaviour management from a kaupapa Māori perspective, which would incorporate kaumātua, whānau and kaiako through the research and development process. The original focus of Hei Āwhina Mātua was to address the needs of kaiako and whānau of children in pre-school settings. However, concerns about suspensions and expulsion of Māori students in mainstream school settings prompted a focus on also researching Māori students in both mainstream intermediate school settings and Kura Kaupapa Māori and immersion primary settings.

The second project, Te Kotahitanga research, was initially funded by the Research Division of the Ministry of Education and was carried out by the Māori Educational Research Institute (MERI) of the School of Education, University of Waikato and Poutama Pounamu Research and Development centre. The problem under investigation was how to respond more effectively to the high rates of school suspension and the early leaving rates, with less formal qualifications, of the over 90% of Māori students attending English-medium secondary schools.

Mere was part of a research team for both investigations.

Aims and Objectives

Hei Āwhina Mātua

The Hei Āwhina Mātua project was focused on harnessing the energies and capacities of the whānau and school communities, collectively and collaboratively, focusing on the agency of each group to take responsibility for promoting the potential of the child/student. The aim of the research was to trial specifically developed resources and to evaluate them against participation and achievement outcomes.

Te Kotahitanga

The objectives of this project as stated in the report were to:

- investigate how Māori students experience the varying influences there are on their educational achievement and how they might see ways of improving their educational achievement
- construct a series of narratives of experience and their analysis.
- develop a model for professional development to implement change in classroom relationships and interactions.

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- identify influences on Māori students' achievement
- investigate questions that flow from the narrative accounts of students in order to understand the dynamic nature of influences and to indicate solutions to the problems facing Māori students in mainstream classrooms
- determine what underlying teacher, school behaviour and attitudes make a difference to Māori achievement
- investigate how education can make the greatest difference in raising the educational achievement of Māori students (Bishop et al., 2003, p.3).

Involvement and inclusion of participants

The involvement and inclusion of participants of both research projects are reported in the bullet points as gleaned from the research reports. However, the information from the interview with Mere reveals more detail about consent, role of parents, whānau and communities and how participants were involved.

Hei Āwhina Mātua

- Three schools, one a mainstream intermediate, one a kura kaupapa Māori, and a kura rumaki Year 1 to 6.
- Teachers, whānau members and students took part in filling in checklists.
- Observations were undertaken in the classroom and playground, class to class, across all school intervals, before and after school.
- Data were gathered for student achievement and participation, (attendance, stand-downs, expulsions, Resource Teachers: Learning & Behaviour/Special Education (RTLB)/(SE) referrals.
- All data analysed and the whānau, board of trustees (BoT) and school community gathered together to receive feedback, which is most constructive when held on a local marae.

Te Kotahitanga

- Four school sites self-selected through Whānaungatanga links.
- A visit was arranged to talk with staff, students and parents.
- Consent forms were provided for each group to complete.
- Members of the research team visited the schools to gather data at times that were pre-arranged. The interviews did not always take place at schools. Some participants were more comfortable at the marae or a private house.
- Their schools selected the students who were interviewed. The schools had been asked to identify the student's levels of engagement with what the school/teacher/s had to offer.

Access, consent, role of parents, whānau and community

There is a different type of ethics when you are working with a Māori community. You have to stand up to the close scrutiny of the community. Accountability has a double layer of responsibility. The community brings researchers in. (Berryman, Interview)

Mere talked about calling a hui for the community and having a hall full of people. She felt that being a teacher was a contributing factor to the positive response of participants. The other factor was having kaumātua support and presence. Both factors bring in parents and create engagement. The other point that Mere made is that this is a different type of ethics because the kaumātua and the community legitimate the research programme by participating or do not legitimate the programme by not participating.

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When you want to gain access to children who are vulnerable and get their buy in to a project you go through parents and you approach children and parents in a really respectful way. Children and parents will be sizing you up and the first thing they want to know is who you are, where you are coming from and why. Because they want to know who you are you need to take the time to respectfully get to know who they are and what the whakapapa and whānau links are. Be prepared to be read your pedigree. (Berryman, Interview)

Tools and Strategies

Mere pointed out the following ‘need to haves’ for research with children and young people as participants.

- A kaiwhakaruruhau (Senior Māori group) who advised the research team on cultural issues.
- Building narratives of experience through collaborative story telling. (Collaborating with the children, listening to and honouring their ideas and views.)
- Group interviews and later interviewing individuals who volunteered to contribute more.
- ‘Chats.’ Informal conversations initiated by participants – people telephoning researchers, students talking to researchers in the school grounds.
- In order to gain a more holistic view of the students’ narratives and contexts, parents, principals and teachers were interviewed.

Students have a right to be heard, they have a right to let me know their thoughts. I didn’t realise the importance of student voice until I got the power of student voice.

Listen to students, really listen. You might not hear what you want, but you will get what is important. When you are seriously listening they will be kind to you. (Berryman, Interview)

At first Mere’s team felt as if the children were challenging them. As the students began to see that they were being listened to it became easier:

Sometimes you ask the hard questions and you listen to the answers, kids need to know they are safe and to be convinced of it. Just listen and do not be judgmental – trying to understand their experience and don’t preach to them, (or add your 5c worth), you shouldn’t hear your voice too much.

Students become collaborators in learning and research, power shifts – give them more power – they are able to direct research. Students create a reality. (Berryman, Interview)

In one of Mere’s research projects the students told the researchers that they couldn’t make it [seem] perfect, they said:

You have a problem and you can make it better, you can’t make it perfect, because if you make it perfect no one would believe it.

Mere got the students to act out what the reality was, what actually went on and this was what was captured on video, not what the researchers thought should be created. The video was shared back with the students to verify. Finally, the students wrote what the process had been like for them along with their thoughts, beliefs and aspirations.

They told us what a report to the Ministry should look like. Students of all ages do want to contribute, do want to be heard, want to engage. (Berryman, Interview)

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Ways of carrying out work with Māori students:

- Starting with karakia, whanaungatanga, mihimihi and ending with poroporoākī.
- Not proceeding until the students are ready. Be prepared to come back and be prepared to take the time those students need.
- Ask them if they have any questions. As a non-Māori researcher being aware that they might not want to ask you questions, particularly if they have not formed a relationship with you.
- Don't just finish when you are finished wait until they're finished. Let them keep talking until they've said what they want to say, not when you think you've got what you wanted.
- Relating at different levels. Might be community, school, class or group. (Community might mean the extended whānau, the hapū, and/or the iwi group, and you may need to be prepared to go outside of your comfort or knowledge levels into those groups, do you know how?)
- Crying through hard issues. Respectful.
- Level of comfort – sitting on the floor.
- Seldom give feedback while in the process. Don't take notes, get agreement to tape so that you're not distracted. (All kids get to play with the tape recorder.)
- Knowing the child and communicating with parents. (Think about the relationships that need to be formed if you want people to open up to you.)
- Always greet by name.
- Ask about them.
- Tell about yourself, at a more indepth level than your name and your job.
- Make sure the place you are working with them in is comfortable, warm, ventilated.
- Read notes about who the students are.
- The research task – there should be a connection, a Māori connection, to the child first.
- Take time to reconnect with students and let them know why you are there when you are re-visiting.
- If you are working with vulnerable children make sure they see their progress. You want to know what they can do, not what they can't do.
- Trust, respect, listen.
- Give something back to the schools and communities – royalties for books go to the schools. Benefits back to sites.

Analysis

- Reporting back to the group – report back to the whānau and community – usually at the marae.
- Transcripts checked by the groups or individual principals.
- Seeking clarification from participants who can provide it.
- Narratives prepared and discussed with the relevant participants, time consuming but deemed integral to kaupapa Māori methodology.

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- Once the narratives were gathered they were coded into three main ideas according to the “meanings that interview participants had ascribed to their experiences and in this way produced a representation that the participants would legitimate.”

Challenges

Mere made two comments about challenges that speak eloquently and succinctly without need of explanation.

How long has it been since you have been in a room full of 12 and 13 year olds?

Make sure that you prepare yourself better if you are going to work with students who have a disability of some kind.

CHAPTER 4:

Involving children in research: Primary school

Sarah Te One

> What childhood is and who children are depend not only on where one looks but also on the lens through which that gaze is directed. (James, 2004, p. 25)

Until the 1990s, 'middle childhood' or the primary school years were "relatively neglected by researchers outside the field of developmental psychology" (Kellett & Ding, 2004, p. 161). This neglect has been attributed to sociological researchers' interest in the rapid changes experienced by children under five, and teenagers (Hill, Laybourn, & Borland, 1996). More recently, research has shifted "out of the developmental centre to embrace sociological, anthropological and emancipatory perspectives", which require a new repertoire of methodologies and research designs (Kellet & Ding, 2004, p. 161). Constructivist pedagogies, with their views of children as *social actors*, striving to make sense of their social worlds as they participate in cultural processes with more experienced others, have become very influential in education. Together, these developments have contributed to a change in the way that research with children is thought about. Children are no longer the objects of research; they are now involved in research, and researchers and others recognise that this involvement augments understandings of children's experiences.

Rationale for involving children in research: voice, agency, and power

The rationales for including children as participants in research vary according to different theoretical perspectives but they share a view of the child as active, engaged in and contributing to their social world. A common purpose expressed in the literature by the different theoretical perspectives is that research should not be on children but with them and for them, and "the 'with' and the 'for' are linked in terms of goals and methods" (Hood, Kelley, & Mayall, 1996, p 119).

Education: to understand and support participation and learning

Researchers who are drawing on educational theories emphasise the need to understand how children's participation in classrooms affect the ways they learn and how the classroom impacts on children's understanding of their social worlds: "There is a need to understand how classroom experience shapes students' minds" (Nuthall, 1999a, p. 143). For example, Alton Lee, Nuthall and Patrick's (1993) New Zealand study explored children's public and private utterances to "open a window to the child's experience of both worlds" (p. 50), and concluded that involving children in research was, in fact, a way for children to speak directly to teachers about their teaching practices, as well as revealing "fundamental questions about bias in research" (Alton-Lee et al., 1993, p. 82). Research involving primary school-aged children can deepen understanding (for researchers, teachers, and children) of how classrooms are culturally constructed and that, for some children, the sociocultural context has "a profound effect on the way the enacted curriculum is translated into the child's personal beliefs and knowledge" (Alton-Lee et al., 1993, p. 82).

This view is echoed by Bourke (2008) who challenged an assumption that teachers, researchers and educators listen to students. Through an investigation of students' perceptions of reforms in education, Bourke revealed that when students' voices are legitimised, they feel "more in control, better connected with the institution, and learn to appreciate their teachers' perspectives" (p. 155). Bourke suggests that student involvement "in educational institutions is a powerful means to support their learning" as well as a means to inform educational leadership, including researchers, to develop "a culture where students' voice is actively sought, legitimized and included" (p. 162).

Further, Nuthall (1999a, p. 145) suggests that education is about socialising children to become capable and competent members of society, and educational research with primary school-aged children seeks to understand the ways in which "the school classroom acts as a primary site for the transmission of intellectual and social culture" (p. 145). The art of teaching is arguably research (see Nuthall, 1999a and Alton-Lee et al., 1993) because, as Nuthall (2007, p. 51, cited in Bourke, 2008, p. 155) points out, "teaching is about sensitivity and adaptation. It is about adjusting to the here-and-now circumstances of particular students". Informed, research-based evidence involving children is fundamental to responsive teaching and learning.

Children's rights discourse

A common rationale in support of children's participation in research refers to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) (1989). Article 12 specifically articulates children's rights to be consulted, and their rights to an informed opinion. UNCROC provides a legal rational for participatory methodology (Alderson, 2000; Bessell, 2008; Harcourt, 2008; Hill, Davis, Prout, & Tisdall, 2004; Hill et al., 1996; Jones, 2004; Moore, McArthur, & Noble-Carr, 2008; Powell & Smith, 2009; Sinclair, 2004; Willow, Marchant, Kirby, & Neale, 2004). Evaluatory tools such as Hart's (1997) ladder of participation and Shier's (2001) pathways to participation model link directly to UNCROC and are cited as providing signposts for research involving children (Clark, 2004; Powell & Smith, 2009; Sinclair, 2004).

Childhood researchers who operate within a participatory research paradigm to research *with* and *for* children argue that children generate knowledge and "knowledge about children is incomplete unless it takes into account the knowledge that children have of themselves" (Jones, 2004, p. 114). Children are experts in their own lives (Clark, 2004; Clark & Moss, 2001; Cook & Hess, 2007; Langsted, 1994; Moore et al., 2008) and "children's participation can enhance children's skills and self-esteem, support better decision-making and protection of children and improve policies for children (Mayall, 1999, Sinclair, 2004)" (cited in Powell & Smith, 2009, p. 124).

New sociology of childhood: voice and agency

Childhood sociologists agree that voice and agency are children's rights. Pufall and Unsworth (2004) interpret 'voice' as expressing intent, and further, that this expression of intent is agentic. Voice refers to "that cluster of intentions, hopes and grievances, and expectations that children guard as their own [and] to the fact that children are much more self-determining actors than we generally think" (p. 8). 'Voice' can be both verbal and non-verbal communication. Agency refers to how children express their voice. Lundy (2007) has a useful way of explaining these concepts. She explains listening to children in terms of space, voice, audience and influence:

Space:	Children must be given the opportunity to express a view.
Voice:	Children must be facilitated to express their views.
Audience:	The view must be listened to.
Influence:	The view must be acted upon, as appropriate. (p. 933)

Research involving children means listening to children. Listening to children can be understood as a political act that unites the child with civil society and, as such, is critical to facilitating children's participation in society (Te One, 2008). The pedagogy of listening "is a context … where individuals feel legitimated to represent their theories and offer their own interpretations of a particular question", which generates understanding and awareness (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 66). However, the pedagogy of listening is difficult to achieve (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Carroll-Lind, Chapman, Gregory, & Maxwell, 2006; Clark, 2004). How research includes children's voices requires an understanding of how organisational structures impact on children (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Finch, 2005; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008; Mitchell, 2007; Rinaldi, 2006; Smith, 2002; Willow et al., 2004). This point is relevant to all sectors of the education system, from early childhood through to secondary school.

Methodology

Methodological challenges when involving primary school-aged children in research

The questions and challenges of involving primary school-aged children as active participants in research highlight the roles and responsibilities of adult researchers as much as they establish children's rights in research. Therefore, "Research with children in the middle years requires more than a little tinkering around the methodological edges" (Kellet & Ding, 2004, p. 172). Even though it is possible to involve children at each stage of the research, there are constraints that need to be considered, and some flexibility is recommended. Most often children are involved at certain points in the research journey and it is useful to identify early, where children's contributions best fit. Jones (2004) developed a framework for involving children in research using six key processes summarised below:

1. **Identify barriers and establish boundaries:** Commonly acknowledged barriers to children's participation in research include the following:

   - funding constraints;
   - questions about the appropriateness of the research;
   - a lack of knowledge, skills or abilities for some research-based tasks;
   - time constraints; and,
   - access and communication issues.

   Both adults' and children's perceptions of children's roles in the research process can limit children's participation. Similarly factors, such as the child's gender, race, religion, social class, and culture, may "create social pressure or expectations that impact on children's participation" (Jones, 2004, p. 118). Identifying potential barriers to involving children potentially creates opportunities to address these. At the same time, thorough investigation of the barriers can result in clearer aims for the research because the boundaries and restrictions are made visible.

2. **Negotiate engagement and clarify roles:** Identify the stages and research tasks clearly for children and, at the same time, include parents and caregivers by backgrounding the aims and purposes of the research; how children are to be involved, and what tasks children can expect to participate in. Establishing an interest in participating is important. Ethical consent processes (discussed later in this chapter) require the researcher to minimise harm and to explain, in appropriate ways, the purpose and benefits of the research. Parents and caregivers can provide 'invaluable support' for researchers involving children (Jones, 2004, p. 119) so therefore, informing parents and caregivers about the processes and purposes of the research is important. Equally important is some negotiation about access to the data, and what roles children might have during the analysis and dissemination phases: "Children should have the opportunity to explore what the research means, […] understand how their participation fits into the bigger picture, and what the benefits or drawbacks might be for them" (Jones, 2004, p. 119).

3. **Research design:** Some attention to theoretical positioning is required at this point and how children might be informed and involved requires consideration, particularly with regard to age and ability and the social context where the research takes place. Suggestions include informal talks, trialling designs, and pilot studies with children. Different methods and designs are highlighted in the exemplars at the end of this chapter. A sense of coherence between the theory, the methodology and the research design is important.

4. **Accessing resources for communication and participation:** How to communicate effectively with children and how to facilitate access to enable participation may require both resources and time. Some consideration of

how to support and sustain children's involvement in research is required. For example, Carroll-Lind et al., (2006) offered access to counselling services owing to the nature of their research into violence experienced in the home. Scott (2008) and her team provided 'a fast food snack' during the interviews (p. 100).

5. **Creating the work environment:** Attention to the context in which the research is undertaken is critical. The aim of the researcher is to ensure that the research objectives are met; therefore Jones (2004) recommends thinking of children as workers and therefore entitled to a certain standard of working conditions. For example, an often overlooked condition of children's participation in research is how this will be compensated. Finch (2005, p. 69) offered the children a book voucher but only once their involvement in the research had ended: "This was not signalled to them earlier so that [the book voucher] would not act as an inducement; Hill, 1998". Children might also be rewarded with certificates that could acknowledge not only that they participated in the research but that they acquired some new skill as a result of their involvement. Ongoing support during the research involving children is regarded as critical and requires the researcher to consider appropriate ways of managing this. Access to supervision can ensure that:

   a. Research objectives are met

   b. Research principles are followed

   c. Problems or concerns are addressed at an early stage

   d. Emotional effects are identified and dealt with appropriately

   e. The child as a researcher (beyond his or her involvement in a particular project) is facilitated

   f. Gaps in resources, skills or training are identified

   g. Children have opportunities to voice their opinions.

6. **Reflection, monitoring and review:** Investing in time to reflect, monitor and review the research project is recommended but often overlooked. Time to meet and discuss any issues that arise as part of the research should be structured into the research project's timeline. In situations where conflicts arise, Jones (2004) recommends the adult researcher attend carefully to the rights of the children involved in the project: an assurance that children's views will be heard underpins methodologies involving children in research (Jones, 2004).

   Yet another consideration for the primary school years (in fact all ages) is to account for diversity and commonality in childhood (Christensen & James, 2008). Children of the same age respond to, and engage with, the research processes differently depending on their social experiences and social competences, hence:

   > [Children's] social experiences and their relative competencies as social actors must always be seen as contextualized, rather than determined by the process of physiological and psychological change.
   > (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 170-171)

Christensen & James (2008) conclude, however, that age remains a dominant signifier, and that "global paradigms … may privilege commonality above the diversity, with such privileging turning out to be potentially detrimental and socially excluding of some children" (p. 171).

Researcher awareness of commonality and diversity emerged in part from the involvement of children in research, and from the subsequent positioning by some of children as researchers, not just as research participants (Jones, 2004). While children are curious about their lives, they cannot be held responsible for research – that role remains with organisations or academic institutions (Jones, 2004). However, questions about the extent to which children are involved in research, and to what end, remain moot. This chapter's focus is on how children are involved in research as participants, and not on children as researchers.

Gaining access

Participatory research methods require close attention to gaining access to children and to research sites. Christensen and James (2008, p. 171) observed an interrelationship "between the form, content and process of research". Therefore research design, ethical consent processes, gaining access as well as conducting research, dissemination and reporting back processes should be coherent and consistent methodologically and in practice. Hood et al. (1996) describe the process as one of involvement in a 'chain of negotiation'. Consequently, there are multiple dimensions to gaining access. Sinclair (2004) identified four questions of engagement determined by the nature and intended outcomes of the research. Researchers need to:

- assess the level of participation (for example, to what degree is power shared between the researcher and participants?)
- differentiate between public (for example, at school) and private (in the home) decisions about whether or not to participate. Is the research to influence planning or policy? Is it community-based or school-based? And, how are children to be involved?
- consider whether or not participation in the research is a one-off consultation or will children's participation be ongoing for the duration of the project?
- question how will (or might) children's participation in the research affect them in the future?

These questions are shared by many who desire children's participation in research (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008; Greig, Taylor, & MacKay, 2007; Moore et al., 2008). The *Early childhood participatory methods exemplar* illustrates some issues associated with including very young children in research, such as whether or not the level of participation is determined by the child or the researcher. The *Primary school focus group interviews exemplar* comments on the challenges that arose when research findings upset parents and children alike. In this exemplar, the community response demanded action from the schools. The *Secondary schools mixed methods action research exemplar* is an example of a research project focused on students' views of learning with a view to improving teaching. Research can have unintended outcomes if the purposes and research design do not take into account the multiple dimensions of purpose, design, ethics, access and dissemination. Both the disabilities' exemplars emphasise building relationships with participants, and in the case of Ward's research (*Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar*) she emphasises "the relational aspect within an ethic of care" (p. 166)

Powell and Smith (2009) investigated the extent to which children's rights to participate were being implemented in research involving children. Citing the implications of UNCROC, Powell and Smith argue there are legal responsibilities to involve children in all matters that concern them and this extends to how children are involved in research. Their project examined New Zealand researchers' experiences of "access to and barriers to involving children in research" (p. 124). The study found that recruiting children as participants:

> seemed to depend on the setting in which the recruitment was undertaken and the nature of the research topic. Recruitment was found to be more difficult when the projects had sensitive research topics or when they were conducted in non-educational settings. The recruitment process was enhanced in educational settings by the significant assistance given by staff [to the researchers]. (Powell & Smith, 2009, p. 133)

Gaining access could be a lengthy process. Most researchers found schools provided ready access to children, and as the gatekeepers in this process, teachers, Boards of Trustees, and principals were, more often than not, willing to support the researchers (for example, see the *Secondary school mixed methods exemplar*). Access to schools was gained in various ways, often calling on previously established relationships between the researcher/s and teachers. Jennings and Mills (2009) reported a parent-teacher relationship with the research site, as did Hood et al. (2007), and Moreland and Cowie (2005). In other situations (see Price, 2007), pre-existing professional relationships created opportunities to gain access. Both the *Primary school ethnographic research exemplar* and *Primary school focus group interviews exemplar* discuss this issue. Further, researchers noted differences between schools. Some schools paid closer attention to the nature of participation expected (Hill et al., 1996), and required researchers to inform a range of affected audiences, including children. The *Primary school focus group interviews exemplar* describes how the schools involved in their research sent information sheets and consent forms home as a package, as they would regular school newsletters (Fletcher, Parkhill & Fa'afoi, 2005; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, & Taleni, 2008).

All the exemplars for this section of the report document the researchers' experiences of gaining access or entry. The *Primary school ethnographic research exemplar* describes how a professional network facilitated access to the school and to the community (Dickie, 2008). The *Primary school visual methods exemplar* and the *Primary school focus group interviews exemplar* describe the experience of gaining entry to the research site through one of the researcher's personal connections with the community and the local school. In the *Primary school mixed methods exemplar*, using schools to recruit children was challenged by the ethics committee because the topic, fairness and forgiveness in families, was not considered directly relevant to the school curriculum (Evans, Yamaguchi, Raskauskas, & Harvey, 2007). In some studies (notably Alton-Lee et al., 1993; Connolly, 2008; Jennings & Mills, 2009; Nuthall, 1999a, 1999b; Price, 2007) the teacher was included as a participant, as well as the children but there were different levels of participation. For example, in Price's (2007) study, teachers were engaged in action research (the *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar* (Kane et al. also describes the teachers' involvement); Jennings and Mills (2009) worked alongside teachers to explicate an approach to negotiated curriculum and Alton-Lee and Nuttall's (1993) research investigated children's re-call with a view to improving teaching skills. In this research, teachers were observed alongside children in the classroom and contributed to the research by providing background information about the children. The research focus was on what children remembered about a certain topic in the short, medium and long-term, and why they remembered it. Classroom dynamics and relationships between children and with the teacher were analysed in order to reveal what supported children's long-term retention of facts taught in the classroom.

Understanding the concerns of the gatekeepers in schools appeared to facilitate access for researchers. In the *Primary school mixed methods exemplar* (Evans et al.), researchers were mindful of schools where research had been conducted in the past. Attention to events in the school calendar, such as Education Review Office visits, or unpredicted staff changes, excluded some schools from participating. Time constraints impacted but in different ways and for different reasons (Hill et al., 1996). Complying with short-term contractual requirements to produce a report excluded some potential research sites. The issue of time constraints is raised in the *Secondary schools mixed methods exemplar* where Meyer argues that contractual requirements to finalise research design and research measures prior to involving the research participants denied students, teachers and parents the opportunity to participate in the conceptual design phase.

Consent processes

Seeking ethical consent or assent from children involved in research is complex and "the relative power of adults to children makes this a double-edged sword when involving children as research participants" (Greig et al., 2007, p. 173). (See Introduction also for further discussion of consent.) Ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence and justice inform practices concerned with seeking consent and avoiding potential harm to children involved in research. Bishop (2008) notes:

> … it is likely that ethics bodies will make a conservative interpretation and the researchers will make a liberal interpretation of what is recommended in any guidelines. Ethics bodies will be concerned

> principally with minimising risk and the researchers will be concerned principally with the potential benefit to knowledge and to children or their research. (p. 28)

Researchers are morally obliged to gain informed consent from children, and where a child may not be legally competent, informed assent is necessary:

> UNICEF (2002), in its guidance on child participation, also makes clear that parental consent is 'not an adequate standard in light of the rights of the child' (p. 5). The *child* as well as the parent must be aware of the implications of the research, and the child if able should give assent in addition to the consent of the adult with parental responsibility. (Greig et al., 2007, p. 174)

Using educational sites for research involving young children is very common but there are considerations to bear in mind. However, unlike early childhood education services, schools are compulsory for children between six and 16 years and so children's consenting to participate in research raises issues of how to ameliorate the power imbalance between student and teacher in a classroom and how to establish an independent researcher identity when the research is conducted in a school environment. If access to the school is via the school authorities and parents, children's options to participate or not are limited. Several studies report that the process of informing and gaining consent was undertaken by teachers, or school authorities, on behalf of the researchers. These processes were directed to the children's parents and so, as is the case for Hill et al. (1996) face-to-face meetings with children occurred when the first interviews were scheduled: "Clearly is it not easy … for a child to discontinue an arrangement made by the key adults who have power and (usually) respect in their lives" (p. 132). Although the process of gaining consent usually presents participation as optional and there may be an option to withdraw without penalty once the research has begun, Kellett and Ding (2004, p. 170) suggest "there are inherent dangers that participation could verge on coercion if children interpret it as school work". Participation at school is influenced by a culture based on "compliance and obedience and most of its daily routines will be mandatory for students rather than voluntary" (Bishop, 2008, p. 32). In one cited example students exercising their rights to opt out of research resulted in punishment for the children and they were assigned to rubbish duty during their lunch time (see Bishop, 2008). Control over consent processes can be complicated when teachers are involved without researcher presence. Schools retain and maintain authority when research in a school involves children and this raises important points:

- how do children experience the research processes?
- what are the benefits for them, personally?

The notion of informed consent is also problematic (David, Edwards, & Alldred, 2001), and can blur the boundaries between information and education. A desired outcome of consent processes is more than just passing on information and has an educative component, ideally consistent with participatory research values, such as emancipation and social justice. In other words, children are empowered to make an informed and educated decision regarding participation in research. David et al. (2001) suggest that "knowledge deemed appropriate for the making of decisions about consent to research is usually rendered as 'information', processed into transferable packets" (David et al., 2001, p. 350). These researchers argue for educated consent so that children could make an informed decision about participation in the research. David et al. (2001) designed three different leaflets, two for children and young people, and one for adults:

> In practice, each of these leaflets aimed to 'sell' the research to different groups, emphasising their different interests. … We associated the leaflets with the idea that we wanted the children to think about their involvement in the research and the topic itself. (David et al., 2001, p. 353)

Seeking ongoing consent during each phase of research involving children is one solution adopted by some (Moore et al., 2008). Developing a set of rights in research with a children's reference group in Moore et al. (2008) provided researchers with insights into rapport building with child participants. Dual consent was sought from parents and from children. Even though parents may have given consent, children were invited to consider the extent of their participation in the research. The children's reference group trialled resources to evaluate how well children's rights in research were explained, "Kids have gotta know what rights they've got. And you should make sure they get [understand] it" (Moore et al., 2008, p. 84). Time spent consulting and familiarising children with the research aims assisted consent processes (Jones, 2004; Kaplan & Howes, 2004). Both the *Primary school ethnographic* (Dickie) and the *Primary school mixed methods* (Evans et al.) exemplars note the positive effects of investing time in such explanations.

One idea to emerge about the process of gaining consent is the notion of ethical symmetry (Christensen & Prout, 2002) which assumes that researchers treat children and adult participants alike. This perspective is relevant to any research involving children – is due respect accorded to them, as it would be to adults? Are the research processes explained appropriately to reflect the competence and agency of the child participants? The *Early childhood participatory methods exemplar* describes two types of consent processes: one for adults and one designed specifically for young children. The same issues of appropriate research processes are raised in the *Children with disabilities ethnographic exemplar* and the *Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar* (Ward). Several researchers report on how, in fact, the rights of children to choose whether or not to participate and, once in the research, their rights to be informed and consulted about data in the same ways as adults, have been overlooked (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Kaplan & Howes, 2004; Schuck & Kearney, 2006). Again, these rights-based issues are relevant in other sectors of the education system (see the *Researching with children and young people who are Māori exemplar* and both the exemplars about children and young people with disabilities). In some situations, the researchers' breaches of children's rights as participants in research was not detected until the dissemination phase (Schuck & Kearney, 2006), and this oversight required that the data be removed.

A way to achieve ethical symmetry is through passive consent. Carroll-Lind et al. (2006) used this method to comply with their organisation's ethical requirements and to respect children's rights to exercise a choice about whether or not to participate in the research for themselves as opposed to seeking parental consent for children to participate. Their New Zealand research project, conducted with nine to 13 year-old children, informed parents, teachers, principals and governing bodies about the research but left the final decision about whether or not to participate in the research with the child. Once the schools had been selected, school principals and boards of trustees were informed about the research and invited to give permission for their schools to participate. There was an active choice made at this level about whether or not to consent to the school participating. Letters about the research, and the process of passive consent, were then posted from participating schools to parents informing them about the research and the passive consent process, which required they give either passive consent, and do nothing more, or active dissent, which required parents to sign a written refusal form and post it back using the stamp-addressed envelopes provided. The result allowed the researchers to examine children's perspectives and bypassed "the usual gatekeepers to children's information, thereby allowing the voices of the child participants to provide an original contribution to knowledge …" (Carroll-Lind et al., 2006, p. 987). These researchers also framed their early deliberations about the processes for the project around Article 12 of UNCROC and argued that "it is necessary to grant children the right to represent their own perceptions (p. 980).

Finch (2005) describes the process of gaining consent as pedagogy. He produced an information video to provide an alternative to verbal and written descriptions of the research and as a way to explicate expectations of the children's involvement. He observed that the combination of a printed information sheet and his video informing children about the research were dual representations of the research and, therefore, needed to provide a consistent message to children. He noted that purpose of informed consent is just that – "to inform participants, *not* to persuade them" (p. 69). The attitude of the adult researcher is particularly significant. Issues of gaining access and consent cannot be separated from the rationale for involving children in research, and these issues arise at all levels of education.

Role of parents, families and communities

Most research conducted in schools used the organisational structures to inform parents and seek consent for their children to participate. The *Primary school focus group interviews exemplar* found that involving children in research also involves parents, families and in some cases, communities. This was also the case for the *Primary school visual methods exemplar* as well as other researchers' experiences (Moore et al., 2008). Both the *Primary school ethnographic* and the *Primary school focus group* exemplars used several strategies to inform parents, including translating information sheets (see also Kirova & Emme, 2008), identifying leaders in communities and seeking advice about how to appropriately engage with parent communities. The *Primary school focus group interview exemplar* illustrates how they conducted their research in schools with relatively high Pasifika population in New Zealand's South Island. A network of colleagues facilitated access to communities and, as part of gaining access, the papalagi (European) researchers undertook some professional development with a colleague who was also a member of a Pasifika community. The video Finch (2005) produced for children was also a way of involving parents in the consent process. In his view:

> … the consent process artefacts (the videotape and the information sheets) to be taken home may potentially have acted as bridges for discussions about the consent decision at home. … It was hoped that the video would provide stimulus for discussion between parents and children about the decision [to participate in the research]. (Finch, 2005, p. 67)

The *Primary school mixed methods exemplar* describes some resistance the researchers encountered from a university ethics committee where their request to use schools as a place to recruit children was challenged as expedient because the research focus (fairness) was not considered curriculum-related, and it was suggested that the schools were merely convenient places to recruit participants for the research. The committee suggested that recruiting from the community would be more appropriate. This was an unusual experience and is explained more fully in the *Primary school mixed methods exemplar* at the end of this chapter.

Data collection methods, tools, and strategies

Adhering to participatory research principles requires a coherent and consistent approach to the research design, notably the practical considerations of generating data in appropriate ways. As with gaining access and consent processes, researchers need to consider context, space and place (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Connolly, 2008; Dickie, 2008; Kaplan & Howes, 2004; Kirova & Emme, 2008; Moore et al., 2008; Moreland & Cowie, 2005; Schuck & Kearney, 2006). The *Primary school ethnographic research exemplar* investigated literacy in the wider social context of church and community, not just school; the *Primary school visual methods exemplar* describes how, in a rural community, children photographed spaces and places that reflected their out-of-school experiences of science and technology in the countryside. Photographs of farming machinery as well as natural phenomena, like the sun, were documented by the children as data relevant to the research. Data collection methods, tools and strategies used to involve children in the middle years are similar to those used with young children, although participatory research with this age group introduces text as an option for data collection. For example, the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2004; Clark & Moss, 2001 – see early childhood section for fuller discussion) with its use of multiple methods has influenced some research designs with older children (Freeman & Quigg, 2009; Kirova & Emme, 2008). Involving children in research requires more than observing them. Opportunities for children to participate have to be built into the research design in age appropriate ways.

When children themselves informed the data collection, they were concerned that the tools were fun and engaging (Moore et al., 2008). Open-ended tasks, such as the blank circle, "allowed children to work as individuals within the relative fixity of its conceptual form" (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 171). The blank circle exercise required children to graph the ways in which they spent time. There was no right way to do this but Christensen and James commented that many children but not all, filled it in like a pie graph. As children participated in this task in small groups with the researcher, a tape recorder was left running to capture the process of engagement in the activity. Spider diagrams and diamond ranking diagrams were a device that allowed children some options for what to include but these were restricted by the shape of the research tool. A spider diagram is a tool that includes a question at the centre of a circle. Children make connections within the circle to a point they determine. Diamond-ranking exercises are an interesting way to include children's own ideas. The ideas to emerge from focus group interviews are then distilled into statements, that the children rank in terms of importance from top being the most important, to the statement at the bottom of the diamond being the least important (Greig et al., 2007). Other methods to rank children's opinions used in research might be charts to identify how decisions are made, or continua, where children can place a sticker along a line of relevant issues or points significant to the research.

Another method to rank importance or value is the pots and beans activity. Children are provided with several statements (represented by the pots). A statement might read, for example, how much I like meetings (Greig et al., 2007). Children then rate the statements one to three by putting the requisite number of beans in a pot. If they put three beans in the pot, they say why and if it is less than three, they are asked what needs to happen to make three beans in the pots. Another ranking tool is to provide children with statements and ask them to place them in three piles. This technique was used to rank the worries children have. Twenty worries were identified (through interviews and focus group discussions) and children were then asked to place them in three piles: big worries, middle worries and little worries.

The *Primary school ethnographic research exemplar* illustrates how diaries and journals were used to capture children's day-to-day experiences (Dickie, 2008). A further example of this was a secret box where children could write and post their responses into a sealed box, and so remain anonymous but still contribute (Christensen & James, 2008). Children mapping routes between home and school provided researchers with evidence of important social and physical connections children had to their neighbourhoods when they attended local schools (Freeman & Quigg, 2009).

Traditional research methods, such as semi-structured, open-ended interviews and focus group interviews, have been adapted to suit the circumstances in which they are conducted. Dockett (2008) noted that conversations with children:

> tend to be informal in style and location. We generally use some open-ended questions to start conversations … in a location of their choice. The reasons for this are we want children to feel comfortable in their conversations with adults. In other words, we want children to have some control over the nature of their engagement in conversations. (Dockett, 2008, p. 53)

While children's levels of engagement in one-to-one interviews vary, researchers report that children appear to enjoy the experience of an interview. In the *Primary schools mixed methods exemplar,* the researcher assistant's experiences of interviewing were clearly enjoyable for both the interviewer and the children concerned. The *Primary schools visual methods exemplar* illustrates how, if a trusting rapport has been developed, children will share their experiences beyond the expectations of the researcher, and shift the parameter of the research. This exemplar describes how children themselves requested individual interviews with the researchers so they would have their undivided attention. Some researchers found that interview situations provided children with an opportunity to discuss meaningful issues, beyond the scope of the research but relevant to the wider context of children's experiences. For example, during an interview with Alton-Lee (Alton-Lee et al., 1993), a child revealed being the subject of subtle racist comments and, as a result of the interview, these comments, and the perpetrators, were observed and noted by the researchers.

Focus group interviews are also commonly used to collect data from children. This method was generally perceived as one that encouraged children to open up to the researcher. The number of children per focus group varied considerably in the literature scanned but Hill et al. (1996) found groups of six worked for their research. Scott (2008, p. 100) recommended that:

> Children be interviewed in restricted age groups as otherwise older children will dominate.
>
> Boys and girls should be interviewed separately as they have such different communication styles.
>
> Groups should be small, with no more than eight children at maximum.

In the *Primary school focus group interview exemplar* (Fletcher & Fa'afoi), the researchers found that their groups of up to 23 children were unwieldy and difficult to manage. Connolly (2008) worked with groups of three children and the *Primary school ethnographic research exemplar* describes how Dickie worked with pairs. Gender make-up within groups (Connolly, 2008; Dickie, 2008) may have played a part by inhibiting contributions in some situations but not knowing other children certainly did. The impact of a male researcher with female participants or vice versa did not appear to inhibit discussions in focus group situations. However, the role of the adult researcher/facilitator was challenged in Connolly's experience of involving children in a focus group, as they tested, subverted and undermined normal boundaries. The regular classroom teacher held more authority than the researcher in that case. In the *Primary school focus group interview exemplar,* the researchers observed the powerful effect of parental presence on the children in group situations. Further, Fletcher and Fa'afoi developed a research strategy that called in community figures, one of whom was held in high esteem and this person's presence in group situations with children involved in research was observed as inhibiting and censorial – children were more self-conscious about what they said and how they said it. Scott (2008) reports that single sex groupings appeared to be more successful but there is no consensus about group make-up, although there is closer consensus on group size in New Zealand at least (see the *Primary school ethnographic researcher exemplar*).

Various strategies were used to engage group attention to the research (Kellet & Ding, 2004). The process often began with icebreaker exercises as a way to build relationships. Chapter 2 (early childhood) noted the importance of building rapport in appropriate ways, and the *Early childhood participatory approaches exemplar* describes how research tools were trialled, modified and even discarded. Moore et al., (2008) trialled some of these tasks with children and, as a result, feedback to the adult researchers on how interviews with groups and individuals went was part of the research process. A range of tools, such as worksheets, blank circles, ranking exercises and brainstorming (some of which have been described above), were designed to elicit responses to research questions in focus groups and also, it should be noted, in individual interviews too (Christensen, 2004; Christensen & James, 2008), and the advantages of some of these were their familiarity in the context of the classroom. Sentence completion was a task that worked in both individual and group situations (Dockett & Perry, 2005a, 2005b).

Visual prompts, including drawings (Clark, 2004; Clark & Moss, 2001; Dockett, 2008; Dockett & Perry, 2005a, 2005b) and photographs (Christensen, 2004; Christensen & James, 2008; Cook & Hess, 2007) can stimulate research-focused discussions with children. Both the *Primary school ethnographic research exemplar* and the *Primary school visual methods exemplar* illustrate how photographs can support the conversational flow with children in both individual and group interview situations. In some cases, like in the *Primary school mixed methods exemplar*, the drawings were supplied (Evans et al., 2007; Scott, 2008) and in others (Dockett & Perry, 2005a, 2005b) children were the artists. Photographs were used in the *Primary school visual methods exemplar*. Often there was an expectation that children would record why the photo was taken. While this has obvious advantages for the researcher, not all children may complete this task. Greig et al. (2007) commented that if there is a mismatch between the task and the ability of the participants to complete the task, the data will be incomplete and some data will be missing. The power of the photograph as a data-collection tool appears to make much more sense if the photographic task is aligned with an indepth interview with the photographer. Shuck and Kearney (2006) found that using video footage taken by the students "help interviewees decipher more quickly the meaning of researcher questions, provide a focus for their responses and prompt memory of past events" (p. 451).

Some visual prompts were designed to assign children's responses to a category as one would use a Likert scale. So, for example, smiley faces, or sad faces became the measures as opposed to text-based measures like very happy or somewhat happy. Researchers found that some agreement was needed prior to such an activity in order to establish reliability and robustness, and the *Primary school mixed methods exemplar* details how their research project managed this (Evans et al., 2007; see also Hill et al., 1996; Scott, 2008).

Importantly though, like the *Primary school ethnographic research* and *Primary school visual methods exemplars* note, visual images provide reference points for discussion (see, for example, Clark & Moss, 2001; Dickie, 2008; Kaplan & Howes, 2004; Moreland & Cowie, 2005). However, a reliance on drawings, photographs or video clips depend on several factors, not least of which is the quality of the image. The skill of the artist, photographer or camera operator can influence the final product, and further, the perspective of the participant is essential to interpreting and extending these data. The pitfalls therefore need ameliorating via conversation or, workshopping through dramatisation, inserting text and creating stories (see Kirova & Emme, 2008). The fotonovela method, a form of story telling, combines "still photographs with digital manipulations and narrative sequencing … [in] an attempt to re-create children's understanding of their school life (Kirova & Emme, 2008, p. 37). In both focus group interviews or discussions and individual interviews, researchers found visual images led to deeper engagement with the research questions: the tools (cameras) were novel and enjoyable to use and children seemed to take pride in their role as photographer/camera operator, documenting research data (Kaplan & Howes, 2004). The *Primary school visual methods exemplar* describes how readily children took to using cameras and in one instance, had used all their photos before even arriving home from school (Moreland & Cowie, 2005). Unexpected, unintended images snapped as part of the data collection prompted interesting discussions with participants and researchers. As the *Primary school visual methods exemplar* reveals, it is not always clear why the photograph was taken or what the subject of the photograph is.

Most of the research involving children reviewed for this chapter was qualitative. This could be because of a reaction to positivist approaches that relied on quantitative research where some believed this objectified and marginalised children (Hood et al., 1996), as well as silencing them (Hood et al., 1996; Qvortrop, 1999; Scott, 2008). Scott questions why longitudinal studies exclude children as respondents and suggests ways of making quantitative research more suitable for them. A mixed method approach contextualises statistical information alongside qualitative comments from children. The *Primary school mixed methods exemplar* is one example of this. Data generation included qualitative methods (such as interviews with children) as well as quantitative methods (a survey questionnaire).

Concerns about children as reliable participants can be assuaged by adjusting conventional quantitative and qualitative data generation tools, for example, interviews or questionnaires, so that they are appropriate for children and their relevance to the research is understood by young participants. Drawing from the experience of other social scientists' research with children, Scott suggests that concerns about the quality of data collected from children can also be redressed. Her review suggests that researchers employ different methods for different ages to account for the "wide range of cognitive and social development that depends primarily on age but also on the gender, socio-economic background and ethnicity of the child" (2008, p. 90).

To address the issue of reliability, Scott advises the researcher to take close account of the context where interviews with children take place and ensure "unambiguous and comprehensible instructions at the start of the interview; avoid leading questions; explicitly permit 'don't know' responses to avoid best guesses; interview the child on home ground if possible" (Scott, 2008, p. 96). Rather than starting from different principles (such as children might not have sensible input into the research or may be unreliable) Scott regards children as the best source of information about their experiences and lives. However, she does caution that in many circumstances multiple sources of data are desirable to avoid bias.

Scott (2008) argues that the quality of data collected from children in quantitative research requires coherence between the method and the processes used. A rigorous assessment of the measures used must include an evaluation of their appropriateness for the age group to be involved in the research. However, asking meaningful questions in appropriate ways may not be enough to reliably interpret the data. Scott provides an example of a split ballot to test alternative responses to interview questions. The primacy effect (choosing the first option), acquiescence bias (wanting to please the researcher) and social desirability (the desire to be perceived as a good child in adult terms) are all important issues. Further, there is the question of motivation to be truthful. While these issues are perhaps more obvious with child participants, Scott notes that they are also issues for adults involved in research.

A novel and innovative tool reviewed by Scott was the use of a Walkman to relay questions to children. Generating data for a longitudinal household study involved children in focus group interviews where a mix of visual prompts provided by the researcher, and visual, smiley face Likert scale also assisted the research team to develop the use of a Walkman as a data-collection device. Pre-recorded questions were saved to the Walkman and children answered these in a survey-style questionnaire. The Walkman ensured privacy for the child who could fill in the questionnaire without anyone around him or her knowing the question.

No method is foolproof and literal interpretations of some questions required more explicit explanations about the intent of the research. Another confounding factor in this research project highlighted differences in vocabulary usage amongst the participants. For example, the complexity of family life was difficult to capture with questions that reduced the experience to living with your mother and/or father, and raised an awareness of how ambiguous these terms are in relation to step-parenting. Scott (and others) posits that ethical requirements for interviewing children "need if anything to be more stringent than with adults. Children are relatively powerless in society and despite the good attention given to children's rights, have relatively little recourse to official channels of complaint" (2008, p. 102).

Table 4.1: Summary of data-collection tools, methods, strategies and research examples based on James (2004)

Methods	Tools	Research examples
Individual interviews	Introductions to build rapport; drawings, worksheets, diaries; visual prompts such as photographs and video images, video footage; sentence completion cards; role plays; tours (child led and documented); audio recordings and transcripts.	Evans et al. (2007); Hill et al. (1996)
Child conferences and focus groups	Introduction to build rapport; brainstorming; visual prompts such as photographs and video images, video footage; audio recordings and transcripts; role plays; secret box; blank circle.	Christensen & James, (2008); Connolly (2008); Dickie (2008); Harcourt (2008); Hill et al. (1996); Jennings & Mills (2009); Moore et al. (2008)
Mapping Tours (child led)	Drawings; visual images; audio recordings and transcripts.	Clark (2004); Freeman & Quigg (2009)
Visual imaging and drawing	Single-use cameras; digital images; video footage; fotonovelas; individual interviews, small group work; written statements; comic book speech bubbles.	Cook & Hess (2007); Dickie (2008); Dockett (2008); Kaplan & Howes (2004); Kirova & Emme (2008); Moreland & Cowie (2005); Price (2007); Shuck & Kearny (2006)
Worksheets, journals, diaries	Some structure may be provided, such as guiding questions, sentence-completion exercises.	Dickie (2008); Dockett (2008); Dockett & Perry (2005a, 2005b); Hill et al. (1996)
Diagrammatic representations	Blank circle; spider diagrams; diamond ranking; illustrated scenarios.	Christensen & James (2008); Evans et al. (2007); Hill et al. 1996)

Analysis, reporting and feedback

The area least reported on in the research scanned was how children or indeed, researchers, were involved in the analysis of data. Visual data, it seems, cannot be interpreted adequately without children's involvement in the initial stages. Children's comments contextualise the data for researchers, and, during that process (either in an interview, or group discussion) children's analysis of their contributions creates more data for the researcher (Christensen & James, 2008). Cook and Hess (2007) describe three visual image projects and conclude that joint discussion about images could reduce adult researchers' presumptions about the data but even when dialogue accompanied photographs, "the adults remained the interpreters of this dialogue when reports were written" (p. 42). The fotonovela method employed multiple processes for interpretation and analysis and the production and shared performances to result from this method allowed children to publish and disseminate (Kirova & Emme, 2008). Interpreting data has been described as an intercultural collaboration between children and adults: "When children have important roles in the interpretation of data, as well as the construction of data, it is likely that their own perspectives are reflected rather than the researchers" (Dockett, 2008, p.57). Such approaches require researchers to undertake respondent checks (revisiting and reviewing interpretations of the data with children) and to respect the possibility that children may choose to censor previously permitted data.

Children's involvement in analysis relates as well to the ways in which research is fed back to children. The case studies for the middle years represent a range of feedback mechanisms employed by researchers involving children: community-based meeting, short reports and even a public photographic display. Several New Zealand research projects developed summaries or preliminary summaries in a condensed form for children and their parents, and the schools (see, for example, Moreland & Cowie, 2005; Evans et al., 2007). The *Primary school visual methods exemplar* describes how the researchers supported the children and the school to mount a community display of their work. The effect was two fold: first the wider community saw the photographs children had taken to explore science and technology – an example of making children's learning visible; and, second, the same community bore witness to children's competence as they participated in the research. In the *Primary school focus group interviews exemplar*, dissemination in a Pasifika community alerted the researchers to parental and community expectations of the research outcomes. Parents especially were clear that they expected that their children would benefit directly as a result of the research about literacy achievement. In both these instances, there was a palpable relationship between the researcher and the researched. For Evans et al. (2007), the researcher and assistants who were involved with the children donated time and the occasional morning tea to the school (see the *Primary school mixed methods exemplar*). This was important for relationship building initially, and at the end of the research, it was important to signal closure and offer thanks. Parents in this study about New Zealand children's perceptions of fairness were sent a summary of the findings, provided by the research team, through the school networks. At the final session, Finch (2005) provided children with extracts of transcripts.

Ethical issues

An ethical issue not yet discussed as part of the consent process emerged with the use of video and photographic data. Images released in the public domain can impact socially and over time. Concern about this impact in one study (Shuck & Kearney, 2006) revealed a pitfall in the analysis process that should have been signalled earlier during consent processes. During a trial presentation of the data, the researchers were questioned about their use of a particular section of video footage. In the first instance, the audience at the practise session interpreted the data very differently to the researchers and this raised questions for them about their use of this particular data. In this case the researchers presented their interpretation of the data but had overlooked the impact of this interpretation on others appearing in the same video. The researchers' comments focused on the teacher but their researchers' perspective did not account for the emotional impact of the video image on the student. Had consent been given to use the image in the ways the researchers intended to use it for a conference presentation? In this case, it had not. The ethical implications arising from that discussion required them to remove that data.

Children's advisory groups (such as the one set up by Moore et al. 2008) raised ethical concerns regarding confidentiality. Children's experiences indicated that their confidences were often disregarded by adults but that the consequences for adult's breaching promises were minimal. Several research projects commented on children's ability to exercise their choices responsibly and in a considered manner, yet their experiences of adults respecting these choices were diverse (Fletcher et al., 2008; Hood et al., 1996; Schuck & Kearney, 2006). Carroll-Lind et al. (2006) resolved this issue of confidentiality by including an option for the children to request a follow-up interview or conversation with the research team. Their research into New Zealand children's experiences of violence (both domestic and school-based) also built in a range of protective features for children, which directed them to support agencies.

A recent review of ethical processes by Powell and Smith (2009) concluded that "even when children are required to give consent or assent for participation, adults influence that decision" (p. 126). Their qualitative email-based research method sought data from researchers actively involving children in research and confirmed the benefits to children of participating in research:

> Participation can be inherently protective for children (Marchant and Kirby, 2004), and if ethical issues are attended to potential risks are minimized. The consequences of not participating can be more harmful, as children are denied the opportunity to gain the benefits associated with participation, including education, therapy and empowerment, along with the possibility of access to resources.
> (Powell & Smith, 2009, p. 129)

Ethical issues associated with involving children in research are complex and contentious (Hood et al., 1996; Powell & Smith, 2006, 2009). Powell and Smith (2009) suggest that "children's participation rights in research in New Zealand may be inconsistently upheld and seriously compromised by a range of factors" (p. 139):

1. Ethics committee processes and requirements, such as participant information sheets, consent and assent procedures, differ markedly;
2. The reasons for these inconsistencies and differences can be explained by "traditional, theoretical perspectives that view children as vulnerable and incompetent" and by "hierarchies of consent givers" (Powell & Smith, 2009, p. 139);
3. Researchers' ethical and methodological choices impact on children's participation in research. (Adapted from Powell & Smith, 2009).

Added to this list are contextual factors, such as where the research takes place (in a home, at school) and the type of space provided therein (Hill et al., 1996; Mannion, 2007). For example, Scott (2008) discusses the nuances of conducting research in the home. This space is shared with family members and issues of privacy, in particular, confidentiality, are complicated if research involving children means their siblings or parents are close by. There are equally complicated issues to be negotiated when research is conducted at school, in classrooms, or even at school when children are removed from classes to participate in research. Scott noted that in classroom-based research, children could downplay their responses to questions (if answering in public might impact negatively on their status with peers) when a teacher or another authority figure (perceived or imaginary) was present but exaggerate their answers when with peers. Alton-Lee et al. (1993) noted the impact of classroom power dynamics, such as gender and race, on children's involvement. Carroll-Lind et al. (2006) found the classroom acted as a common space for their project and conventional classroom behaviours for sitting tests were voluntarily self-imposed by the children. Bright (2008) however, observed a negative effect, and Scott (2008) noted how place and space required some negotiation of the people dynamic. How to balance children's rights to participate with their rights to be protected as participants is an ongoing issue:

> A better balance between protection and participation to 'enable children to be heard without exploiting them, protect children without silencing and excluding them, and pursue rigorous inquiry without distressing them (Alderson & Morrow, 2004, p. 12). (cited in Powell & Smith, 2009, p. 139)

While desirable and even essential, components of inclusive research with and for children (voice and agency) are problematic constructs but not always for the same reasons (Fielding, 2007; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008; Mannion, 2007). This field is clearly still evolving. Perhaps the road to developing a mature methodology involves questioning the benefits of children's participation in research in each context and, at the same time, emphasising that research involving children should improve children's quality of life (Stainton Rogers, 2004).

Table 4.2: Critical areas and questions asked

Critical areas for middle childhood	Questions raised
Pre-existing power dynamics in schools inhibit and even punish children for exercising their rights to participate, or not, in research.	How do adults responsibly exercise their authority to involve children in research? How is children's autonomy respected?
Ethical consent processes inconsistently applied.	Are the ethical processes required by the organisation adequate? Are children protected if they participate? Are they protected if they choose not to participate? Are they overly protected?
Inconsistent, and even inadequate understanding of children's participation rights in research.	Do researchers understand what it means to involve children in research? Do researchers understand enough about the implications of inviting children to participate? Do researchers understand enough about parents' expectations and concerns? Do researchers understand enough about community values? Are researchers aware of cultural values?
A need to appreciate the methodological immaturity regarding research with children.	Are the proposed methodologies and methods thoroughly understood? Are the benefits and pitfalls explored?
A need to design research involving children coherently to address methodologies, methods, analysis processes and children's rights to be involved at the dissemination phases.	Are children's rights to participate addressed at each stage of the research? Are children's rights to participate in culturally appropriate ways addressed? Is there space and place for children to voice their perspectives at each stage of the research? Is this always appropriate?
Addressing an imbalance between the researchers' intentions and children's expectations.	Do the research questions consider the benefits as well as the possible disadvantages to the children specifically and in general? Are the questions justly intended? Is children's autonomy respected? How might this impact on their relationships once the research has ended?

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Primary school mixed methods exemplar

Evans, I., Yamaguchi, T., Raskauskas, J., & Harvey, S. (2007). *Fairness, forgiveness and families.* Wellington: Families Commission. Blue Skies report No 17/07

Interview details

Interviewer: Sarah Te One
Interviewee: Ian Evans
Note taker: Mimi Hodis

Background

Professor of psychology, Ian Evans, Massey University has had a long-standing interest in the topic of fairness that began with his research into mainstreaming children with disabilities in the US (Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro & Goldberg, 1994):

> *We wanted to understand kids' perceptions of fairness, and how they responded to unfairness which maybe could lead to better inclusion for children with disabilities. This has been an ongoing line of research. (Evans, Interview)*

Previous research had noted that children were sensitive to unfairness and, while "not yet well-established", there is a possibility "that repeated experiences of unfairness, particularly unfair punishment and unfair lack of deserved reward, may make children hostile and less likely to forgive" (Evans, et al. 2004, p. 5). Yamaguchi (2005) had found that children were more likely to forgive a parent than a sibling, which raised 'intriguing questions' about children's understandings and experiences of forgiveness and tolerance. The research investigated "whether there were aspects of parent behaviour that might contribute to the development of these forgiving tendencies in children" (p. 5). At the same time as this research was undertaken, Yamaguchi was exploring how children were treated fairly by their parents. Data collected as part of this study was used by Yamaguchi in her doctoral work.

This particular study was funded by the Families Commission Blue Skies Fund, and the research took place in several primary schools, representing a cross-section of socio economic circumstances in one region in the central North Island of New Zealand. 82 children in Year 4 (nine-year-olds) and Year 6 (11-year-olds), whose parents consented on their behalf, participated in this research, which was conducted on the school premises.

Aims and objectives

Very little empirical research has investigated children's understandings of fairness and forgiveness in family contexts. The purpose of the research was to:

(a) replicate the observed relationship between unfairness and a tendency to retaliate against the perpetrator

(b) explore children's understanding of forgiveness (the opposite reaction to retaliation)

(c) assess whether aspects of parents' disciplinary style might relate to their children's willingness to forgive (Evans, et al., 2004, p. 5)

This case study focuses on how the children were involved in the research. Based on Evans' previous (and extensive) research, he was curious to understand whether or not there was an inter-generational effect as a result of how children experienced fairness and forgiveness at home, within their family:

> *If there was a tendency to show forgiveness in response to unfairness this might reflect in how children react? Was there a connection between the home and [the children's responses to unfairness]? This research was not able to show a relationship between parental perceptions [of fairness and forgiveness] and the children's reactions. (Evans, Interview)*

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According to Evans et al. (2004, p. 8):

One of the complexities in studying children's perceptions of fairness is that their feelings when encountering unfairness will depend on how they have judged the unfairness in the first place. ... Another in studying children is that the term 'fair' carries the more general connotation of appropriate, right or just (Hatcher & Troyna, 1993). ... [It] is important to ask children not only to judge fairness, but to explain their judgement as well.

This study aimed to include children's perspectives alongside their parents (entirely mothers in this study) to understand a) how children explained fairness, and b) whether there was a measurable relationship between children's experience of unfairness and their ability to forgive.

Access, consent processes, role of parents, families and community

Issues of access to school-aged children in our society can pose problems for ethical reasons. Because school is compulsory, some argue that research with school-aged children draws from a captive audience, which can be problematic for a variety of reasons (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People, 2008; Harcourt, 2008). In the case of this research, this concern was raised by the University's Human Ethics Committee:

The Ethics Committee objected to recruiting children through the schools. In their view, this [research] was not about school work, and they felt that recruiting children from schools was convenient for the researchers. They argued that the research was not, primarily, about education, so we should recruit in other ways. And there was a concern that the research might interfere with the children's education and the Ethics Committee disapproved of how the researchers did their research in the school.

It was a bone of contention with the Committee. Some subsequent projects have had the same problems: Researchers have to convince the Committee that it is the school's decision to participate in the research or not, but we thought they were going beyond their role. Schools were invited to participate, and schools could say 'No'. (Evans, Interview)

Eventually, the Ethics Committee agreed to the original recruitment strategy. Access to the children was gained through the primary schools, and most willingly agreed to participate. Reasons for not agreeing did not concern the topic or the researcher presence but previously timetabled, school-wide events. Information letters and consent forms for adults were sent home by the school. Parents were encouraged to share the details about the research with the children:

Information was given to the parents and the researchers always asked parents to discuss this with the child. [Children's] Assent was given verbally. (Evans, Interview).

Prior to the research tasks beginning, Yamaguchi and two other research assistants met children in their classrooms:

Tomoko spent a lot of time in the classrooms, building up rapport with the teachers and the children. The teachers introduced her and she visited the staff room, talked to the teachers, was helpful and friendly. She let the teachers make the judgement about when it would be a good time to do the research. By the time the study was done, Tomoko was very familiar with the children. (Evans, Interview)

Prior to the experimental procedures beginning, the researcher and the research assistant asked the children again "if they still wanted to participate and explained that they could stop at any time." (Evans et al., 2004, p. 15)

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Data-collection tools, strategies

This was an experimental study that can be seen as following on from previous studies, although with a slightly different focus (Yamaguchi, 2005). The strategies used by Yamaguchi (2005) were designed to rate the degree of fairness and unfairness, the strength and types of feelings associated with children's perceptions of fairness and unfairness in response to four scenarios, which were adjusted to reflect the New Zealand context. The four scenarios were of two types: A parent story and friend story. The parent stories illustrated potentially unfair parental expectations to tidy-up, and exhibiting a double standard (parent eating some pudding after telling the child not to); and the friend stories (boy and girl versions) illustrated unfair blame (the friend lying to the teacher about a mess in the classroom) and a betrayal of trust (a friend telling other children a secret). Three further tasks were designed to measure forgiveness (as opposed to retaliation or hostility): "It was assumed that these represented an indirect way of measuring children's willingness to forgive a person who has treated them unfairly" (Evans et al., 2004, pp 16–17). Some thought had been given to the tone of the scenarios and, in order to protect the participants, these scenarios were presented as hypothetical. Each scenario and task was illustrated as another strategy to engage the children in the experimental phase. The researcher and one of two research assistants invited the children into a separate room, at a time that suited the children and the teacher. This could have been a playtime or lunchtime but Yamaguchi and her colleagues were guided by the teacher. Even though the subject of the research was serious, there were some humorous moments, partly owing to Yamaguchi's Japanese accent:

At one time, Tomoko asked the children what sounded like 'do you want to come and pray?', but she actually meant 'do you want to come and play?' (Evans, Interview)

Overall, the strategies were assessed as successful.

All the children appeared to enjoy their session in the study. They were well-behaved, listened attentively to the story and seemed relaxed in the presence of the researchers. They were fascinated by the idea of being videoed. No testing session had to be terminated because any child was giving indications of distress and all children assented to the procedure. (Evans, Interview)

The research procedures with the children had a clearly thought-through beginning, middle and end:

We gave some thought to the methodology which was complex. Launching into a story about bad things may not be a good strategy so we wanted a positive ending. There was an opportunity at the end of the interview for children to tell their own stories. The interviews were conversational and the children were very forthcoming and happy to participate. (Evans, Interview)

Children were rewarded for their participation with a sticker.

Analysis, reporting back and dissemination

A mixed-method study included analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data. Limitations on the ages of the participating children (nine-year-olds and 11-year-olds) were deliberate as the focus was not on development but on gaining insights:

Two years can make a difference in terms of being articulate. We selected an age group with the ability to identify emotions and explain concepts. (Evans, Interview)

Quantitative data were analysed for dependent variables (sharing, caring and trust) to measure how children responded to fairness: "The three situations didn't correlate. There are limitations but [analyses] were statistically straightforward." (Evans, Interview). The qualitative analyses proved more complex and Evans acknowledged that the thematic analyses could have been more thorough:

Descriptions of forgiveness were very interesting. The language themes were not perfect and there were some difficulties finding the word to describe the same emotion. Basically, [children and their parents] used different words for emotions. We would have had small categories if we had divided the words into categories. (Evans, Interview)

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To report back to the participants Yamaguchi prepared a one page synopsis of the research findings for parents (and by association, children) and she spoke to the children about the findings. According to Evans "it was hard to give a sense of the findings to children. To explain the findings was a bit much". (Evans, Interview)

Ethical issues: insights and hindsight

This research raised the following ethical questions: Was this research of benefit to children's education? And, was the research taking advantage of a captive audience? These questions remain contentious and for complex reasons. Another issue was to ensure that negative experiences from home did not dominate the research, and that children were protected. Evans believed that Yamaguchi's background as a graduate student in clinical psychology acted as a safety net.

In terms of meeting the aims and objectives of the project, Evans believed that the mixed-methods more than adequately addressed the research interest but these could have been more precise. For example, it was important for the overall study that there was a parent and child dyad. 83 children were volunteered (with the children's consent) but only 56 parents participated therefore it was hard to match.

The timeframe (approximately two months) for collecting data was a limitation. Setting up the research was very time consuming:

Using schools to find the participants was time consuming for principals. We used the schools to find participants and this put pressure on teachers and principals and so forth – in some ways that is kind of regrettable – but schools were genuinely interested in the topic – there was an intrinsic interest in the topic. (Evans, Interview)

Critical messages for this report

The ethical question: 'Who benefits from the research?' remains an important one for researchers. Similarly, questions about where and how to recruit school-aged participants are also important. In this research, schools were invited to participate. The alternative, recruiting children through letter box drops in community neighbourhoods, raises a different set of issues. Schools are also autonomous and each board of trustees or principal, has the right to agree (or not) to participate in research. As Evans stated, children's perceptions of fairness and forgiveness was of intrinsic interest to the schools, even if the focus was on the familial experiences and how these might be transferred to the child. There are some universal values that may not be explicitly taught as part of the school curriculum but a shared understanding of fairness and forgiveness between a school and its community (which include families and children) might have benefits.

Once again, time is a critical restraint exerting an influence over the research at all phases in the process. This research was completed in a relatively short space of time owing to the contractual obligations of the funding. The Blue Skies fund is intended for short-term projects where the benefits of a final report can be released into the public domain within a relatively short timeframe.

Questions that are raised

- What is educational research? Is our definition of educational research too narrow?
- How can research that is not explicitly curriculum-based be facilitated in schools?
- Do schools understand enough about their rights to either accept or refuse to participate in research?
- How might multi-method research findings be reported back to children in a user-friendly way?
- Are children a captive audience? Do children invited through schools to participate in research understand how to withdraw?
- Does more need to be done to highlight the benefits of research involving children?

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Primary school visual methods exemplar

Moreland, J. & Cowie, B. (2005). Exploring methods of auto-photography and photo-interviews: Children taking pictures of science and technology. *Waikato Journal of Education, 11,* 73-87.

Interview details

Interviewer: Sarah Te One
Interviewees: Judy Moreland and Bronwen Cowie
Note taker: Mimi Hodis

Background

Judy Moreland and Bronwen Cowie are both employed by the Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research at the University of Waikato. The research was prompted by an interest in children's perspectives, as well as a growing concern that the number of students studying science and technology was diminishing. Stereotypical images of scientists had been elicited over the years by the 'Draw-a-scientist-test': "… children depict scientists stereotypically as white males who wear laboratory coats and glasses and work alone with chemicals that can be dangerous" (Moreland & Cowie, 2005, p. 73).

The methods used in this project germinated from an 'idle chat' (Cowie, Interview) in Cowie's office as they were about to go home:

I had been at a conference and had seen some photographs taken by teenagers about their neighbourhood and I wondered if we could do the same thing here with science and technology? (Cowie, Interview)

Over the years we had talked to lots of children about what they thought about working with technology – we wanted to look at the students' views of science and technology. (Moreland, Interview)

A final interest in this research was prompted by the possibilities of using multi-method approaches that include visual images. To support the researchers' interest in children's perspectives, auto-photography was chosen. This method relies on photographic data collected by the participants: "Auto-photography and photo-interviews provide a distinctive qualitative voice, with the method working from pictures to words and not vice versa" (Moreland & Cowie, 2005, p. 74). The children in this research took photographs of what they decided represented 'science and technology'. The researchers were interested in using an approach to research espoused by Delamont (2003), where the image of the Lebanon Gate was used to represent research that challenges researchers to question their "epistemological certainties, … standpoints, methodological foundations, and [would force researchers] to find new literatures, new theories, new perspectives on education itself" (Delamont, 2003, p. 4).

Aims and objectives

The research aimed to reveal children's contextually situated perceptions of science and technology. The researchers assumed a sociocultural perspective, which they claim "has become increasingly important in science and technology education research. … A sociocultural perspective endorses the view that knowledge is socially constructed and acknowledges that activity is always nested in a wider, social, cultural, political, and economic context (Wertsch, 1991)" (Moreland & Cowie, 2005, p. 74):

We were really going to try something new and we had no idea about how it would work. We didn't know if 5 year-olds could use a camera; we didn't know if our questions would make sense? Should children understand the distinction between science and technology? Would they know the differences? (Cowie, Interview)

Yes, that was part of our debate. We were interested in the students' voice, what children thought about this research. Unless we tried, we wouldn't know what children's perceptions of science and technology were, or if they had any perceptions – they did! (Moreland, Interview)

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A further intention of the research, and one consistent with a sociocultural perspective, was the value of the camera as a tool that "could cross borders between home and school". They had control over what they photographed, and what they talked about when they were interviewed. To me this was about a transfer of power from researcher to student. (Cowie, Interview)

Access, consent processes, role of parents, families and community

The school was selected for several reasons. First, it had not been used in previous research; second, it was a small, rural school (two teachers, Decile 2) and because of this there was enough research funding to provide every child with their own disposable camera and third, the school was located near where one of the researchers lived:

There was a high level of trust [in our work] from the Principal and from the community. We were very welcome – children would wave and greet us. It was a really enjoyable time. (Cowie, Interview)

A mix of informal and formal consent and assent processes were used to gain access and begin the research. Conventional formal processes sought formal, written consent from parents on behalf of their children but researchers were present in the classrooms and explained the project to the classes:

They were really pretty excited about the photos and the cameras. We would go into the classroom and explain the project, and ask again if they wanted to come and talk to us – we gave them the option of talking to us in pairs or on their own. We talked to them about taking the photos of whatever they liked. (Moreland, Interview)

This process indicated a willingness on the part of the researchers to involve the children in the research process from the beginning and is an example of how children were empowered through opportunities to make choices about whether or not they wanted to participate, how they wished to exercise that option, and how they might contribute with their photographs.

Data collection tools, strategies

The data-collection tools used in this research followed auto-photography and auto-interview conventions. Because there was enough funding to supply all children (38 children from Year 0 to 8) with a disposable camera, decisions about selecting participants did not arise in this study. Researchers were clear that the focus of the research was not on photography or aesthetic perceptions but on the children's perceptions of science and technology. The particular type of disposable, single-use cameras were chosen because they were "relatively straightforward to operate, were light, compact, and produced high quality photographs. Their disposability meant there was no need for concern from either the children or the families about damaging expensive equipment" (Moreland & Cowie, 2005, p 75):

We deliberately chose cameras with 15 exposures rather than 24, and we explained to [children] that they would need to make some decisions. We thought that 15 photos would be less of a chore and [children] would stay interested in taking 15 photos – it wasn't too many. (Cowie, Interview)

Children were given simple instructions (verbally and pictorially) as well as a sheet to record their reasons for taking the photograph. The sheet "prompted the children to take 15 photos, [the first] one of themselves and 14 of 'science' and 'technology'" (Moreland & Cowie, 2005, p. 75). Instructions for distinguishing between science and technology avoided explaining differences between the two disciplines because this was a purpose of the research.

Data gathering took place over 10 days after which the cameras were returned to the school, the photos developed and the photo-interview phase begun. Initially, the researchers interviewed children in pairs but, at the insistence of an older child for an interview on her own, and based on this child's shared experience of that interview, the researchers began individual interviews:

It seemed like they wanted our undivided attention and we were happy to do individual interviews. (Moreland, Interview)

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Shifting the locus of the research from the school into the community and into homes revealed to families how independent and competent their children were at data collecting. Even the youngest children asserted control over the medium (camera) and, in some cases, would stage photographs to illustrate science and technology. Family members reported their conversations with their children about the research to the researchers who concluded that "children taking photographs about science and technology could be used as a means to engage the wider school community in conversations about science and technology" (Moreland & Cowie, 2005, p. 78).

Analysis, reporting back and dissemination

Sociocultural theory (Rogoff, 1995) includes the personal, the interpersonal and the community. The interpretive design for the research reflected the researchers' view that children's experiences of science and technology outside the classroom were valuable. The analysis of the data, however, used the current Ministry of Education curriculum documents for science and technology. According to Cowie and Moreland, these documents provided useful categories for analysis:

We reasoned that at school, that would be how children would know about science and technology, or were likely to know about them; that's how they would have experienced them. (Moreland, Interview)

We discussed the whole area around aesthetics and visual image analysis as an orientation to analysis but we didn't go there. It seemed fair to us to concentrate on science and technology because the children knew that. If we'd worked with an art person it would have been different. (Cowie, Interview)

As part of the reporting back and dissemination phase, children were asked to select two of their 15 photos for a community exhibition. Families and the community were invited to a local community hall where the photos and an accompanying short commentary dictated to the researchers by the children were displayed. A data show complemented the static display. The exhibition was the first time the children had seen each other's work and "excited whispers filled the air" (Moreland & Cowie, 2005, p. 83).

The dissemination had an international impact as the researchers displayed the children's photographs at the British Research in Education Association conference:

The children were really excited about their research going overseas. (Moreland, Interview)

A local reporter wrote an article (with photos) about the exhibition and the research for the newspaper.

Ethical issues: insights and hindsight

Auto-photography and photo-interviews addressed, in part, some of the power issues experienced in research with children. As well as providing an accessible vehicle for discussion (the photos), the interviews were opportunities for children to talk and reflect on their decisions and ideas. Further, it allowed the researchers "to probe the children's understandings" (Moreland & Cowie, 2005, p. 85). An element of reciprocity entered these discussions as children "were able to experience adults listening and responding to them about what they thought and saw" (p. 85). An issue raised during this phase was that sometimes the photos did not capture what was intended or it was difficult to know what exactly the photo was about.

An interesting ethical issue arose as the children selected photos for the exhibition. First, ethical consent was needed for any people depicted in the exhibition photos. This meant returning to the families, or community members, and explaining the purpose of the research once more, and seeking consent for a specific photograph to be included in the exhibition. A second ethical concern reflected the researchers' commitment to protecting children and their families from intrusive, potentially compromising attention. Therefore, the researchers supported children to select photos that would not reveal their personal circumstances but could still illustrate their perceptions of science and technology:

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We were quite careful about the photos for the exhibition. Some gave too much insight into [the children's] home conditions and so were not chosen. (Cowie, Interview)

We were really conscious that we got insights into [the children's] home life; we were really privileged, researchers don't usually get into people's homes like that. We would ask ourselves: Would we want a photo like this in an exhibition? (Moreland, Interview)

A final reporting back/dissemination activity was to collate the exhibition photos into a portfolio for the school. This has been an artefact held in great esteem by the children, their teachers, their families and the community.

Critical messages for this report

A particular strength identified by the researchers in this project was observed in the children's confidence in taking photographs. The auto-photography method allowed for research with children, rather than research on children and proffered possibilities for questions to be raised by the children, and not just the researchers (Graue & Walsh, 1995, Clark & Moss, 2001):

Children were a huge part of the research process. They made a strong contribution and they had really good ideas. They were as interested in the research as the researchers were. They were really excited about taking the research to England, and talking at BERA. (Moreland, Interview)

It was hugely rewarding. I would like to reiterate how we should never under-estimate children's contributions. They had questions, just as we did. We were questioning whether or not it was a reasonable research process. Children gave the questions a lot of thought in their own time. We included one autistic child and it was no trouble at all. (Cowie, Interview)

In other words, sharing power with children assured them of a degree of control:

They had control over what they photographed. They were in control over what they talked about when they were interviewed. (Cowie, Interview)

Another important message from this research is the potential auto-photography and photo-interviews have to build meaningful home-school relationships that collaborate to improve children's learning outcomes. Similarly, there is potential for teachers to "find out about the learning experiences children have at home and in the wider community" (Moreland & Cowie, 2009, p. 85).

One point made by the researchers concerns the involvement of the classroom teacher. Both commented that they would include the teacher more in future research because there were unexplored possibilities for using the children's photos in relation to the science and technology curriculum documents.

Questions that are raised

- How can we make it possible for auto-photography and auto-interview methods to inform teaching and learning?
- How can we explain to children the purposes of research?
- How do we include children's contributions meaningfully?
- How do we acknowledge children's contributions?

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Primary school ethnographic exemplar

Dickie, J. G. (2008). *An investigation of sites, uses, and practices for literacy in the lives of Pasifika students. A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, Victoria University of Wellington*. Victoria University of Wellington: Wellington.

Interviewer: Sarah Te One
Interviewee: John Dickie

Background

Dickie's study stemmed from an interest in emancipatory research methods (Dickie, 2000) and from a concern about "hearing constant references to the long tail of literacy under-achievement for Pasifika and Māori students in what is essentially a pākeha education system" (Dickie, 2009, Interview). The Ministry of Education (2003; 2006) argues that "one way to raise the achievement of Pasifika students is first to understand their out-of-school literacies" (Dickie, 2008, p. 1). Dickie's research investigated 14 Pasifika students' (Years 7 and 8) situated, out-of-school contexts for literacy as a way to enable teachers to make better connections between such contexts and the school curriculum. His research sought the students' perspectives by engaging them as ethnographers of their own literacies outside school. The research was conducted in one primary school with a predominantly Pasifika demographic. Dickie commented:

Over the years when I have visited new entrants' classroom I would see all these little children, their big eyes looking up at me and I wondered: What opportunities did they have? Were there equal opportunities for these [Pasifika] children to succeed? What were their parents' aspirations? I wanted to do something ... to see what we could do to provide more equal opportunities." (Dickie, Interview)

Ministry of Education resources (2003a, 2006) and research (Phillips, MacNaughton, & MacDonald, 2001; MacNaughton, 2002) assert that low teacher-expectations of achievement by Māori and Pasifika students can be redressed by creating an awareness of how effective links between home and school can build on "the strengths children bring from home and from their community literacy practices" (Dickie, 2008, p. 67).

Aims and objectives

The research focus sought children's insider view of their literacy practices beyond the classroom. The aims were to understand how and where the fourteen Year 7 and 8 Pasifika students used their literacy knowledge and skills to support teachers at this level because a) it is important for teachers to make connections between home and school in cross-cultural contexts where "literacy is a powerful tool of cultural hegemony (Laqueur, 1976) and is about cultural knowledge and social power (Luke, 1994)" (Dickie, 2008, p. 1); and b) during the last two years of primary school, there is an emphasis on literacy acquisition before children start secondary school. The study asked "whose literacy, and whose curriculum is taught in New Zealand classrooms and how is literacy measured[?]" (Dickie, 2008, p. 4):

I wanted to know how children (Years 7 and 8) used literacy. How do they learn outside of school? Is there something there that may be useful for teachers? The children's skill and literacy may not match the school's literacy and if teachers know about these skills and expertise, they may be able to incorporate it into school programmes. It is also helpful to know where there may be a conflict of values for children between literacy uses in different sites. (Dickie, Interview)

Access, consent processes, role of parents, families and community

I took little steps, one-at-a-time, and I kept field notes of all my initial meetings because I didn't know what might be needed. (Dickie, Interview)

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Based on existing relationships with local schools and an informal group of advisors made up of professional colleagues, access and consent were processes of building trusting relationships over time:

The key thing was to go through people I knew. I knew the Principal of the school and I knew the school. I had a favourable impression of the school. I telephoned the Principal and then met her face-to-face. That was much better than talking [on the phone]. I went along and explained what I wanted to do and she was extremely welcoming. She was very committed to the community and enthusiastic about the research. She offered to explain the research to the Board of Trustees. So, we did it informally first, and then formally. (Dickie, Interview)

Access was gained using personal relationships built with key people. In this case, the Principal's awareness of Samoan values and her knowledge of the Samoan community facilitated support for the research in her school. The Principal also selected a teacher whose input proved to be "very instrumental in making the research succeed" (Dickie, Interview):

This teacher was a Samoan, and spoke Samoan, and knew the community very well. It was an ideal situation really, and I needed to get people on side. I gained access to the children through the teacher.

In a process of visits to the school and discussions with his group of advisors, Dickie worked through a dilemma he felt as a papalagi (white male) researcher:

I was really seeking consent from the community but I talked to other people too, and because it was such a positive topic, they supported the idea. It's all about the relationships, getting their trust, building relationships. There was the whole hierarchy of the school: the Principal to the teacher to the child. (Dickie, Interview)

During the consent process the teacher pointed out that some of the children's parents did not read English and so the information and consent needed translating into the appropriate Pasifika language. One advisory group member double-checked the translation and found errors, which could have undermined the researcher's intentions to build trustworthy relationships. The Advisory Group added to this researcher's understanding of the consent process in a Pasifika context.

Children's written consent to participate was not a requirement in this research, although, in hindsight, Dickie commented:

If I were doing [the research] again I would seek written children's consent. Now, in hindsight, that's a good idea – it shows more respect for the children and it values them as participants. (Dickie, Interview)

Gaining informed consent from the children occurred through a variety of strategies. Dickie visited the school many times, participating in classroom activities and at a sports day and during school visits. It was during one such visit to the local community library that the teacher explained the research to the children and sought volunteers for the pilot project. Four names, two boys and two girls, were selected. After the methods had been trialled, the final selection of fourteen participant children was made. Children were invited to participate and work with a peer. Those who volunteered were given consent forms for their parents to sign.

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Data collection tools, strategies

Dickie was committed to seeking the children's perspectives and regarded his role to be to elicit children's perspectives on their literacy experiences in out-of-school contexts. He envisaged the children as ethnographers although he found this difficult to explain to the children. Photographs and journals were important means of data collection and these were augmented by three separate interview situations. The children worked with a self-chosen peer of the same gender because the pilot project revealed that the children were self-conscious when working with others they did not know very well. Dickie asked the girls at the end of the pilot-project interview why they hadn't spoken very much: "Well, we didn't know the other children in the group" was their response.

Disposable cameras (27 exposures) were distributed to the children who were asked to complete their tasks (taking photographs of out-of-school literacy experiences) week about between two children. As well as taking photographs, the children were asked to keep a journal to account for what photos they had taken, what reading and writing they had seen, who was involved and where this took place.

The children were given badges, similar to conference name labels, and these identified them as legitimate researchers:

They got quite excited about the badges – they seemed to enjoy wearing them – and they liked the cameras. I did so many visits. I would meet the groups of children, go and collect the camera, go back with the photos for a second meeting with a set of photos for the children (I kept one set for myself). And then there was the final meeting with all the children ... The school secretary was wonderful and she would ring me when the camera was ready to pick up, and the teacher kept the process going, reminding the children about the photos and the journal. The process took about three weeks but was not straightforward as some pairs took much longer and needed many reminders. (Dickie, Interview)

The use of photographs in this project minimised the power imbalance between the researcher and the children. Dickie commented:

I wanted an insider view from a children's perspective. We know about school literacy and what schools and teachers want but we don't know about what happens out of school. The photos were a way of showing an insider-view; it showed their homes, their books and other things; kids reading to one another.

The other thing with photos is that kids make their own decisions about what will be photographed, and, in addition, they are asked to interpret their own photo – comment on the photo and the researcher's interpretations – it gives them more control over how their photo will be used. (Dickie, Interview)

This point of whose interpretation would prevail was significant to Dickie who spent some time ensuring that the interviews where the photos were discussed recorded the children's perspectives accurately. Rather than offering these participants transcripts, Dickie chose instead to seek clarification during the recorded interview sessions. Throughout the interviews he would summarise the conversations to ensure he had understood the children's interpretations correctly. Once the interviews were transcribed as text, areas of uncertainty or ambiguity were clarified in a follow-up conversation with the children concerned.

Three interviews were conducted; two with the pairs of children (two interviews per pair) and the last one with all the boys and then all the girls separately. During the first interview, the research focus on out-of-school literacy was explained. Demographic data were recorded on each child's interview schedule with the researcher assisting. The camera was handed over, and the role of the journal was explained as well. During the interviews, each child had an interview schedule with the questions and the researcher read these aloud and, when necessary, explained them to the children. In the second interview, the photos and the journal acted as prompts and led to discussion. Rather than asking questions, the researcher read his questions together with the children so the interview began as a discussion. A Likert scale, used as part of the first interview, was displayed on large coloured cards:

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I was working with the children rather than just being an observer of them. The journals backed that up – they went with the photos and sometimes went beyond the photos.

In the interview situations the photos were a guide – they led the discussion and I would, at times, ask 'Is this what you mean?' (Dickie, Interview)

As much control over the data-collection phase as possible was given to the children:

I was the adult, and the teacher. I was the outsider and they could comment on my view – they were the expert weren't they? They were being asked to be the expert and present their interpretations of the photos. They were the experts. I needed to get them on-side – they had the power to tell me, or not to tell me – I needed to do everything I could to get them to be forthcoming. One of my supervisors suggested I provide biscuits and drink. (Dickie, Interview)

Analysis, reporting back and dissemination

Dickie followed the Pasifika Guidelines (Anae, Coxon, Mara & Wendt-Smith, 2001) during all phases of the research but the following comment is pertinent to the analysis phase:

[The Pasifika Guidelines] explain how to behave in the full sense. Aspects relate to consultation, face-to-face situations, and the need to build rapport with the participants who are being interviewed. This means that, in a sense, the data are not being collected but co-authored. Part of following the Pasifika Guidelines was having teacher educators from a Samoan background giving advice. (Dickie, Interview)

This research used sociocultural theory, in particular Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis (the personal plane, the interpersonal plane that included guided participation, and the community plane) to examine data from the different sites to establish where literacy experiences were situated. The personal plane explained the insider view, or the children's perspectives, which could be linked to the teachers' understandings and to the school curriculum. The children's interpretations of their photographs were part of the analysis process as well as being part of the data collection.

The research was for a doctoral thesis. A short report was provided for the school but not specifically for the children:

On reflection, I think I could have done this better. I didn't really report back to the children; not a formal reporting back. By the time I had written the thesis and reported back to the school, the Year 8 children had gone to high school. If I was doing the study again I would think of some user-friendly way of doing that because the findings were so very positive, and the children were very literate and using literacy in many ways outside of school. (Dickie, Interview)

Ethical issues insights and hindsight

Dickie commented that, in hindsight, he would seek children's direct written consent as opposed to verbal assent and written parental consent. Photographs were highly effective, and the children said they enjoyed using the cameras. The journals were less effective with some boys describing writing the journals as boring. Girls tended to record their entries more conscientiously and while most boys wrote something down, one did not. Despite this, the combined effect of a conversation with photos and a journal was successful overall. However, for other aspects of the study, three themes remain salient:

Build trusting relationships: an insider contact helps ameliorate differences between external, outsider tensions, and insider perceptions of research and researchers. Further, relationships based on mutual respect resulted in rich, detailed explanations from the children about their photographs and journal entries.

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Key informants: in this case an Advisory Group, proved invaluable. Networks of professional colleagues, and contacts within the community being investigated as part of the research, can facilitate entry, consent, and participation.

Time: In this study, numerous face-to-face meetings with key people took time but were an investment in the long run. An informal researcher presence seemed to facilitate relationships between him and the children and with the staff in the school. Time explaining the research, and being present in the school, helped access and establish some sense of credibility.

Critical messages for this report

Children involved in this research provided invaluable data. A commitment to ameliorating the power differences between the adult, papalagi researcher enabled Dickie to elicit data that might otherwise not have been proffered. Through the photo elicitation and journals, Dickie empowered children to participate on their own terms and in meaningful ways. They could choose what, in their out-of-school life, were important uses of literacy which they might photograph or write about, and share as part of the research.

Given the obvious competence the children demonstrated, as researchers involving children, possibly more attention should be given to the dissemination phase to ensure that children can appreciate and understand the findings, can comment on their efficacy, and, ultimately, benefit from their dissemination.

Questions that are raised

- How can we support researchers to report back to children when the research process takes more than six months or a year?
- How can we ameliorate power differences between adult researchers from different cultural backgrounds and children?
- Why is the role of an advisory group not discussed more often in research design?
- What are the implications for focus group research with children?
- How can different data sources generated by children, such as journals, diaries, and photographs, be used in interviews with children?
- Why is written consent from both children and parents important?

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Primary school focus group interviews exemplar

Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., & Fa'afoi, A. (2005). What factors promote and support Pasifika students in reading and writing? *Teaching and Learning*, *2,* 2-8.

Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., Fa'afoi, A., & Tufulasi Taleni, L. (2008). Influences on Pasifika students' achievement in literacy. *Teaching and Learning*, *1,* 4-9

Interviewer: Sarah Te One
Interviewees: Jo Fletcher and Amosa Fa'afoi (interviewed separately)
Note taker: Mimi Hodis

Background

These two articles report on two phases of a project investigating Pasifika student literacy among Years 5-8 in six Christchurch primary schools. An increase in the number of Pasifika students in schools was a challenge for teachers unused to diverse cultural values and ways of working. National and international research revealed a concern about these students' low literacy achievement levels. However, given the experience of "disempowering research with little social or economic improvement in health and education" (Vaioleti, 2006. p. 22), this research began by building relationships with the Pasifika communities. A particular challenge for the researcher team was that two of them were not from the Pasifika community. Fletcher (Interview) commented:

In this research it was important that it was led by a Pasifika person. We were led by Amosa [Fa'afoi] who helped us build a wide network in the community. We had two matai (chiefs) and a senior lecturer, and we had a contact in the Ministry of Education.

According to Fletcher et al. (2005) and Fletcher et al. (2008), traditional, European research protocols "didn't work well for Pasifika children. They didn't respond well to surveys and questionnaires so we wanted to have a more natural conversation." (Fletcher, Interview)

Aims and objectives

The research aimed to reveal factors that Pasifika students in Years 5-8 classes considered supported their reading and writing. Phase 1 of the research began with a cohort of students who were high achievers. The rationale for this was explained by Fletcher as follows:

We are talking about the South Island context here – it's different [to the North Island where there are larger Pacific Island communities] and so we needed to start thinking and talking. We recognised a nervousness about the research, especially about two European (papalagi) women doing the research. We knew there was some negativity towards Pasifika students in some schools, and we wanted to show Pasifika students achieving to counter negative images. By starting with children who were reading and writing above average, we wanted to know why they were successful and what made them successful, and what barriers there were. (Fletcher, Interview)

The second phase of the research focused on underachieving students but with a similar focus on what students felt supported them to succeed, and what they experienced as barriers to their achievement in reading and writing.

Access, consent processes, role of parents, families and community

Access to the students took eight months. As part of this process, Amosa Fa'afoi, one of the researchers, assumed a leadership role to guide the research. His concerns were underpinned by a commitment to equal power sharing between the community and the researchers. He expressed this as follows:

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The ethical paper work had something missing. It was looking at education from some other people's perspective and I wanted to make sure that there was equal power sharing between the researchers and the community. Who looks after the community in the ethics process? We took the ethics model and modified it so that the community had some input. There were also some cultural issues for me. Researchers needed to accept that they didn't know it all and to do this research they needed support from others. (Fa'afoi, Interview)

Before the research began Fa'afoi developed a protocol for the female, papalagi researchers based on the Talanoa (Vaioleti, 1999-2003, cited in Vaioleti, 2006). A very real concern was for the students to not embarrass their families or their communities as they participated in the research:

I felt I was the gatekeeper, a doorway to the Pacific people [in this research project]. I needed to create an awareness of the different values and attitudes between the school and the families and the Church. The [papalagi] researchers needed to observe parents and students' interactions: Students would be more vocal without their parents, but much quieter when their parents were around. It was important to understand the dynamics between students, parents and community values. It was necessary to know the important people in the community and to gain their trust, but also to get their advice. (Fa'afoi, Interview)

Fletcher (2009, Interview) described the process of gaining access as developing 'an ecology of trust'. Schools were selected for them by the matai, one of whom worked in the Ministry of Education, and the Church Minister. Community meetings were held to explain the purpose of the research, and these meetings did not include the papalagi researchers. Once the schools had been selected, Fletcher, Parkhill with Fa'afoi met the principals and key teachers who were participating in the research process.

These staff selected the students based on their scores in literacy tests. The students' parents or caregivers were asked whether or not their child or children could participate. Consent from the students depended on consent from their parents or caregivers. A parental and community concern identified that the underachieving students might be considered 'unworthy' if they revealed their perspectives about reading and writing. This concern was articulated once more by Fa'afoi:

We were aware of relationships between parents and children and also aware that the issues in the home, the values and attitudes, were different to the values in the schools. [...]. Values from home and the Church need to be a part of the research.(Fa'afoi, Interview)

Data-collection tools, strategies

This research used focus group interviews with children. These focus groups were run by a teacher or by a recognised authority figure from the Pasifika community. In one school the Church Minister's wife facilitated the focus group discussions; in another, the deputy principal, and in another, it was the principal. Parents of the participating children had an option to attend, and some did. The researchers were also present. There were between 12 and 23 children in a focus group. In one school these discussions took place on the marae but in other schools, they were held in the staff room or in a class room. After the meetings, the researchers, the teachers or facilitators, and the parents met to discuss the interview data. There were three to four focus groups and meetings held over two terms in both phases of the research.

A variety of strategies were used to prompt discussions in the student focus groups. Fletcher (Interview) acknowledged:

...it was difficult to draw out conversations and to avoid compromising the issues, particularly with the under achieving group – it was difficult to frame the issue. Amosa read a story from a school journal and then started telling stories about his childhood.

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Fa'afoi (Interview) noted that these strategies were "necessary tools to make sense of the stories. As I listened to the children I heard so many stories that sounded just like my own experiences". Fa'afoi also commented on the observer effect of the adult and of the group size:

> *There was one particular woman of high status, a Minister's wife, and when she was in the room the students were not prepared to speak too loudly but they were freer when she was not present. I also noticed that when the groups were smaller, some students found a voice.*

The teachers and others conducting the focus group interviews used the same set of questions to guide the conversations with children. Follow-up questions were also asked during the interviews with the children.

Analysis, reporting back and dissemination

Both researchers interviewed commented on the importance of building trusting relationships, guided by the methodology in the Talanoa, where authenticity and reciprocity are highly valued and where, "in a research situation in a Pasifika community, the participants will behave differently depending on the age, gender, cultural rank or community standing of the researcher" (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 22). The researchers in this study recognised prior experiences of the Pasifika communities' involvement in research where the processes were not transparent in culturally accessible ways. Fletcher commented on the analysis and feedback process:

> *...the methodology needs to reflect the minority culture; it doesn't have to reflect the majority culture and so Amosa worked with us to prepare us for the experience. [The community feedback meeting] was very emotional and it was tough. We took the themes to a fono [community meeting] and the matai took the lead, and the fono controlled the agenda. At the first meeting, with the children who were successful, the children were there but they were very quiet, and at the second meeting, where the children were not successful, the children were outside playing. It was better if the kids weren't there ... There were fewer people at that meeting, and that was more difficult too, because the kids were not doing as well. (Fletcher, Interview)*

Reciprocity and power sharing were aspirations for this part of the research process that:

> *...highlighted where the issues [for Pacific Island students] are in the schools. It's about communicating and looking at how we can help one another. There are cultural issues and there needs to be a willingness to share power and learn together with fanau and community. (Fa'afoi, Interview)*

Ethical issues insights and hindsight

The protocol developed in consultation with the community leaders and the papalagi researchers was considered essential. Fa'afoi commented on how he felt responsible for his community and wanted to ensure that they could participate on equal terms with the researchers in the research. He also commented on how important it was for the papalagi researchers to understand the dynamics of the Pasifika community, and that they were prepared for a different cultural process.

In hindsight, Fa'afoi commented:

> *It was important to talk informally with the students. They kept wanting to come back and discuss the issues they were facing and so the quality of the feedback needed to maintain their trust. There wasn't really enough time to consolidate a trusting/working relationship. (Fa'afoi, Interview)*

Similar responses were noted by Fletcher, who also commented on the structure of the focus groups:

> *We needed much smaller focus groups – about three children would have been best then we could track what each child said. In some groups, the more confident children had a lot to say, but sometimes it was difficult to get to know the individuals. Sometimes two or three children can take over. (Fletcher, Interview)*

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Both Fletcher and Fa'afoi noted the value of working as a team, guided by the matai and by the Talanoa. For Fa'afoi, his status as a researcher and as a member of the Pasifika community meant his reputation was doubly scrutinised. Firstly, as a researcher in an academic institution, and secondly, his community would assess and evaluate the process of the research knowing his involvement. Fa'afoi made one last comment about the process of including the children and, by implication, their families, their Church and their communities in research:

> *Values from home need to be a part of [the research process]. Once the work is completed there needs to be some gain for the minority. They need to have some ownership of the research. We involved advisors, ministers, matai but how do we negotiate solutions that allow schools to implement strategies. (Fa'afoi, Interview)*

In other words, the research process does not stop with a report or thesis. Reciprocal relationships based on trust require the researchers to follow through with recommendations. In the case of this project, there was an expectation that the students who were not achieving literacy standards would benefit from the recommended strategies identified in the research.

A final point noted by Fa'afoi was the importance of being culturally attuned to relationships between adults and children and between children themselves. Body language, gestures and other non-verbal cues were observed but sometimes overlooked as time constraints exerted pressure on the processes:

> *I learnt a great deal. We need to create space and to follow up on questions and issues; we need to know when to shut up. Yes, we need to learn to be quiet. (Fa'afoi, Interview)*

Critical messages for this report

A negotiated protocol and guided access to the participants facilitated this research and highlighted aspects about reciprocal relationships that had been identified but were reinforced by this research, notably following up with the community. The ecology of trust established went beyond the walls of a classroom and were evident in the community meeting but also present in the family dynamics of participating students.

This project presents a different understanding of including children in research. Children did not expect to participate on their own terms but as members of families and communities where their roles and responsibilities differed between home, school, church and community.

Questions that are raised

- How is children's involvement interpreted in different contexts?
- What do researchers from 'outside' need to understand to effectively and ethically research in different contexts?
- How might the questions posed by researchers impact on a family or community?
- Are our ethical processes for working with children too singularly focused on benefits and harms for the individual, and not enough on the family and community to which that child belongs?

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CHAPTER 5:

Involving young people in research in secondary school settings

Judith Loveridge

What is the rationale for involving young people in research in educational settings and what disciplines and theoretical frameworks are drawn on?

In the last 30 years there have been increased calls for the involvement of young people in research in secondary school settings; Jean Rudduck (2007, p. 587) refers to the calls for involving students as a “tidal wave of statements”. The reasons given for their involvement have changed over time and are shaped by the concerns of the particular historical moment and context in which they emerged and in which they have subsequently developed or faded away. As with research with children, there has been a move from doing research about young people, in which they are objects of research, to doing research which involves young people, in which they are participants in research or (co)researchers themselves.

Rationales for involving young people in research

Various reasons have been given to support the involvement of students in research in secondary school settings including:

1. Students’ understanding of their learning: the process of involving students in research about their learning is seen as important in terms of establishing a language of learning and for motivating students and engaging them in contributing to their own agenda for learning.
2. School improvement and reform: young people are seen as having unique perspectives on their experiences of school and these can be drawn on to improve what happens and improve outcomes.
3. Construction of students’ identities: exploring the influence of intersecting dimensions of students’ identities (such as class, culture, gender, sexuality, and disabilities) on students’ experiences of life in school and the part played by schools in facilitating or complicating the identity of students.
4. Socialising students as active citizens: participating in research exposes students to opportunities to weigh evidence, consider other perspectives, develop a position and revise it in light of findings.
5. As part of the broader agenda of youth research: understanding the experiences of young people as they transition from school to various aspects of adulthood, such as work, living arrangements, crime, drug use, sexual identity and so on.

Some of these reasons are interconnected. Students’ understandings of their learning are also seen as important for the improvement of pedagogic and school practices; engaging students in contributing to their own agenda for learning is seen as important for socialising them as active citizens; understanding about the construction of students’ identities is also seen as important for engaging students in contributing to their own agenda for learning etc. As these different rationales intersect, researchers are better able to understand the dynamic complexities of students’ experiences in classrooms and schools. Hence, much research involving young people now has multiple agendas. Thiessen (2007) argues that studies informed by these different rationales are about ‘knowing students’ (p. 3); knowing is used both as an adjective, in recognition of students as knowledgeable participants in school and research, and as a verb, in recognition that this is a goal of research. Likewise, Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) identify a dual role for the participation of students in research when they argue that "'participation' has become both an *aim* and a *tool* in an ethical quest towards 'empowering children'" (p. 501).

Disciplines feeding into youth studies

Heath, Brooks, Cleaver and Ireland (2009) describe six distinct traditions and disciplinary perspectives that have contributed to the 'broad church' of youth studies (p. 10-13):

1. Developmental psychology: there is a long tradition of developmental work involving young people, going back to G. Stanley Hall's work in the early twentieth century heralding the invention of 'adolescence'. Research in this area has mainly utilised quantitative and experimental methods but recent work has also utilised narrative and psychoanalytic approaches.
2. Educational research: many disciplines (psychology, sociology, history, and anthropology) contribute to the study of educational questions about policy and practice across a wide range of subject areas, hence educational researchers have used a variety of methods and tools developed in the different disciplines.
3. Cultural studies: studies on 'deviant youth' gave rise to the field of cultural studies, which in turn generated further interest in youth subculture research. In the main, these studies have drawn on ethnographic methods.
4. Youth transitions research: the focus of this research is on various transitions such as from school to work, between different forms of domestic housing and more recently, to drug use and criminal careers. Both quantitative methodologies, including secondary analyses of large and sometimes longitudinal data sets, and qualitative methodologies, particularly narrative approaches, are evident.
5. Social and cultural geography: young people's use of space and place has emerged as a new area in social and cultural geography and this has drawn the attention of other researchers to these aspects of young people's lives. New techniques, such as mapping exercises and 'interviews on the move' have evolved and are now incorporated into the methodological tool box of researchers working in a variety of traditions.
6. Feminist youth research and 'girl studies': this branch of youth studies arose in response to what were seen as male dominated studies within the early youth research. Work within this tradition tends to draw on qualitative methodologies.

Others are also doing research with young people in social policy, criminology, health, anthropology, political science and social history. As research about young people grows at a rapid pace, there is cross-fertilisation amongst the disciplines. As will become evident throughout this report, the traditions and perspectives that feed into youth studies are also feeding into research involving young people in educational settings.

Stances authorising student perspectives in classroom

Cook-Sather (2002) writes specifically about research with young people in educational settings. She examines arguments that have been put forward for attending to students' views and acknowledging their authority to speak and be listened to about their educational experiences. She argues that five stances from within adult interpretive frames have challenged the previous hegemonic views of students as blank slates, teachers as the sole authors of what students learn, and education as banking, and that thus have "authorised student perspectives within the classroom" (p. 5). These are:

1. Constructivist pedagogies: constructivist pedagogies emphasise students as active creators of their own knowledge; pedagogical practices can be changed to better facilitate learning by listening closely to what students say about their learning as they explore ideas and make sense of them.
2. Critical pedagogies: in addition to viewing students as having an active role in their learning, critical pedagogies foreground the political nature of education and focus on critiques of social injustice. There is an emphasis on

experiential and research-based learning about themes that emerge from students' own lives and which challenge taken-for-granted assumptions. Critical pedagogies are committed to a redistribution of power within the classroom and the wider social world.

3. Post-modern and post-structuralist feminist pedagogies: whilst agreeing with the need to change dominant power relations within education, post-modern and post feminist researchers caution that unless researchers are attentive to intersections of identity, language, context and power in classrooms, some voices will dominate and other alterative voices will be marginalised or absent.
4. Educational researchers' perspectives: unlike the previous three groups, educational researchers do not share a common stance towards attending to student voices but use a wide range of approaches to integrate students' voices into critiques. They reveal the complexities, challenges, difficulties and contradictions that can accompany including student voices into conversations about the larger policy context and practices that impinge upon students' experiences of school.
5. Social critics' stance: these are not educators, or educational researchers but critics who wish to raise public awareness of particular issues like race and class inequities and illuminate students' experiences. Their work appeals to a wide readership and they present a view that the public can hear in a way that educators cannot. In this way they contribute to authorising students' perspectives (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 5-7).

Cook-Sather emphasises that these stances "all unfold within adults' interpretive frames and thus leave ultimate authority in the hands of adults" (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 7). She argues for the need to foreground students' interpretive frames, to allow them the opportunity to frame agendas and guide discussions about what goes on in the classroom and the wider educational policy context. She proposes doing this entails a genuine willingness to listen (which, she argues, means having to respond) and to genuinely share power and authority. When this actually happens, Cook-Sather maintains that "the messiness, complexities, and significant challenges in attempting not only to attend to student perspectives but also to position those students as authorities and to act on what they say" is revealed (p. 9).

Thus, educational research involving research with young people has been influenced by a number of theoretical traditions and disciplines, and likewise educational research has also influenced other disciplines. There is now an extensive body of literature about involving students in research at secondary school and an even larger body of related work that speaks broadly of involving students in 'consultation' and 'participation' more generally. It is beyond the scope of this report to discuss all of these but three recent publications in particular are useful for opening up the issues. They also include comprehensive reference lists covering a wide range of scholarship that has involved young people in research. Many publications make programmatic statements about involving young people in research but a recently published book titled *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary school* provides an extensive range of chapters based on empirical research involving children and young people in research in educational settings (Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007). Another recent publication, *Researching young people's lives* provides a comprehensive discussion of issues associated with various aspects of the research process with young people and useful detail about research that has been conducted across a range of settings with young people, including educational settings (Heath et al., 2009). In their book on *Researching children's experiences,* reflecting qualitative perspectives on research, Freeman and Mathison (2009) dedicate an entire chapter to the issue of 'children as researchers' that examines the challenges and opportunities of engaging young people as partners in the research process.

Methodology

Design phase

Owing to the way most research is funded and ethical review is sought, research does not generally involve young people in the design stages such that they would have input into the design of data-collection or generation tools.

Some researchers have argued that it is important to involve young people in research design even if they are not involved in other stages of the research, such as data collection or analysis, as they may raise questions that adults have not thought of and it also allows their input into the focus of the research.

Nairn, Higgins, Thompson, Anderson and Fu (2006) report on a study that was designed in response to students having been asked, in a previous study, to suggest possible research questions. One young man indicated he would like to know more about socialising without alcohol. Nairn et al. took this suggestion up and designed a research project to explore the adoption of alternative subject positionings in relation to the dominant norm of alcohol consumption by young people. Interestingly, in the *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar* the researchers changed the design of the research once the research had commenced owing to feedback from young people. Likewise, in the *Secondary school mixed methods exemplar* they modified research instruments when it became clear that the instrument they were using was not as predictive for certain groups of students as it was for others. They used input from students in focus groups, along with insights from the international literature to modify their measure. It would be interesting to know how frequent these kinds of modifications to research design are, given that they are not regularly reported. Modifications such as these reflect the dynamic and messy nature of research that is responsive to students and research conducted in educational settings where there are many different agendas at play. These examples suggest that even if funding and ethical processes require that the broad framework of the research is set prior to their involvement, young people could still make meaningful contributions, such as refining research tools, adjusting the language used, planning how data are gathered, and interpreting findings.

Access to participants

As with research in the other educational sectors, access to students as research participants in secondary schools is generally obtained through researchers negotiating with the principal and the board of trustees. Occasionally, a teacher (with whom the researcher may already have a professional relationship) will approach a researcher with an issue they would like to see researched with their students (see, for example, the *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar*). More typically, it is researchers who approach schools for access to students as participants. Journal articles or book chapters rarely provide much detail around the important processes of gaining access to participants. Some researchers argue that for certain kinds of research the interactions around gaining access can be considered a part of the data-gathering process (Davis, Watson, & Cunningham-Burley, 2008). The processes of gaining access are clearly intertwined with the processes of gaining consent for participation.

Key stakeholders, including principals and members of school boards, are given the role of ‘gatekeepers’ regarding access to students in order to protect young people from unnecessary or inappropriate research. Whilst acknowledging the importance of making sure that young people’s time is not wasted or they are not subjected to badly conducted research, Heath et al. (2009) question whether decisions about access for research to young people, who do have rights to express their opinions, should be left to gatekeepers alone. Alderson (2004) argues that denying researchers access to invite students to participate in research conflates the gatekeeper’s right to withhold access to institutions with students’ rights to give or withhold informed consent. If researchers are not given access to students, this in effect circumvents consent processes that would allow students to be given information and then make an informed decision about participation. Heath et al. (2009) suggest that other factors, such as time pressures, inconvenience, over-protectiveness and a reluctance to expose the quasi private life of the school to outside scrutiny may have undue influence on gatekeeper decisions in comparison with a genuine consideration of the effects on young people. They argue that a more participatory approach would involve gatekeepers consulting with others, including young people themselves, as to whether or not access to students is granted to researchers.

Whether or not they are engaged in decisions about access for researchers, students can find ways of not participating fully or of subverting the process if they do not wish to participate in the research, although this may not be comfortable or easy to do. New Zealand researchers Nairn, Munro and Smith (2005) analysed the process surrounding an interview where the researcher believed a teacher was going to invite students to participate in a group interview; they found that, in reality, students were conscripted by the teacher to participate. They reflected that it would be preferable for student researchers working with them to recruit students. In subsequent research on youth identities, these researchers have not relied on teachers to recruit students but have recruited them themselves, face to face. However, this process has the potential to affect the validity of findings in restricting research participation to 'convenience samples' that are not representative of the wider population of interest, in contrast to a more general group who might consent when approached through school. Heath et al. (2009) argue that it is not uncommon for research with young people in educational settings to be susceptible to such recruitment practices or researchers not being given sufficient time to explain their research to participants before they are put in the position of being asked for consent. This would suggest that although it may be a complex and messy process, for some kinds of research consulting with students about access of researchers would be worthwhile. In the research by New Zealanders Munford and Sanders (2004) discussed more fully below, great care was taken in gaining access to potential participants and this may have contributed to high recruitment rates.

Informed consent

Once permission has been granted to conduct research within the school, consent for participation must be gained from students and generally their parents or guardians as well. Gaining informed consent is a key component of ethical research. Informed consent refers to participants understanding the conditions under which research is being conducted and disseminated and being able to agree to participate without feelings of obligation or pressure to participate. Gaining informed consent for young people in secondary schools to participate in research is particularly complex and contentious in consideration of the range of ages and competencies of young people attending secondary schools. Whilst UNCROC (1989) refers to children as including "all those under the age of 18", it is now widely acknowledged that the term 'child' masks a wide range of ages and competencies. Furthermore, Article 12 of UNCROC (1989) states that:

> State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

In view of the other decisions that young people are deemed competent to make about their lives, some researchers feel that young people are competent to make decisions about their involvement in research in educational settings without parental consent. Some support a system for older children whereby they themselves can actively consent to participate without parental consent, and parents only indicate if they wish older children not to participate (Powell & Smith, 2009).

As discussed in the Introduction to this report there is no law stating that parental consent is necessary for a researcher to talk with a child, nor stating a legal age at which children or young people can consent to participate in research without parental consent. Researchers working within institutions may be required to adhere to their Institution's ethical guidelines around these matters (see excerpts from Powell and Smith (2006) in the Introduction). Guidelines that do not regulate the way that research is conducted, including the age at which parental consent is not required but help researchers think through such issues enable researchers to be responsive to conflicting pressures that can occur in research. Although some may wish for a specific age to be stated at which parental consent is no longer required the lack of a specific age does mean that researchers are required to reflexively consider their particular research context, the characteristics of the particular research participants, the type of research they are doing and what seems appropriate in terms of broad ethical principles that are adhered to by their research community and the community in which they are researching. As discussed in the Introduction to this report, this should involve considering what is culturally appropriate, particularly for research involving Māori and Pasifika young people and the need to consult with appropriate people or groups in the young people's communities.

Munford and Sanders (2004) sought to recruit young people (aged 13-15), through schools, for research involving both them and their parents/caregivers about well-being. They decided to recruit three different groups of young people: those achieving at a high educational level, those who were functioning well in education, and those who were excluded from educational institutions. They wished to recruit the participants in a way that "achieved a balance between the recognition of children and young people's autonomy rights and capacities to act with competence, and the responsibilities of parents and other adult gatekeepers" (p. 470). To achieve this goal, they developed a four-step process for obtaining consent:

- The first step involved contacting schools and organisations involved with young people not at school to request permission to meet alone with a large number of young people. Information that would be given to inform young people and parents about the research was provided to the schools and organisations.
- The second step involved informing parents that their young people would be attending a presentation to inform them about the research and give them an information sheet to bring home. It was made clear that the presentation would be very general and no consent would be sought at the presentation.
- The third step involved giving the presentation to students at the school or venue provided by the organisation. The presentation was only for the young people; some teachers expressed a wish to sit in on the meetings but this was denied so that assurances of anonymity provided by the researchers to the students would be upheld. At the end of the presentation the young people were provided with contact forms so if they wished to do so, they could provide their telephone number and the names of their parents/caregivers who could be contacted by the researchers.
- Step four involved the researchers calling the young people at home and checking if they were happy to hear from them and if so then asking permission to speak to their parents/caregivers. Meetings were then usually arranged with parents/caregivers to further discuss the project before consent to participate from both parents and children was sought. In all but one site, a high recruitment rate was achieved suggesting that both parents and young people found the approach acceptable and engaging.

Although the process outlined above is time consuming and resource intensive, Munford and Sanders (2004) argue that it made explicit their view of young people as competent and demonstrated their respect for them and their views. They suggest that the process may require modifications for different cultural contexts, including dialogue with relevant communities. Their approach was equally successful for recruiting Māori and non-Māori families.

New Zealand researchers Smith et al. (2002) investigated what it means to be a young person at the turn of the century in light of the preceding 15 years of economic and social change. They did not recruit participants from within educational settings but their experiences in terms of gaining informed consent (and other aspects of the research) are useful for those conducting research with youth in a range of settings. They used focus groups in the first phase of their research and for the second phase they designed what they called a 'youth tribunal'. A number of these tribunals were then held throughout the country in both rural and urban locations. Initially, they were concerned that the requirement to explain the ethical information and procedures at the beginning of each session would prevent young people from speaking. However, on reflection, they argue this process became one of the most powerful parts of the methodology; it was perceived by youth as indicating that the process was important and safe. Acknowledging the rights of youth underscored the sense of opportunity and permission to talk about what they wanted to and in ways of their own choosing. These two research examples suggest that if informed consent processes are conducted with due attention and care at a level beyond simply meeting formal requirements, they can contribute to building positive and trusting research relationships with young people and thus significantly enhance the methodology.

Pragmatically, there are questions about how much information should be provided at what point for young people and in what form so they can engage with that information to make a genuinely informed choice without coercion. David, Edwards and Alldred (2001) suggest that the act of giving information to participants about research is like other pedagogic processes associated with normal classroom activities and hence makes it very difficult for students to dissent to be involved. However, the experiences of Smith et al. (2002) and Munford and Sanders (2004) would suggest that the attitude taken by researchers towards the process of gaining consent can mediate these tensions. Some researchers have incorporated alternative activities within questionnaires so that young people can decide not to participate without teachers or other adults knowing that they are opting out of the research. Survey researchers also generally include instructions within questionnaires to make clear that students have the right to not answer individual questions or respond to any parts of a survey if they so choose. Researchers argue that when young people write nonsense in questionnaires it is important to recognise this as a student's right to dissent to participate in a context in which it may be hard to do so in more formal ways. It may be possible to inform young people fully about all aspects of research utilising traditional quantitative methodology with a pre-determined data-collection schedule. Smythe and Murray (2000) argue that in processual forms of research, such as narrative enquiry or ethnographic research, it may be difficult for researchers to fully anticipate all that will be asked of participants thus complicating the issue of fully informed consent. Process consent, whereby consent is negotiated on an ongoing basis, or for different phases of the research, is one way that some researchers have attempted to fully inform and empower participants to opt out of involvement or involvement with some aspects of a research project (see *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar* for consent processes allowing different levels of participation). Researchers would also be expected to make defensible judgements regarding whether they can ask follow-up questions in interview situations that go beyond the terms of obtained consent and could introduce potential harm to participants.

Data generation and collection

With such a wide range of disciplines and traditions feeding into youth research in general and research with young people in educational settings, there is now a wide range of research methods for generating and collecting data. Many of the rationales currently provided for involving young people in research are concerned with giving expression to, and understanding, young people's experiences hence it is not surprising that interviews (individual or group) are used extensively in youth research (Heath et al., 2009). In New Zealand, we also see a mix of methods emerging to research issues with young people.

Surveys

Surveys provide a useful way of getting an understanding of the bigger picture and of patterns amongst and/or between different groups of young people. When used in longitudinal research, they can provide evidence of trends amongst different groups or cohorts of young people, including long-term interrelationships among variables, some of which may be causal. However, the literature on surveys does not generally provide specific guidance for surveys with young people. Although there is a perception amongst some that children and young people may perceive surveys negatively, as a piece of school work or as a boring exercise (Tisdall, Davis & Gallagher, 2009), Stafford, Laybourn and Hill (2003) found that young people enjoy responding to surveys. Students express the view that surveys enable young people to express their views in a way that they might not in a group, giving all students opportunity to express their views in a safe and confidential manner. Young people have, however, expressed reservations about the use of online surveys that relied on young people having internet access in their homes or having to use over-subscribed computers at school in places that do not offer privacy.

Borgers, de Leeuw, & Hox (2000, cited in Heath et al., 2009, p. 137) indicate that from 12 years onwards standardised questionnaires that are used with adults can be used but attention should be paid to the kind of language that is used and ambiguities should be avoided. However, Heath et al. caution

> Contrary to the general guidance on writing adult surveys, which commonly argues that a balance of positively and negatively phrased items in questionnaires can help to reduce response bias, evidence from research with young people suggests that they can find it difficult to indicate agreement by disagreeing with a negative statement or conversely to indicate disagreement by agreeing with a negative statement. (p. 137)

Giving questionnaires to experts in the field to review, trialling questionnaires and interviewing respondents about their responses as they complete a questionnaire under development are all ways in which the format and wording of questionnaires can be improved. Increasingly some surveys are being administered through the internet, either by email or dedicated websites. The use of internet-based research with young people in educational settings raises pragmatic issues of access to computers for students to respond and also ethical issues concerning procedures for gaining both student and parental consent for those under the age of 16. Examples of how these issues have been dealt with are now emerging.

In addition to the research by Meyer et al. (2009) (see *Secondary school mixed methods exemplar)*, two other New Zealand projects provide valuable insights about conducting large scale longitudinal survey research with young people. They are *Youth 2000* (which includes *Youth 07)*, which has been conducted by the Adolescent Health Research Group at the University of Auckland and *The Youth Connectedness Project*, which has been conducted by the Roy McKenzie Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, together with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). Both provide extensive information about their processes through examples of materials given to students and parents, examples of questionnaires and the reports, papers, and presentations on their websites (see www.youth2000.ac.nz and http://www.victoria.ac.nz/mckenzie%2Dcentre/research/youth-connectedness/index.aspx). The researchers from both projects stress the importance of taking time to build collegial relations between the researchers and the person who is designated as a coordinator for the research from within the school; having a really good relationship with the school coordinator contributed greatly to the numbers of students who participated on the day, particularly in the *Youth 2000* project. The *Young people with disabilities* and the *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplars* also refer to the value of having someone from the school helping to coordinate aspects of the research.

In 2001 the Adolescent Health Research Group conducted a national survey on the health and well-being of year 9 to 13 secondary school students (referred to as *Youth 2000*). In 2007 the survey was repeated and updated and also included new questions in response to emerging issues, such as those relating to the rapid increase in the use of technology (referred to as *Youth 07*). In the initial *Youth 2000* research students used laptops and headphones but in the *Youth 07* research students completed a web-based survey using state-of-the-art hand held computers with head phones. Responses from the participants' internet tablet were automatically transmitted by a wi-fi webserver to a laptop database and then these files were later uploaded to a central database. A Youth Panel was used in the development of the survey instrument and the Māori version was trialled with groups of young Māori who were asked about the suitability and comprehensibility of the questions for Māori students. The survey was presented in both audio and visual forms and students could easily move between Māori and English versions of the voice-over. Questions were answered by the student using a stylus to touch the screen. The survey used computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI), which enables a complex branching questionnaire design; a participant's response to a question determines the next question they are asked. This means that participants are not exposed to questions that are not relevant to them, it reduces the time taken to answer the survey and maintains participant engagement with the survey. In addition to answering the questionnaire some physical measures were also taken of the participants by a teacher of the same sex. A school climate survey was also conducted with staff.

The Youth Connectedness Project is a six-year project which commenced in 2004 and its aim is to examine the role of young people's feelings of connectedness in supporting them in becoming healthy and productive adults. It has used three advisory boards (youth, Māori and stakeholders) in designing and conducting the research. The methodology is cross-lag and longitudinal involving three cohorts of young people recruited at the start aged 10, 12 and 14 years. The researchers designed the survey after consultation with their youth advisory board and input from youth focus groups. This survey was also designed to have different branches so that respondents were only viewing questions that were relevant to them. Initially, data were collected using computers, then laptops and in the final year through a web-based survey. After the first round of data collection, the researchers selected some results to be discussed with young people in focus groups so that they could understand the underlying meanings of the quantitative results through their thoughts and interpretation. They also used these focus groups to make sure the project was developing in the right direction and included some new questions in the surveys following based on the outcomes of those groups (Personal Communication, Carla Crespo, 15.09.09).

Ethnographic approaches

There is a long tradition of ethnography being used in youth studies. Early ethnographies focused on marginalised groups but more recent ethnographic approaches have expanded to a wide variety of groups of young people within and outside of educational settings (Heath et al., 2009). The term ethnography was initially used to refer to studies that involved a sustained period of immersion and engagement in a fieldwork site, typically a community or sector of a community, using methods of participant observation and interviews to capture ordinary activities and the meanings that applied to them in naturally occurring contexts. Within this framework, ethnographies were conducted primarily with people from cultures that were 'other' than that of the researcher. In more recent years, the term ethnographic approaches has encompassed what might be regarded as 'watered down' versions of traditional ethnographies. Typically when ethnographic approaches are used, the researcher is working in a clearly defined or boundaried fieldwork site (such as a classroom); less time is spent overall 'in the field' with the researcher perhaps coming and going from the fieldwork site rather than being totally immersed in it; probably researching within one's own culture but not necessarily researching people like oneself; and, importantly, using the methods of participant observation and interviewing (Creswell, 2009). Traditional style ethnographies are still conducted in educational settings, such as Emond (2005), for example, who moved into and lived in a residential facility for 12-18-year-olds. Many more studies seem to be based on ethnographic approaches, such as Russell (2005) who spent between three and six months in three different schools. As well as drawing on the methods of participant observation and interviews, ethnographic approaches also use other data sources as part of the research method. For example, Kane and her co-researchers (Kane et al., 2006; Kane & Maw, 2005) videoed classes and then used the videos to stimulate recall when interviewing the teacher and then separately with focus groups of students. They also used 'tickets out of class', which were index cards that the students could use to give quick feedback to the teachers (see *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar*).

Heath et al. (2009) argued that there are several strengths of ethnographic approaches, including allowing researchers to go beyond surface accounts to explore the lived experiences of young people (see *Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar*) and to facilitate an understanding of phenomena in context (see *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar* and *Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar*). Ethnographic approaches are also seen as particularly useful for investigating transitions (see *Children with disabilities ethnographic exemplar*) or for understanding changes over time. The relationship that the researcher establishes with the range of participants in the fieldwork context has received a lot of attention in the literature, including the advantages and disadvantages of having an 'insider' versus 'outsider' identity (see Emond, 2005; Heath et al., 2009; Russell, 2005). It is frequently recommended that researchers should take on the role of an atypical, less powerful adult (Emond, 2005); however, this begs the question of how each of us sees that role in our particular lives and contexts. Russell (2005), reflecting on her experiences of balancing the relationship between students and teachers during her fieldwork argues, "The researcher should employ a reflexive attitude to understand how the interaction between the researcher and the researched, and the researcher's autobiography, influence the data collected" (p. 197).

Interviews

As noted previously, interviews are currently the dominant method of data generation in international youth research. Likewise, a lot of local recent research with young people has predominantly used individual or group interviews (eg, Higgins & Nairn, 2006; Kane & Maw, 2005; Nairn et al., 2005; Nairn, Higgins & Sligo, 2007). Researchers argue that interviews in which adult researchers listen to young people deeply and with respect "can be a powerful tool for – quite literally – giving voice to their experiences and concerns" (Heath et al., 2009, p. 79). The refreshingly critical reflection on a 'failed' (in that there was a minimal amount of text elicited from the student participants) interview by Nairn et al. (2005) reveals a number of factors that can intervene to mitigate the potential power of the interview. However, the analysis of this 'failed interview' shows that even 'failed' interviews are rich in data if researchers are prepared to take the risk and interrogate their own research practices.

While most interviews with young people have been one-to-one, there is a trend towards group interviews (eg, the *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar*). Group interviews are seen as one way of deflecting the power and influence of the researcher and providing a more comfortable context for some participants. Young people are considered to be enmeshed in the life of their peers and to acquire and construct knowledge and understandings through interacting with others, so providing a research context—the group interview—where they can participate by interacting is seen as appropriate. Nairn et al. (2006) conducted research with young people who were infrequent or non-drinkers, about the way they socialised and experienced social places with and without alcohol. When given the choice of how they wished to be interviewed, 29 out of 39 participants chose to be interviewed in self-selected groups ranging in size from two to five. When focus groups comprise young people who know each other, questions may be raised regarding whether all young people will feel comfortable talking about some issues, attitudes or experiences in front of their peers. Questions are also raised as to what extent peer pressure is exerted or felt by participants during focus group interviews. For this reason conducting both individual and group interviews can be useful to allow the researcher to consider the impact of the different methods on responses given. Nairn et al. (2005) argue for the use of multiple interviews with young people, rather than a one-off one, so that relationships can build over time. This practice is also supported by the experiences of other researchers working with young people (see, *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar*, *Children with disabilities ethnographic exemplar* and *Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar*). Multiple interviews over a period of time are particularly useful for research that is concerned with change and transitions.

Heath et al. (2009) and Nairn et al. (2005) also raise the question of the location in which research is conducted. Heath et al. note that when research is conducted in educational settings there is often not a lot of choice about where interviews or other data-generating exercises are conducted and sometimes the locations provided are very unsuitable. They refer to an example of research on bullying where the interviewer was provided with a room with a window facing directly into the library (Martino and Pallotta-Choarolli, 2003, p. 32, cited in Heath et al., 2009, p. 95). It became apparent to the interviewer during the course of the interview that the participant was being bullied by other students looking in through the window. The interviewer found that in subsequent interviews conducted in a safe and private place responses were quite different in nature. The *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar* also underscores how having a suitable place for researchers to work and conduct interviews greatly facilitates the research process.

Cultural issues can also introduce important methodological considerations. Graham et al. (2009) present the findings from focus groups and individual interviews carried out with Māori and Pasifika parents and students. They describe how an adapted kaupapa Māori approach to the research method required that they incorporate cultural protocols into the actual focus group interview sessions. They also discuss the imperative of involving interviewers who are themselves close to the culture of young people being interviewed, which in this study entailed both Māori and Pasifika researchers interviewing Māori and Pasifika participants.

Heath et al. indicate that some youth researchers have begun to experiment with interviewing 'on the move'. The potential for this is foreshadowed in Nairn et al.'s (2005) discussion of the impact of the change of setting at the end of a 'failed' interview. One of the respondents suggested that he show the interviewer a place in the school grounds that had been referred to during the interview and six of the nine students who had been involved took the time to accompany the interviewer there during their lunch time. As the setting changed so did the roles between the students and the researcher, with the students being in command. Although the researcher did not take notes during the tour she wrote up field notes afterwards.

Peer researchers

Some researchers have employed peer researchers to gather data in an attempt to mitigate the effects of age difference between researcher and researched and the power imbalance between the adult researcher and the researched. Nairn et al. (2007) report on three different pieces of research in which peer researchers were used. Two of these research projects took place outside and one inside school settings. Their discussion of these different projects draws upon the work of Bourdieu to examine the way that the peer researchers' cultural and subcultural capital enabled them to facilitate or not research relationships with peers. Some peer researchers used subcultural and cultural capital very effectively to establish productive research relationships with particular participants. However, they also found that in some cases, peer researchers seemed to adopt a standpoint of resistance to becoming part of the adult research agenda, resulting in a casual stance towards research tasks that was ultimately incompatible with the goals of the research.

Murray (2005) investigated using peers to lead focus groups to explore the views of young people who had committed criminal offences and then stopped offending versus those who had never offended. She argues that peer-led focus groups can be valued because the discourse that occurs is seen as more natural than adult-led groups but this may overlook their contrived nature. She contends that "the value of peer led groups lies in providing discourse which potentially provides fresh insight or that an adult's presence may have precluded" (p. 277). It is suggested that using existing friendship groups may mitigate against some of the perceived difficulties of peer led focus groups. Friends may act as a brake and lessen the threat of participants over-disclosing. Participants are also more likely to attend. However, Murray indicates that there is a need for research about young people's own preferences and to tease these out in relation to the kind of topic being researched. She asks, for example, whether peers are more likely to talk about a sensitive topic in the presence of a peer or an adult.

Mason (2000) cautions researchers to be mindful about the physical and psychological safety of the young people they engage to gather data. Working in pairs can go towards resolving concerns about physical safety but it can be difficult for researchers to anticipate the harm that may come to young peer researchers through listening to accounts that may be disturbing. Heath et al. (2009) indicate that using peer researchers to gather data can also be fraught with logistical difficulties owing to the complex lives that young people lead. They also suggest that to sustain committed involvement from young people in data collecting, they must have a real interest in the research topic or a sense of ownership of the project through also being involved in other aspects of the research.

Other participatory methods, including visual methods

When young people have been positioned as active participants in research, researchers developed different task-centred activities that recognise them as actively making sense of their world and also giving them more control over the research process. "Such tasks might include visual activities such as taking photographs, doing drawings, making posters and producing videos or alternative text based tasks such as writing stories, keeping diaries, work ranking exercises, and discussion based activities such as group debates, role-playing and brainstorming" (Heath et al., 2009, pp. 65-66). These activities do not need to be done with adults and they can be done at a pace and level of intensity determined by the participants. It is argued that because different children and young people will respond differently to different techniques it is important to offer a range of techniques to optimise the likelihood that an individual will find a way of sharing their views and experiences (Sanders & Munford, 2005). Activity-based tasks also provide the opportunity for participants with low levels of literacy to participate. They can be used alongside more traditional ways of generating and collecting data to provide variety. They may also provide a way of accessing responses that are more difficult to articulate or for providing a more comfortable medium for communication about topics that participants have difficulty discussing.

Visual methodologies are a particular form of participatory method being used more frequently in research with young people. Heath et al. (2009) identify three main groupings of visual methodologies. These are analyses based on naturally occurring visual images, such as images in magazines; analyses based on visual material produced by the researcher, such as video recordings or photographs in classrooms; and analyses based on visual material produced by young people themselves. The latter can cover a wide range of methods, such as young people 'mapping' different aspects of their lives, drawing-based activities, assemblage of images from a variety of sources, along with writing to create a portfolio or 'memory book' and taking photos or videos. Heath et al. argue that visual methods in which young people produce visual images can "allow researchers to explore aspects of young people's lives that may remain uncovered by more conventional research methods" (p. 127). Respondents are provided opportunity to show aspects of their lives that are difficult to express in words, thus providing data unlikely to emerge in surveys, interviews or focus groups. These methodologies can take the researcher into less accessible aspects of their lives, such as activities occurring informally among peers, and so again reveal data that might not otherwise be accessed.

Although these approaches offer rich possibilities for accessing a range of data, a common theme in the literature is that they are also resource and time intensive. Buying and maintaining the equipment can be expensive and researchers or facilitators are often needed to work alongside and support student researchers. Time is needed to teach participants how to use equipment, to analyse and then present visual images and to ensure that participants are well received in the context in which they are working. It is also crucial to make certain that the participants understand how to conduct themselves as researchers in a particular context so that they are themselves safe and do not cause offence to others. There are also specific ethical issues that need to be considered for images produced by researchers and those taken by participants, such as strategies for gaining consent from people whose image may be included in natural environments, how anonymity can be ensured, how images taken will be represented and then interpreted by others, and where and for how long images may be in public circulation. There may also be ethical issues regarding the privacy of others where data do reveal information about people who have not given consent for data to be collected about them, such as parents or teachers. A number of the issues raised in the international literature about participatory methods are also emerging in the literature reporting examples of local research engaging participatory methods with young people.

Local researchers Sanders & Munford (2005) used a traditional approach to interviews as well as recording discussions with participants through the three participatory strategies of Eco Maps, City Maps and the Daily Life Story. The purpose of the research was to find out about young people's daily lives and how they were included or excluded from current institutions and organisations. The interview itself included some open-ended philosophical questions and some more specific questions. Eco Maps involved the participants identifying people with whom they were in regular contact, mapping out the relationships diagramatically and then coding the relationships they had with these people in terms of their quality and nature. City Maps involved the participants identifying on a map places that they spent time and coding the places according to the experiences they had there. The Daily Life Story involved the young people talking the researcher through a typical weekday, weekend day and a day when on holiday. Discussions moved around between the different strategies, contributing to the researcher and participant creating a pace for the interview that was suited to the participant and their particular ways of responding. The activities also assisted in the building of a relationship between the researcher and the participant. The researchers felt that the three different strategies really did enable all the young people to respond differently to different sorts of questions and to build a momentum in the interview that can sometimes be more difficult to achieve with direct questioning only.

Higgins, Nairn and Sligo (2009) have also used interviews in conjunction with more participatory methods. In a research project with young people that was concerned with the expression of identity they used peer researchers and the construction of a portfolio by participants, referred to as the anti-CV. They were particularly interested in questions around identity during the transition from school to work so they were engaged with the participant during their final year of school and then 12-18 months later. They initially conducted interviews with 93 participants. They recognised "that there are different ways of expressing and reading identities; the anti-CV opened up a space to do this. We invited each participant to create a portfolio that conveyed their sense of self, using any appropriate media (eg, music, photos, videos, writing, images)" (Higgins et al., 2009, p. 84). The portfolios then became the subject of discussion between the researcher and the participant. Only 17 participants chose to create an anti-CV and of these 15 contained primarily visual material. The researchers conclude that the anti-CV did provide a tool for their participants to perform their identity in a way that the standard research interview does not. They reflect, however, that this process was less participant-directed than they had hoped as the performance of identity through the anti-CV was constructed for a particular audience: adult university researchers. Hence they argue that it does not invalidate the performance "but it does frame it in particular ways" (Higgins et al., 2009, p. 96). Bragg and Buckingham (2008) make a similar point about the visual scrapbooks they asked young people to make to show their views about how the media shows love, sex and relationships:

> Although we would emphasise the potential richness of the scrapbook approach, it would be naïve to assume that young people simply used them (or indeed any visual media) as a means of self-expression or a way of 'making their voices heard'. They are not a neutral tool but highly contingent. (p. 27)

Higgins et al. (2009) also note that the portfolios opened up some unanticipated ethical issues in that the use of photos had opened up the private lives of the participant and their families and friends in a potentially intrusive way so whilst empowering the participants in some sense, the method also put the researchers in a more powerful position than the standard interview would have.

Two local visual youth projects that are useful resources for those thinking of using visual methodologies are:

1. a collaborative project, based in Clendon and Mangere, involving youth-focused community organisations, local young people and the Whariki Research Group (Jensen, Kaiwai, McCreanor & Barnes, 2006) and
2. *Through our eyes* a project being carried out in four Māori communities across New Zealand, with a researcher working with young Māori (between the ages of 14 and 16) to map or document their social territories (www.victoria.ac.nz/throughoureyes/about.html).

The project based in Clendon and Mangere was informed by an approach referred to in the literature as photovoice. In 1997 Wang and Burris published an article, which has been a key reference for those exploring working with photovoice; they define it as "a process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders and potential catalysts for change, in their own communities" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). It is argued that photovoice is a way of offering groups of people who have been marginalised an opportunity to express themselves. In the Clendon and Mangere project, photovoice was a means of bringing youth perspectives and participation to issues in their communities but it was also a process of capability building with young people in their communities. Most participants were secondary school age Māori and Pasifika young people who were members of youth action groups in their communities. The researchers had a long established research relationship with the communities and were supported by a youth worker in each area. Relationships between the researchers and the parents of the young people who volunteered were seen as crucial; whilst being engaged in giving support, providing food and resources, and admiring the work of the young people, parents also were kept from actively 'meddling' in the work of the young people themselves. Community adults played a role in supporting the relationship of the researchers and the parents. The young people drove each phase of the research process, including presenting to the Ministry of Social Development Research Day in June of 2006, with the researchers being supportive but not directive.

Jensen et al. (2006) consider that as a tool photovoice greatly added to understandings of youth issues and ways that the environment could be improved for youth. The tool also built capacity and enacted youth participation as youth participated in the entire process. However, they caution that there are aspects of the process that need to be carefully considered. The entire process was time consuming for the young people, creating pressures for both the participants and researchers who were juggling numerous other commitments. Some genuine concerns and issues were not canvassed as the participants had been cautioned against taking any photographs that could be risky. There is a danger that photovoice may set up unrealistic expectations, leaving participants and communities feeling worse about their situation if expectations are not met. The perspectives of volunteers are also not generalisable to the diverse groups of other young people in the communities. Heath et al. (2009) note that this last concern is common to much research involving young people; they argue that it is preferable to give some a voice, whilst acknowledging whose voice is present and whose is absent, rather than not involving young people in research at all.

The *Through our eyes project* is informed by writing about visual ethnography, which uses visual images to produce new ways of understanding and interpreting cultural meanings. Each member of the research team had a tribal connection to the area in which they worked and they were guided by the kaumātua as they identified appropriate channels for accessing young people as potential participants. The process of being guided by the kaumātua was also part of a broader process of ensuring that there was community consent for the young people to participate in the project. In active tribal communities children and young people are seen as integral to the community and hence their well-being is a concern of the community. The web page for this project provided access to the information that was given to young people and the community about the project (see www.victoria.ac.nz/throughoureyes/about.html). It includes advice to the young people about making sure they had the consent of their whānau to participate, that they checked with kaumātua about their plans to take photos of taonga or places, people or things that were private or precious to the community, to be legal, and to be careful and not to take photos where they could get hurt. The advice to the young people included the assurance that the researchers would keep the things that the young people told them as private unless they thought the young people might be in physical danger.

It is important to take note that these projects did not take place in a social vacuum. In different ways both projects underscore the importance of the relationship between the researchers and the communities; in Clendon and Mangere the researchers had longstanding research relationships with the communities and in the *Through our eyes project* the researchers had a tribal connection with the community and hence were positioned as insiders. Both projects also underscore the support of adults and communities that is needed for visual projects that take place in the community and the need for communication and dialogue throughout the different phases of the projects. In common with Higgins et al. (2009), both projects draw attention to the need to think through specific ethical issues and issues of safety when engaging young people in visual methodologies. Although the issues are not raised in these studies, there are other ethical issues to consider when requesting participants to generate visual images, such as who owns the visual image—the student or the researcher—an individual or a team—and how are images that become altered through the use of technology managed and how is permission sought and given for them to be reproduced? (Thomson, 2008). Bragg and Buckingham (2008) also discuss the difficulties of maintaining assurances of privacy and anonymity when working with students and visual images. In their projects students were asked to give their visual scrapbook to their teachers who would then pass them on to the researchers. The teachers were requested not to look at them but it became evident that some of them did, provoking justified complaints from students.

Wang and Burris (1997) note that a critique frequently made about visual research is that the personal judgement of the photographer may intervene in making biased choices regarding what to photograph, how events are photographed, what is chosen for discussion, what is discarded, and so on. However, they argue that the same sorts of questions can be asked of other data-gathering measures such as surveys:

Who designed a questionnaire, what questions were put in, what questions were left out, who implemented the questionnaire, who analyzed what components of the data, and who reported what components of the data. What is more, while one may interpret what material has been included, it is hard to discover what has been left out. In other words, all methodologies hide as well as disclose (p. 376).

Thomson (2008) makes a similar point, arguing that visual analysis requires:

> The use of specific and explicit approaches which must be systematic, thorough and open to scrutiny. A reader must be able to track what has been done in order to understand the subsequent interpretation…But it is important to recognize that these issues are not confined to visual research. *Exactly* the same set of concerns about selection, processing, editing and presentation apply equally to the use of words and numbers; it is just that we are more used to working with them. Their very familiarity actually means that we may forget their coyote-like nature: all language systems are equally tricksters (pp. 10-11).

Table 5.1: Summary of data-collection methods, tools and strategies and research examples in research involving young people

Methods	Tools	Research examples
Interviews	Individual	Kane et al. (2005); Munford & Sanders (2004); Nairn, Higgins & Sligo (2007); Higgins & Nairn (2006)
	Daily life story	Sanders & Munford (2005)
	Focus group Peer researchers	Kane et al. (2005); Nairn et al. (2005); Nairn et al. (2006); Smith et al. (2002); Murray (2006) Nairn, Higgins & Sligo (2007)
	Youth Tribunal	Smith et al. (2002)
Visual data gathering	Cameras	Jensen et al. (2006); *Through our eyes project*
Visual product	Visual diaries Anti-CV	Bragg & Buckingham (2008) Higgins et al. (2009)
Ethnographic	Interviews, participant observation, diaries, journaling, video-stimulated recall	Emond (2005); Kane et al. (2004); MacArthur et al. (2007); Russell (2005); Ward (2007)
Mixed methods	Survey, focus group, panels, computers	Meyer et al. (2009); Adolescent Health Research Group (2004) & (2008). *Youth Connectedness Project*.
Survey	Survey only	Nairn & Smith (2003)

Emerging issues and cautions

Researching across difference

The issue of whether or not the researcher conducting interviews (or using other data-collection or generation methods) should share key characteristics with those being researched arises particularly in relation to interviews in both local (see Bishop, 1996, Nairn et al., 2005 and Tuhiwai Smith, 2001) and international (see Heath et al., 2009) writing about research with young people. The experience of Nairn, as a 40 plus, middle-class, pākehā or palangi researcher, conducting a 'failed' interview with nine 15-year-old students, who were predominantly from different Pasifika cultures but included a smaller number of Māori, may lead some to suggest that it was inappropriate for her to conduct the interview. However, on reflection Nairn et al. (2005) resist such a reading and argue that they are persuaded by Bishop (1996) who argues "if Pākehā researchers leave it all to Māori people it is to abrogate their responsibilities as Treaty partners" (p. 18). Another possible reading of the situation would suggest that it would have been better to have the interview conducted by a young Pasifika person. However, Nairn et al. also challenge this by drawing on the work of Tuhiwai Smith (2001) who provides an example of a young researcher with a similar identity to the research participants indicating that it was hard to make a connection or "to find the join". Nairn et al. (2005) argue that it is important not to rely on simplistic resolutions to researching across difference: "Simplistic resolutions include 'matching' interviewers and interviewees on essentialist grounds that can never be fully realised. For example, matching on ethnicity may leave other dimensions such as social class, gender, age, sexuality and religion unmatched" (p. 236). They also point out that if researchers always employ 'the other' to research 'the other' then researchers are left analysing data they have not collected. At the conclusion of their paper Nairn and colleagues reflect on the ways that this experience of the 'failed' interview have led them to change their research practices. Of particular relevance to the discussion here is the use of two interviewers, adults and young people working together, to provide two different 'faces' that might help forge connections or relationships between the different participants and the researchers.

The discussion of these issues in Graham et al. (2009) also provides some guidance for researchers. In their discussion of research that has negotiated sameness and difference between researcher and researched Heath et al. (2009) cite a number of researchers who have come to a similar position to Nairn and her colleagues regarding essentialising the identities of both researcher and researched. Many of these researchers stress the importance of researchers taking a reflexive approach to the way that similarities and differences might impact on research encounters. These differences should not be taken for granted or ignored but need to be examined in terms of how they impact on encounters and relationships in the research process.

Data analysis

The transparency of the data analysis process and how key findings are identified presents a number of challenges for researchers. Tisdall (2009) critiques qualitative research in which children's 'voices' are being promoted but it is the adult researchers who determined which questions to ask, identified the themes, selected which quotes to feature, and essentially framed and carried out the analysis at every stage. Furthermore, she argues that analyses that focus on voice "privileges the comprehensible verbal utterances of individuals over other forms of communication, with exclusionary implications for children and young people who communicate little or not all through speech (Komulainen, 2007), or who remain silent or laugh in response to a researcher's question (for example, Nairn et al., 2005)" (p. 214).

There are few studies that report involving young people in the analysis (see Meyer, Minondo et al., 1998 for an exception), although it is becoming more common to do so (see *Children with disabilities ethnographic exemplar* and *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplar*). This may well be the most important phase of the research for involving young people, who are in a unique position to assist in the interpretation of observed phenomena about the lives of adolescents that might not be well understood by adult researchers. Involving people in the process of making sense of data about their lives will make for a more valid interpretation and also attenuates power imbalances in the research process. Meyer, Minondo et al. (2009) present evidence to support their argument that adult researchers from particular cultural backgrounds are not in the best position to interpret findings about phenomena such as adolescent friendships. Their research demonstrates how the involvement of teenagers in the interpretations of social interactions lends credibility and validity to the results of research.

Involving participants in this way does not negate the role of the researcher who must ultimately make the final decisions about interpretation and dissemination even as these activities occur in collaboration with participants and key stakeholders. Data analysis involves skills and knowledge of the policy and academic contexts in which research is situated; participants may not agree on the meanings of data nor will they necessarily have the analytical will to extend their interpretations beyond what is meaningful to the individual. Another practical issue is the extent to which young people actually wish to be involved in the analysis of data. Young people may be amenable to research participation but have a number of other competing responsibilities, activities and commitments that they prefer to being involved more extensively as co-researchers.

Clendon and Mangere's photovoice study (Jensen et al., 2006) did involve the young people in the analysis stage. In one location, all of the young people were fully involved and in the other most were involved initially but the presentation of the analysis fell to only two of the participants. The researchers identify the tight timeframe as the reason for this and note that for future projects they would extend time for this phase to better anticipate the level of commitment that is required. The analysis stage was an iterative process, with participants discussing with each other the six photos they had been requested to select as the ones they were most keen to have included. As they discussed the photos, they referred to their field notes. Their analysis was shared using a PowerPoint presentation designed for use within the community, thus somewhat different than what might be disseminated to researcher audiences. The researchers note that giving participants choice over what to photograph and the selection of photos was important for the empowerment of participants. However, Jensen et al. (2006) also emphasised that working with skilled researchers/facilitators in the analysis stage "was vital to building collaborative relations that allowed individual voices to be heard, while pursuing the co-operative production of the presentations" (p. 36).

Dissemination

Interestingly, not a great deal has been written about the dissemination of findings to or by young people. Some researchers engaging young people in ongoing research use newsletters to keep participants informed and hooked into the project (see for example, the website for the Youth Connectedness Project (www.victotria.ac.nz/mckenzie-centre/reserach/youthconnectedness/index.aspx). Other researchers feed back information to schools for dissemination to students and their families (see Secondary school mixe*d methods exemplar*) but whether and how this occurs will be dependent on school personnel. The *Youth 2000* project has the following preamble to a summary of results on a webpage marked for youth on its website:

> If you're reading this page you might be thinking 'Yeah, I remember doing that survey at school when I was in about Year 9 or something'. Maybe back in 2001 you thought it was pretty cool answering the questions on a laptop computer with the head phones so you could hear the questions and answers as well as reading them.
>
> If you were one of those students we want to say a big 'Thank You' for taking part in the survey. We are really grateful to the students who took part and we want to share with you just a few of the findings from the 2001 survey (if you want to know more go to the Publications link above). (www.youth2000.ac.nz/youth-2001/info-for-youth-1111.htm)

To make decisions about the dissemination of the *Youth 2007* findings, researchers met with a youth advisory group from Youthline. Their input was requested into the decision about which results from *Youth 2007* different groups should know about, ie, young people, parents, teachers and other professionals working with young people, such as youth workers and health professionals (Personal Communication, Sue Grant, 9.9.2009). After the consultation was completed the young people devised posters depicting the results they believed the young people should know about and they also developed a quiz to engage young people with the results (see http://youthline.co.nz/content/view/746/lang,english/ for the quiz and http://youthline.co.nz/content/view/742/lang,english/ for the poster. The *Youth Connectedness* project involved young people in workshop discussions about the research at the end of 2007.

Involving young people in the dissemination of findings raises issues to do with assurances that have been provided by the researcher about respondents remaining anonymous. Jones (2004) used an adult theatre company who developed a play based on the findings of research with young people who were vulnerable. The young people who had been participants became part of the play at certain points. Jones argues that the combination of adult actors and young people gave more credibility to the findings than if the young people had performed the play on their own; the adults gave authority to the views of the children and the acting provided a mask, which enabled the expression of emotions and preserved confidentiality. Tisdall (2009) suggests that young people who were not involved in the research but interested in the issues could present the findings. These issues could be explored with potential participants or disseminators, perhaps as part of the discussions about what is involved in the research, prior to giving consent. It may also be that the idea of involving young people in the dissemination of research is one that appeals to adults more than to young people.

Both Kane (*Secondary school exemplar mixed-methods action research*) and Jensen et al. (2006) write about what a powerful and positive experience it was to have young people involved in the dissemination of findings about research they had been actively involved in. The process was reported to have been positive for the young people themselves and more interesting for the audience than had the presentation been done only by adult researchers. The idea of young people being involved in the generation and dissemination of findings is congruent with a number of broader policy initiatives, such as the *Youth Development Strategy for Aotearoa* (Ministry of Youth Development, 2002).

In the United States there are a number of scholar-activists who are involved in doing participatory action research with youth who are marginalised. The projects aim for the participants to become change agents through educational research and to become scholar-activists themselves. A number of these projects involve youth disseminating findings to their local communities and also to national conferences. A recent issue of New Directions for Youth Development discusses a number of these projects (see volume 123 at www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117944414/grouphome/home.html).

Cautions about participatory methods

Alongside a growing literature, which evinces enthusiasm for these participatory methodologies, there is also a growing literature that raises questions about their use. Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) question the way that participatory methods have been used uncritically, as if they were a panacea for all ethical ills of previous research. They argue that participatory methods designed to 'empower' students imply that students are not capable of participating in research through their own agency, and hence "advocates of 'participatory methods' risk perpetuating the very model that they purport to oppose" (p. 503). They contend various participatory methods can involve prescribed activities that actually mask the ways in which students are being asked to do what the researcher wants, not 'empowering' students. They are not arguing against the use of participatory methods but rather indicating that the attitude or spirit within which these are used is crucial for whether or not students are actually empowered through the research processes. Furthermore, they advocate that "to encourage children to participate in creating knowledge about themselves is also to encourage them to take part in processes used to regulate them" (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008, p. 504). Bragg and Buckland (2008) make a similar point:

> Our own qualitative approaches might be seen as reproducing a trend that has been identified as taking place in the media and in neo-liberal societies … Nikolas Rose and others have argued that under neo-liberalism, individuals are required to invent themselves as self-regulating and responsible individuals (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999). To some extent, inviting our participants to produce a scrapbook might be read as citizenship, regulating their interiority, with the scrap book method as a technology serving to position young people as reflexive and 'opinionated' individuals rather than enabling critique of such practices. (pp. 127-128)

Ethical issues

As discussed, ethical issues emerge at each point of the research process when involving young people in research. Some emerge because of the tensions that arise owing to young people being in a transition zone between childhood and adulthood. Many are tensions relating to finding a balance between respecting young people's rights to express views on matters concerning them and participate in processes affecting them, as well as the adult's responsibilities to protect them. There is debate about the point at which and in what contexts young people are able to decide for themselves whether they wish to participate in research. Respecting young people's rights to express themselves and participate in processes affecting them has led to some researchers exploring research methods with young people to engage them more in the research process. This, too, raises ethical issues: Do these processes result in a more balanced power relationship or do they mask power relationships? Do these processes allow for the expression of young people's voices or do they allow only for the expression of some young people's voices? Whose voice is being heard when 'student voice' is invoked, and whose voices are absent or marginalised? Is the right of all students to be heard upheld? Are the voices of all students listened to with respect? Are silences, as a conscious withholding of assent, recognised as such and respected? Arnot and Reay (2007, p. 313) argue that now "Most contemporary voice research recognises the power of research relationships and methods in framing particular voices, eliciting some and not others. Therefore most researchers accept that there is not one authentic voice of a single social category". Do these processes expose young people in ways that they and the researchers do not anticipate? Do these processes set up unrealistic expectations of what will result from the research in which young people participate? Do some of these processes put young people at risk of harm, however subtle? Finally, these questions can have a particular edge in educational settings where voluntary decisions to participate in research may be unduly influenced by complex factors, including relationships with other persons in those settings.

Table 5.2: Critical issues and questions raised

Critical Issues	Questions raised
Funding and ethics approval timeframes prevent involving young people in the research design process.	How can funding and ethics review processes adapt to consulting young people about research design?
There is a tension between gatekeepers wishing to protect potential participants and protecting their right to participate in research.	Do gatekeepers understand enough about the competencies and rights of those they wish to protect?
There are complex issues in gaining consent and recognising the dissent of potential participants.	What are ways to find the appropriate balance between recognising the rights of young people to have a say about matters concerning them and family/whānau and community need to be involved in decisions that affect the well-being of their young person?
Ethical participatory research requires time to build positive relationships with young people, schools and communities and to develop and trial appropriate measures, tools and skills.	How can funding bodies be more fully informed about the time that it takes to build relationships and develop appropriate measures, tools and skills? Would more critically reflexive articles about methodology assist with this?
Researchers in schools need appropriate places to work and support from within the school to organise logistics and facilitate the research.	How can the demands made on schools by researchers be recognised and recompensed by appropriate resources?
The relationship between the subjectivity of the researcher and those of participants is complex and owing to the multiple dimensions of identity is unpredictable but can impact on all aspects of the research process.	How can researchers be encouraged to maintain a reflexive stance towards their own identity, their relationship to participants and all aspects of the research process?
Participatory methods have the potential to exclude some young people's voices whilst amplifying others.	Whose voices are present and whose voices are absent? How might the data-gathering method privilege some voices over others?
Very little is written about how data are analysed and very little analysis of data involves young people.	Why is there so little written about data analysis? How can processes and judgements made about data analysis be made more transparent? When is it appropriate to include participants in data analysis?
There is increasing attention being given to involving young people in dissemination of research findings.	In what aspects of the dissemination of research findings is it important for young people to be involved in? For example, making decisions about what information is disseminated to whom? Or in the actual dissemination of research?
Participatory methods may unwittingly expose a young person's identity or unanticipated aspects of their life.	How can forums be created that enable researchers to openly share the benefits and pitfalls of their methods?

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Secondary School Exemplar Mixed Methods

Meyer, L. H., McClure, J., Walkey, F., Weir, K. F., & McKenzie, L. (2009). Secondary student motivation orientations and standards-based achievement outcomes. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 79,* 273-293.

Interview details

Interviewer: Judith Loveridge
Interviewee: Luanna Meyer
Note taker: Mimi Hodis

Background

The Ministry of Education sent out a Request for Proposals for research to investigate the effects of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) on motivation. Statements had been made in assessment documents that were proposing that students should take responsibility for their own learning and would be empowered by being able to make choices about what they studied and were assessed on. However, it was not known if and how being able to make these choices was influencing motivation and achievement. The project was led by Professor Luanna Meyer at the Jessie Hetherington Centre for Educational Research in collaboration with Professor John McClure in the School of Psychology; other co-researchers included Associate Professor Frank Walkey (Psychology, VUW), Dr Kirsty Weir (currently Ako Aotearoa) and Lynanne McKenzie (JHC). In addition, facilitators were contracted to conduct focus groups with parents and students to ensure that these groups were conducted by Māori, Pasifika and/or parent facilitators. Initially the research project was funded for one year, and then funding was gained for an additional year and then an additional two years of research. The 2006, 2007 and 2009 final reports are available from www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling as is a 20-page summary report *Motivation and achievement at secondary school* that was published and distributed nationally. The journal article reports the first stage of a four-year research project funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to investigate the impact of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) on student motivation and achievement.

Aims and objectives

The overall objective of the research was to investigate the interrelationship between self-reported motivation orientations and achievement outcomes on NCEA.

Additional research questions addressed by the larger project include:

- What is the impact of different design aspects of NCEA and student motivation and achievement?
- Are knowledge of NCEA certificate endorsements and whether these endorsements matter to students related to motivation orientation and achievement?
- Does participation in extracurricular activities, including part-time work have an impact on achievement?
- Can future achievement in NCEA be predicted one to three years later by self-reported motivation orientations in Year 10 of secondary school?
- Are there relationships between self-reported student perceptions regarding whether or not teachers care about their learning and students' motivation and achievement?
- Are there different patterns of relationships between motivation and achievement for students as a function of ethnicity, gender and school decile zone level?
- What do secondary students and their families/whānau think about NCEA, including recent NCEA design changes?
- To what extent do students attribute their best and worst achievement grades to ability, effort, luck, task difficulty, teachers, peers, and family?

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Access, consent processes, role of parents, families and community

Access to student and parent participants was through the students' secondary schools. Twenty secondary schools were selected as representative of New Zealand state schools, including schools from North and South Islands, a range of decile levels, located in different regions, of varied size, and at least some schools with bilingual/immersion programmes for Māori. These 20 schools participated across the four years of the project, including obtaining consent from student participants and administration of motivation surveys to students each year. Student consent was given to access their NCEA achievement data, which was accessed directly from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) each year when results were released to students. Additional secondary schools were approached to trial early versions of the screening measure. Some of the original schools and additional schools were approached to invite students and parents generally and, at two schools, Māori and Pasifika parents and students specifically to participate to ensure diverse perspectives were included. These focus groups were conducted by Māori and Pasifika facilitators and note takers.

An information sheet about the project was distributed to all participants, and parent and student participants provided individual signed informed consent. During a form period in October each year (Term 3), teachers distributed the information sheet and consent form, explained that participation was voluntary, and administered the printed motivation survey collecting results from students. Surveys were returned to the school office and sent from the school by courier to the Victoria University of Wellington (VUW).

Data collection, measures and strategies

The project developed the measure *Survey of NCEA Goals* designed specifically for students in Years 10 and 11. The survey was based in principle on existing international measures of student motivation and attributions but adapted for New Zealand and specifically for NCEA context. It was trialled with small groups and individual students prior to wider use. The original longer measure and the shorter screening measure were designed to be administered by the teacher in form period. The screening measure requires approximately five to eight minutes for students to complete. Achievement was measured in Years 11-13 from NZQA NCEA records of learning for individual students accessed through their National Student Numbers (NSNs), including outcomes such as total credits attained, total achievement standard credits, total unit standard credits, internal vs. external assessment results, credits with Merit, credits with Excellence, grade average and non-achieved grades.

When the first lot of quantitative data was analysed the *Survey of NCEA Goals* had high predictive power for pākehā and Asian students but was not as strong a predictor for Māori and Pasifika students. Meyer explained:

> *It was evident that it was not measuring something that mattered for Māori and Pacific students. Guided by the research of Russell Bishop and Mere Berryman on what is important for Māori students in their learning and related research on social and interpersonal affiliations as possible influences on motivation and achievement, we replaced some items on the survey with new items. Items were developed to measure the influence of peers, teachers and family/whānau influences on students' performances and attributions for negative and positive results. (Meyer, Interview)*

For the focus groups, schools organised voluntary groups of up to 10 students across Years 10-13 and parents who met with two researchers; one researcher served as facilitator and the other as note taker. An information sheet and consent form were distributed to each of the participants, and signed consents were collected. A maximum of four to five main questions were asked at each focus group. The full list of the recorded responses was read out to the group after each question to allow for member checking for accuracy as well as opportunity to add additional comments.

All data are kept in locked and password-protected files at the Jessie Hetherington Centre.

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Analysis

The project was mixed-method, employing a range of quantitative and qualitative analyses, including use of NVivo[2] and SPSS[3] to analyse the data. Choice of different analysis procedures was driven by the nature of the different research questions and the data.

Reporting back and dissemination

At the end of the first two years of the project, schools were provided with printed copies of those first two project reports published by the Ministry of Education. They also received letters of thanks from the project. No report was published in 2008, as this was regarded by the Ministry of Education as interim to the final report based on the last two years that was published in July 2009. This latter full report and summary report are available on the Ministry of Education website, and the Ministry of Education has distributed printed copies of the 20-page summary report to all New Zealand secondary schools as well as to other constituencies. The research article has not been distributed to schools but a final letter of thanks will be sent to schools later this year that will reference this and other publications from the project.

Ethical issues

The project was reviewed and approved by the VUW Human Ethics Committee, which reviewed all research procedures and measures given that human participants were involved including children. The ethical procedures included informed consent of all participants, confidentiality of responses, protection of participants' and schools' identities and secure storage of data. No unanticipated ethical issues arose during the research.

Insights and hindsight

The need for adequate time to develop valid research measures was highlighted through this project. Meyer explained "*The project was driven by a Ministry of Education research contract with timelines that did not allow sufficient lead time to validate fully the original motivation measure. More time might have allowed a stronger brief measure sooner in the process*" (Meyer, Interview). Cumulatively, four years of funding eventually enabled a useful and valid motivation screening measure reflecting the New Zealand context and NCEA as an assessment system for recording student learning outcomes to be achieved.

Critical messages for this report

The success of the Māori and Pasifika students' and parents' focus groups underscored the importance of giving careful thought to who facilitates focus groups and endeavouring to find facilitators who share some aspects of participants' cultural backgrounds. Meyer argued *"This emphasises the importance of involving people from the community of the school in research, and by that I mean people of the community, not the teachers. Future research using focus groups could, with adequate resources, train members of the school neighbourhood and community to facilitate focus groups"* (Meyer, Interview).

Meyer argues that this research underscores the importance of longitudinal research:

> *It is difficult to get funding for longitudinal research in educational contexts and there are logistical and methodological challenges, such as being dependent upon schools to administer questionnaires and the increasing attrition rates of participants the longer the study continues. However, the possibilities for tracking changes in such factors as the relationship between students' motivation and their achievement outcomes are of tremendous value. (Meyer, Interview)*

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[2] Qualitative data analysis computer software package.

[3] Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

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This study also highlights that there is a large amount of data collected annually about students that has not to date been used in research. Meyer argues "*The data that is held by NZQA, with appropriate consent from students, is potentially a very rich source of data for future research*" (Meyer, Interview).

Questions that are raised

1. How can students be involved in the conceptualisation of research design and measures for large scale research projects so that the data that are gathered measure aspects of their lives and not just what adults consider to be important?
2. How can research participants (eg, students, parents) be involved in the conceptualisation of research design and measures when in the main funding and ethics applications require that these aspects are finalised before educational institutions, teachers, students and parents are approached about research projects?

Secondary School Exemplar Mixed-methods Action Research

Kane, R.G., & Maw, N. (2005). Making sense of learning at secondary school: involving students to improve teaching practice. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 35*(3), 311-322.

Interview details

Interviewer: Judith Loveridge
Interviewee: Ruth Kane
Note taker: Mimi Hodis

Background

This research was directed by Ruth Kane who is Director of Teacher Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. At the time she did this research she was Professor of Teacher Education at Massey University. Nicola Maw was the field researcher. Christopher Chimayange joined the team in the analysis phase. The research was funded through the Ministry of Education Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI). The TLRI report provides an overview of the project and data analysis and discussion. The paper that was published in the Cambridge Journal of Education does not report any data from the project but discusses the principles, values and conditions necessary for student voice research.

The research project began serendipitously with a senior teacher at a local secondary school asking Kane if she could help him and other interested teachers at the school design and carry out research that would let them know if what they thought they were teaching the students was what the students acknowledged they were learning. This approach came two weeks after a funding round had been announced for TLRI grants. Kane then approached three other schools and invited them to be part of a TLRI application that included the first school. The application was successful and once the grant was available Nicola Maw was employed as a field-based researcher. Maw had previously been working on student voice research in England and her experience of this research was drawn on in the final shaping of the research design. Within this project the teachers were seen as the key researchers with the university researchers mentoring teachers through the research process and facilitating the data collection. Maw worked for a term in each school alongside the participating teachers to build and maintain relationships with teachers and students and to facilitate and participate in data collection. Analysis and interpretation were carried out collaboratively by university researchers and the teacher researchers.

The research that is reported in the TLRI final report was conducted with three schools. A decision was made during the course of the research to limit the study to three schools and to return to the first school in the following year. There were different responses to the initial invitation to participate in each school and these responses contributed to very different research experiences across the schools.

Aims and objectives

The main objective of the research was "How do we find out what students are learning with a view to improving teaching?" As part of this the study aimed to explore how learning in secondary school is understood and how meanings are constructed by students and teachers. The study began with the premise that "for teachers and researchers to be able to understand and improve learning and teaching we need to ask for and listen to students' needs and views" (Kane & Maw, 2005, p.311). The project also aimed to engage teachers in self-study so they could explore their own conceptions of student learning and to have them consider these in light of what students say about their learning at school.

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Access, consent processes, role of parents, families and community

The research was based in three regional secondary schools and involved school management, groups of teachers and students. The researchers introduced the initial ideas for the research at staff meetings and then met with small groups of teachers who volunteered to participate in the research. The teachers then nominated one class from the senior school (Years 11-13) to work with during the project. The research design enabled students' control over the extent to which they participated in the research. Each class provided a focus group of students who the students felt represented the range of students in the class in terms of gender, learning ability and interest in the subject. Each class determined how the focus groups were selected.

Data collection, tools, strategies

The design of the research was multi-method to allow for triangulation of data through multiple sources:

1. Questionnaires were completed by all participating teachers and consenting students.
2. Teachers were interviewed individually and students were interviewed in focus groups. Data from the questionnaires were used to finalise the questions that were asked in these interviews with teachers and students.
3. Lessons by the teachers were video taped and used in interviews with the teacher and then separately with the focus group of students to stimulate recall (SR) and discussion of constructions of learning and aspects of the teachers' practice that facilitated or acted as a barrier to student learning. The SR interviews took place as soon as possible after the lesson had been videoed. The researcher used probing questions during the discussion to direct students' attention to the effects on their learning rather than remaining focused on the activity they were doing. The process of videoing and interview was repeated several times—typically one lesson a week for six to eight weeks. The teachers together with the researchers examined the transcripts of SR interviews with the students. This was seen as a critical part of the teachers' self-study and a means of ensuring that students' perspectives were recognised and examined.
4. Focus group students were asked to keep learning journals about what and how they were learning and what they were learning about their own learning processes. Teachers were asked to keep learning journals where they could reflect on their perspective on student learning and what they were learning about learning from the students.
5. 'Tickets out of class' were index cards that students used to provide quick feedback to teachers at the end of class, indicating things such as what was the main learning goal or what they had not understood. Students did this when they wanted to, with typically three or four students doing it each class.

These data-collection strategies were modified to respond to specific school and class needs. In one class it became apparent that the students were very uncomfortable with the videoing and with having an outside researcher. The videoing SR component of the research was removed for this class. Feedback on the teachers' practice was sought through fast feedback forms. The teacher also conducted the initial interviews with students. In another school with a strong commitment to te reo Māori it was decided that a rumaki class would take part in the research. A researcher who was fluent in te reo was contracted to work alongside the field-based researcher. Research tools, such as the fast feedback form and the questionnaires were translated into Māori. Interviews with the teacher and students moved back and forth between te reo Māori and English.

In the first school, once students realised that teachers were responding to what was being fed back to them through the field researcher, the students felt confident to give the feedback directly to the teachers. This was done very respectfully.

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Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing process during each school site immersion. Each school's data were treated as a bounded case comprising data generated from multiple sources, including: initial teacher and student questionnaires; teacher interviews; student focus groups; stimulated recall focus groups; tickets out of class; and, student and teacher journals. Data were transferred to the NVivo[4] data management program to assist with sorting and collating.

Analysis was guided primarily by the research questions:

1. What do teachers and students understand about how students learn?
2. What ways do teachers seek to promote learning and how are these ways coherent with student conceptions of how best they learn?
3. How did teachers and students' co-researching Making Sense of Learning at secondary school project inform teachers' ongoing pedagogical practices?

Researchers independently read and re-read a sample of data initially in order to establish a coding grid to be used in the coding of the entire data set. When this was agreed upon, all data were coded through reading and re-reading the data sets and allocating identified statements to codes. New codes were identified and data re-coded as required.

The study traced teachers' and students' conceptions of learning from initial interviews through stimulated recall and exit interviews. The iterative procedure involving constant comparisons was used to determine congruency or non-congruency of teachers' and students' conceptions of learning and how such conceptions were affirmed or challenged through the teaching and learning relationship. In addition, it was important to determine the participants' reflections on their own role in the research project and how, if at all, this contributed to their understanding of teaching and learning.

Reporting back and dissemination

Each school received a copy of the final report and individual feedback was given to teachers. In the first school an evening meeting was held for parents and the community to feedback findings from the research. Students and the five teachers involved in the research also presented findings in a symposium organised by the researchers at the New Zealand Association of Research in Education Conference, November 2004.

Ethical issues

Every effort was made to ensure that students were fully informed about the research project and able to participate as fully as they wished; however, owing to constraints of timelines for funding and ethics applications, the project was initiated and developed without students' input.

In one of the schools, students' questions challenged the researchers, highlighting their ethical responsibility to continue to support the school as it moved to extend the research process to other teachers and students. This resulted in one less school being involved in the project and the researchers returning to the original school to continue with the project in the following year.

Kane commented that:

Ethical issues could have arisen at anytime in that it could have been seen that the researchers were giving the students an opportunity to vent about their teachers. However, the focus of the research remained on how teachers support or do not support learning and the field researcher conducted the research in a professional and respectful way. A legitimate way out of the research project for teachers was also built into the original ethics agreements. (Kane, Interview)

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[4] Qualitative data analysis computer software package.

continued ...

Kane also noted that *"While people were very impressed with the students who presented findings from the research alongside their teachers at a National Conference the bravest people were the teachers who had let their practices be examined by all*" (Kane, Interview).

Insights and hindsight (things that went well, things that didn't work, things that would do differently another time)

On reflection, Kane commented that the research process worked very successfully in the first school but not so well in the other two. She said:

> *This is not at all a criticism of the other two schools. We just didn't allow enough lead-in time to negotiate decent relationships. You need time to build relationships to do this sort of research. We also took a few things for granted. Teachers are very busy people; they don't necessarily want to be involved in research just because a Professor has asked them. We just landed on them. We didn't have an advocate or a champion in those schools supporting the project. We also didn't have a dedicated space for Nicola to work from. In the first school the research project was teacher initiated. From the Principal down, Nicola was incorporated into the staff as a welcomed colleague with a slightly different role and she had a dedicated office to work from, to meet with participants and to store video and other research equipment.*
>
> *...*
>
> *We put in for doing the research in four schools to get the grant but ideally the research would have been carried out in one school for a year. Stimulated Recall using video is an amazing research tool but it is labour intensive. The TLRI fund is great but for this sort of research you need to be able to fund a full-time field researcher, the equipment and lots of time. However, I basically wouldn't change the research design. I would just do it for longer and take time to develop relationships with schools. (Kane, Interview)*

Critical messages for this report

Kane argued "*We should be asking students more; this research shows they are capable of articulating quite clearly how they learn and their agency in their learning. We don't ask students enough to be involved*" (Kane, Interview).

Involving students in research about their learning requires openness and being transparent about the purpose and ethical processes. The students in this research sought greater input into the research direction and scope as it progressed. It is important for future research about student learning to attend to ways in which students can become involved in the design of research.

Time is needed for establishing respectful and trusting relationships with students but also to organise the logistics of their participation; time is needed to schedule the opportunities for regular meetings and open conversations. A private space where research activities can progress without interruption is necessary for securing the trust that is fundamental to involving young people in research. The lives of teachers and students within schools are complex and more time than is anticipated is often needed to accommodate these complexities. This need for time adds to the cost of research and can limit the number of sites that such research can be carried out. Nonetheless, time is necessary for all the above reasons for this kind of research.

To have an advocate for the research within the school is of tremendous value. It helps to build the kinds of relationships necessary for this kind of research and also with the logistics of figuring out the timetable, availability of classes, negotiation of release of students etc.

continued ...

continued ...

It is important to respect the rights of both teacher and student participants and to respect each as co-authorities on teaching and learning. Although every effort was taken to ensure confidentiality of responses of teachers and students, and this was appreciated by students, respectful dialogue led to students and teachers communicating directly with each other. Thought needs to be given to the ways that relationships can change throughout the research process and that this may have implications for ethical processes and the renegotiation of ethical agreements.

Questions that are raised

1. How can students be authentically involved in the design of research about their learning when funding and ethics applications require details of the research design and actual questions for questionnaires and interviews to be sorted out before the research commences?

2. If students do not wish to participate in such research, who is disadvantaged?

3. How can adequate time be factored into research contracts to enable the establishment of relationships necessary for this kind of research?

CHAPTER 6:

Children and young people with disabilities

Judith Loveridge and Luanna H. Meyer

Research is designed to address questions and generate new knowledge of benefit to others; sometimes this research will also be of benefit to those who participate directly in the research as well but this is not a requirement for research to be valid and valued. Research also introduces an element of risk for those who participate directly. Internationally, ethics review committees no longer accept that there is 'no risk' to participants involved in research but instead require that researchers are explicit about any potential risk and how they will mitigate such risks to prevent harm to participants. Risk can take a variety of forms. It can derive from opportunities lost in being removed from beneficial activities (eg, for learning) in order to complete research tasks. It can also involve use of limited resources and staff time that would otherwise be available to support learning activities. Risk can be associated with the nature of the research task or activity itself, such as engaging in role play, responding to a questionnaire or being interviewed about events, situations or memories that could make the child uncomfortable or arouse negative emotions, such as shame or anger. With respect to educational settings, there may also be risk for violations of privacy or confidentiality, where participants fear loss of services or interpersonal repercussions if their responses are seen as challenging to teachers, principals, or other school personnel or officials in authority.

Children and young people generally, are included among those labelled as 'vulnerable populations' for purposes of research, on the assumption that they are not yet ready to make decisions in their own best interests as discussed elsewhere in this report. Because they are a vulnerable group, additional layers of consent are required, for example, so that their best interests are protected regardless of the benefits of research outcomes for knowledge development. Children and young people with disabilities represent a special class of those who are vulnerable, requiring additional considerations in research to protect their rights and prevent exploitation or harm. Munro, Holmes, and Ward (2005) emphasise:

> …it is important to acknowledge that although researchers, policy makers and local authorities may all work to enhance the well-being of vulnerable groups, they may well have different perspectives which frequently affect and occasionally undermine the research process. (p. 1025)

Whenever research is carried out in an organised setting or agency, such as an educational programme, the official and unofficial consent layers multiply to include the participant, parents, school personnel at different levels (eg, director or principal, teacher, and so on), board of trustees, and possibly centralised government agency personnel. For children with disabilities, advocates may also be involved in agreements to participate in research.

In this section, we address issues specific to research involving children and young people with disabilities conducted in early childhood, primary and secondary educational settings. 'Disabilities' in this review will include children and young people described as having developmental/intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, learning disabilities, autism, sensory impairments, emotional and/or behavioural challenges.

What is the rationale for involving children and young people with disabilities in research?

There has been considered debate regarding the involvement of children and young people with disabilities[5] in research carried out in educational settings, including the five major reasons identified here:

1. **Human rights and the right not to be excluded**

   Several articles from UNCROC (1989) have been cited to make the case that children and young people with disabilities should not be excluded from opportunities to participate in research (Garth & Aroni, 2003; Lewis & Porter, 2004; MacArthur, Sharp, Kelly & Gaffney, 2007). Article 12 acknowledges the rights of children to express their views about matters affecting them and to have those views heard and taken seriously; Article 2 emphasises the principles of non-discrimination. Thus, these two articles taken together have been interpreted to signify that denying participation in research to children who have disabilities would deny those children expression of their views and is discrimination if their right to do so is abrogated because of the presence of a diagnosis of disabilities. Reference is also made to Article 23 that concerns the rights of children with disabilities to enjoy a full and decent life in conditions conducive to dignity and self-reliance as well as the right to active participation in the community, including education. Finally, there are also frequent references to Article 3 referring to the best interest of the child. These rights are reinforced by evidence that participation in research has contributed perspectives important for policy development and has led to enhanced outcomes for children and young people with disabilities and their families.

   In addition to international recognition, policy development in specific countries has also recognised these rights as in, for example, the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Dalziel, 2001) (see *Children with disabilities ethnographic exemplar*). Both Objective 1 (encouraging the emergence of a non-disabling society) and Objective 3 (providing the best education for people with disabilities) are referred to as justification for research with children and young people with disabilities. This increased reference to a rights-based rationale for research participation has been associated with shifting the emphasis from research ‘on’ to research ‘with’ people with disabilities (Wright, 2008). Lewis and Porter (2004) argue there is a continuum of views about what ‘with’ actually entails. For some, it includes children and young people with disabilities being involved in setting the agenda, collaborating on design, collecting data, contributing to analysis and being involved in dissemination. For others, the emphasis is placed on ensuring that children and young people with disabilities can contribute their views. Lewis and Kellet (2004) signal a concern that with increased participation across the different phases of research, people with disabilities “cannot effectively represent all populations of disabled people and there is a danger that those with the severest disabilities might become disenfranchised by power shifting to the less disabled” (p. 201). They suggest that a solution to this dilemma may be found in having disabled people participating in research councils and other collaborative initiatives. Meyer (2001) describes how a large-scale research project on social relationships sought additional interpretations of the perspectives and preferences of children and young people with severe disabilities—who were unable to communicate their own views—from

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[5] There is not uniform agreement internationally regarding whether to refer to, for example, ‘children with disabilities’ or ‘disabled children’. While both approaches can be found in the literature, we have chosen the usage that emphasises the child and young person first, with ‘disabilities’ as one characteristic signaled by a prepositional phrase rather than refer to ‘disabled children’ which has been critiqued as foregrounding disabilities as the most important dimension in comparison to other characteristics that are in fact shared with others who do not have disabilities. The usage ‘with disabilities’ is widely regarded as people-first language, emphasising “the need to see the child or young person first and foremost, rather than the disability” (Lewis & Kellet, 2004, p. 191). This language is also consistent with social structural child perspectives that view childhood as a universal category present in all societies, with other characteristics, such as disability, culture, religion and so on varying across societies (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). We acknowledge, however, that recent New Zealand practice, as reflected in the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Dalziel, 2001) and the international document UNCROC, refer to a/the disabled child and/or disabled people and assert that society disables people. See also Children with disabilities ethnographic exemplar for an explanation of the use of disabled.

non-disabled peers who knew them well. This approach may not completely solve the challenge but it respects the child perspective as key to understanding phenomena, consistent with the rationale described next.

2. The sociology of childhood

Internationally, childhood is universally regarded as a unique phase of human development with organisational and social structures that differ in significant ways from those of adults. A number of authors make a case that it is important to understand the active role that children and young people with disabilities play in constructing their daily lives and to seek their perspectives on their experiences and identities (Ajodhia-Andrews & Berman, 2009; Davis, Watson & Cunningham-Burley, 2008; Lewis & Kellet, 2004). Arguments are made for attending to the diversity of experiences of children and young people with disabilities and not to homogenise their experiences (Davis et al. 2008) or to overvalue disability as the most defining variable in a child or young person's life (Cuskelly, 2005).

Emphasis has also been placed on the role played by culture, particularly non-dominant cultural 'minority' status, in the experiences and identity of children and young people with a disability. Harry's (2008) research has made major contributions to international understandings of how cultural identities define key aspects of the educational experience, including services for children and young people with disabilities and their families, demonstrating that research that fails to consider culture will lack relevance, validity, and credibility. Research that ignores cultural identities in favour of recognising a socially constructed identity such as disability can do harm, both in de-valuing the voices of research participants and in supporting deficit (child) theorising rather than acknowledging systemic responsibilities (Artiles & Bal, 2008). The important overarching point made by researchers in this area is, however, that identities such as culture or gender should not be overridden by a diagnosis of disability.

In addition, the fundamental, universal identity of childhood as a stage of life that should be acknowledged in societal institutions and organisations applies to those with disabilities just as it applies to other children and young people. Thus, research discourses generally emphasise inclusion alongside consideration of specific identities such as disabilities, gender or culture rather than accepting that such identities would be allowed to dictate exclusion from participation.

3. Evaluation of educational policy

Others articulate their rationale for involving children and young people with disabilities in research in terms of researching various aspects of inclusive educational policies. Programmes for children and especially those designed for children and young people with disabilities, can be the focus of emotive debate on best practices. Entitlements to educational and related services go beyond the per child expenditure spent by educational systems for non-disabled children and, in some cases, can be quite costly indeed. In the age of the internet, fad cures for disabilities such as autism spectrum disorders and Down Syndrome can be sourced by anyone, and parents and policy makers alike may expect and demand an approach that has not been subjected to rigorous research but which is expensive, high profile and has highly effective communication networks driving adoption. There is a danger that educational policy and practice will be influenced primarily by factors such as ideological beliefs, budgetary constraints, political pressures, and the traditional 'way we do things around here' rather than by empirical evidence. There may even be disincentives to supporting, funding or even allowing research that might challenge current policy, such that governments of the day can sometimes control dissemination of research findings or even prevent participation in research.

For example, inclusive educational policies have been advocated since the 1970s. Accompanying this advocacy has been a growing body of research evaluating the impact of inclusion on the social and academic development of children and young people with disabilities and on their non-disabled peers (Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Webster & Carter, 2007). Wright (2008) argues that if inclusive educational policy is about 'learning for all', then so too should research processes investigating and evaluating educational policy. Garth and Aroni (2003) state: "If inclusion as a philosophy is being advocated, then it would seem that children with disabilities should also not be excluded (whether intentionally or not) from participating in research" (p. 562). For example, Cooney, Jahoda, Gumley and Knott (2006) investigated how the context of integrated versus segregated schooling impacted on young people with intellectual disabilities views of self and their future aspirations in their final year of secondary school. Ward (2007) also drew on this rationale to examine the social experiences of four students with disabilities in inclusive educational settings (see *Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar*). Indeed, research involving children and young people with disabilities overall provides a model of how empirical evidence can guide educational policy decisions and use of resources (Bourke et al., 2002).

4. **Evidence-based interventions**

   Perhaps more so than for any other vulnerable group, children and young people with disabilities have been subjected to and benefited from extensive research focused on individualised interventions and improved pedagogical practices. Even as recently as the latter half of the 20th century, the published literature debated whether persons with disabilities were 'educable', and entire countries or regions within nations denied any educational services to certain groups of children on the grounds that they could not benefit from an education. Well before the turn of the century, intervention research demonstrated that even children and young people with the most severe intellectual impairments could learn complex tasks, and it was this research that supported advocates, educationalists and families seeking educational services. Whereas previous generations of young people were generally removed from their homes and grew up in institutions that sometimes failed to provide even basic care, current practice is underpinned by empirical evidence of irreparable harm without an education and enhanced benefits where that education meets individualised needs. Consequently, the 1976 forerunner legislation (now known as IDIEA) in the United States became an international exemplar of statute supporting empirically based individualised education for children and young people with disabilities.

   Thus, a strong rationale for involving children and young people with disabilities in research has been the development of empirically supported interventions and pedagogical practices to improve academic and/or social outcomes. This research has resulted in effective interventions to develop communication, social, reading, mathematics, and other skills with children and young people who had previously been considered incapable of learning (Coyne, Kame'enui, & Carnine, 2007; Guralnick, 1997; Lewis, Hudson, Richter, & Johnson, 2004). Perhaps because there are legal entitlements to programmes effective for the individual—not the case for non-disabled children in the mainstream—children and young people with disabilities may be more likely to be involved in intervention research than others. Yet, the extensive research literature may be overly focused on the validation of individualised programmes at the expense of approaches that will work in the mainstream. In their literature review regarding effective pedagogical approaches for the inclusion of children with special education needs in mainstream classrooms, Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheey and Wearmouth (2009) found limited research addressing the more systemic aspects of blending individualised instruction with inclusive policies.

5. **As part of the broader agenda of youth research**

   As with youth research in general, some researchers are concerned primarily with transition issues considered to require a specific focus. This is exemplified by Monteith (2004) who examined the experiences of young people with disabilities as they transitioned to adulthood and explored the additional barriers they faced to achieving adult status.

In summary, research can be quite specific in reflecting one of the particular agendas described above. In many cases, these reasons are interconnected. Studies conceptualised within a framework of the 'new sociology of childhood' may also make reference to the rights of children and young people to be included rather than excluded from their communities. Research focused on the evaluation of inclusive educational policies may intersect with research on effective pedagogical practices for individuals. Indeed, if these two areas do not intersect, they can clash such as would occur if a mainstream classroom argues it cannot accommodate an individualised programme for a particular child with severe disabilities—hence resulting in lack of access to inclusion under the guise of access to effective intervention. Intervention research can also emphasise the development and validation of effective strategies to keep children with severe behaviour needs in classrooms and local communities, so that the research may reflect a policy or values commitment in setting the agenda regarding which approaches will be investigated.

Methodology

How is access gained?

Lewis and Porter (2004) argue that the views of people who contribute to decision-making about the involvement of children and young people with disabilities in research is crucial. The attitudes of caregivers, advocates and educationalists are powerful in determining what is able to be researched and whose voices are able to contribute and be heard. Ethics Committees, parents and gatekeepers who have the power to decide access to educational institutions may justify decisions that deny access for researchers to children and young people in terms of protecting potentially vulnerable participants. Denying access can be in the best interests of the child but can also be driven by other considerations such as inconvenience, time limitations, staff resources and even unwillingness to participate in any research or research of which one disapproves at a particular educational institution. Refusal may be based on concerns about being scrutinised and critiqued. These concerns may be justified and research does generally contribute to the generation of new knowledge more so than providing personal benefit to individual research participants or to the educational settings where the research is carried out. Nevertheless, Iacono (2006) argues that denying access to educational institutions for research with children and young people may be motivated by the wrong reasons and have negative results: “The very notion of protection, however, involves paternalistic protectionism, with a concomitant risk of non-inclusive and discriminatory decisions by institutional ethics committees” (p. 173).

Beresford, Tozer, Rabiee & Sloper (2004) found that many parents were reluctant to allow their children with autism spectrum disorder to participate in research but were willing to volunteer themselves, name another informant other than the child, or agree to the child being observed. Such reluctance can be driven by convictions that the child or young person with a disability lacks the communication or other skills required to provide valid input as a participant in the research project. Researchers may be denied access to potential participants by staff in educational institutions who base that decision on beliefs that children and young people with disabilities will not be able to make a meaningful and valid contribution to research (Davis et al, 2008; Lewis & Porter, 2004). Davis and colleagues argue for adopting a reflexive stance towards such aspects of their research experience. In their ethnographic research, they encountered staff views that it was not possible to engage children with disabilities in research in a meaningful way, reporting immense pressure to conform to their views. This experience helped the research team to understand the power of structural influences shaping children’s everyday lives. A reflexive stance, as conceptualised within ethnographic studies, examines the relationship between knowledge and interpretations put forward by ethnographers and their own cultural and personal values and experiences. As part of considering their prior academic preconceptions, Davis and colleagues were challenged to scrutinise and critique their own beliefs, including those about inclusion and agency.

As well as being protected or excluded from research about their own situations, Cuskelly (2005) notes that children and young people with disabilities are frequently excluded from ‘mainstream’ research by those who control access to potential participants. She argues that this may sometimes be appropriate: for example, if the research is about a particular aspect such as typical language development and the proposed research participant uses sign language because of a severe hearing impairment. More commonly, denial of access occurs because gatekeepers believe that children and young people with disabilities have nothing in common with those who do not have disabilities or they think that those with disabilities are so different they should be excluded. Caregivers may believe that children will react negatively to a researcher who is a stranger or to the change in routine (Lightfoot & Sloper, 2003). Permission may also be refused because stakeholders do not wish to do the extra work required to involve and support children and young people with disabilities so that they may participate in research. Hepinstall (2000) highlights the fact that access to vulnerable children and young people may be unduly restricted by the multiple layers of carers who control overall participation decisions. Recently, one New Zealand university's ethics committee considered a proposal to refuse any researcher ethics approval if participants were to be recruited in educational settings, on the grounds that the university committee members had the right to make decisions about what was a good use of children's time in school—rather than trusting this decision to educational leaders, parents, and the children themselves.

Arguments such as the above deny voice to children and young people with disabilities through participation in research, and these justifications imply that their views are not valued, competent or valid, and thus obtaining those views is not deserving of extra time and effort (Garth & Aroni, 2003). If these attitudes are allowed to dominate decisions about access to potential research participants—who would then be the ones to grant or not grant individual consent to participate—then the experiences and situations of those with disabilities may be neglected in research, particularly those with communication difficulties. Preece (2002) notes that within the field of disability research there is a tendency for empirical studies to focus on those with whom it is easiest to communicate, thus research has involved young people and adults more than very young children and those with physical and/or sensory disabilities and those with moderate disabilities rather than those with more severe disabilities.

How is consent negotiated?

Although researchers may be given access to children and young people with disabilities, this should not be mistaken for consent for them to participate. There needs to be a clear process in which potential participants (or someone on their behalf) receive information about the research, understand it and respond to it (Lewis, 2002). Much has been written about how to determine the capacity of individuals to participate in research. Iacono (2006) argues that decisions must be made on a case by case basis, taking into account each individual and the specific research involved. *Gillick* competency is also referred to in this context in determining whether a person with a disability is competent to give consent (see Introduction for further explanation). Clearly, obtaining informed consent in research with children and young people with disabilities is complex. Some of this complexity resides in the particular forms of disability that may present challenges, such as difficulties with communication impairment, attention, memory and transfer of learning; complications may also result from organisational structures in the context in which the research is occurring (Cameron & Murphy, 2006). Some writers argue that while informed consent is important, it may be difficult to obtain genuine informed consent (Lewis, 2002) and still others suggest it is possible but requires consideration of additional issues (Cameron & Murphy, 2006).

The conditions of agreeing to participate in research generally include the rights of individuals to decline to answer any individual questions or take part in particular activities. Lewis and Porter (2004) argue that in reality there are a number of such decision points as research unfolds and that consent should be thought of as an ongoing process with participants being given the opportunity to express whether or not they wish to continue to be involved. Cameron and Murphy (2006) argue that the greater the control that individuals have at every decision point, then the less likely it is that the research will infringe the rights of people with learning disabilities.

Lewis and Porter (2004, p. 193) raise the following questions regarding consent:

1. "Does the research involve fully informed consent from participants?
2. To what extent is the participant able to give fully informed consent?
3. Is understanding of consent to what checked/tested?

4. Does the research involve assent from participants?
5. If others give consent, has the participant given assent?
6. Has an explicit distinction been made between assent and consent in relation to what is given?
7. Is consent/assent confirmed throughout the research?
8. Can potential participants opt out?
9. Have ways of checking for understanding of confidentiality/research purposes been explored?
10. Has a right to silence/privacy (informed dissent) been recognized?
11. Have participants, at appropriate intervals, been reminded of their right to withdraw?"

Nevertheless, as has been discussed, it can be difficult to ascertain whether or not children and young people with disabilities have consented or assented to participate in research. There are alternative response processes and adapted strategies that have been developed for use with persons who have significant disabilities, such as Cameron and Murphy's (2006) *Talking Mats* that will be discussed in more detail in the next section. The researchers used pictures and short simple sentences to explain the research to the participants, repeating the explanations and providing expanded time between explanations. The adults participated in the process, and 'carers' (family members or paid carers who knew participants well) observing the process confirmed that the researcher had accurately interpreted the participant's response as either being willing or as refusal to participate in the research. Participants communicated consent using strategies in their repertoire (eg, using a mark or a non-verbal signal), with carers corroborating that it was a positive response.

> Positive indicators for giving consent were:
>
> High level of engagement (eg, eye contact, body language).
>
> Relevant elaboration (eg, verbal comments indicating willingness to take part).
>
> Positive nonverbal responses (eg, nodding).
>
> Doubtful indicators were:
>
> Low level of engagement (eg, lack of eye contact, indifference).
>
> Concern that the response was overly acquiescent (eg, agreeing without clear understanding).
>
> Ambivalent nonverbal responses (eg, negative facial expressions). (p. 115)

These researchers also checked for ongoing consent to participate at several stages of the research project; during the research process, three participants indicated that they wished to stop participating. The researchers propose that for consent processes to be working there must be evidence that some choose not to participate. Furthermore, they suggest that future research with vulnerable groups should document non-participation rates as a way of assessing if consent is occurring, given the imbalance of power relations that inevitably exist between researchers and participants. Cameron and Murphy (2006) suggest implications for researchers working with children and young people with disabilities, including the following that relate to gaining consent in educational settings (directly quoted below):

- Increased time for gaining consent needs to be planned into the original research proposal.
- Researchers need to be competent and skilled in using 'individualised communication'.
- Information sheets and consent procedures need to be adapted appropriately.

- Consent should be viewed as an ongoing process and ways of developing, continuing and ending that research relationship should be established.
- The documentation of non-participation rates would allow researchers to consider the validity of their consent procedures. (p. 117)

Other researchers also raise the issues of extra time and care needed to ensure that participants have fully understood the consent process and to check for ongoing consent (Cooney et al., 2006; Germain, 2004; Lewis, 2002).

The question of who can give consent or permission on behalf of a child or young person has also received considerable attention, as proxy consent is also a complex issue. In research facilitated in educational settings, it is usual that consent will be sought from a child or young person's parent(s) or guardian. Proxies may make decisions about the involvement of children and young people on different bases (Lewis & Porter, 2004). Some may make the decision in terms of what they think is in the best interest of the individual, while others may try and make a judgement about whether or not they think the individual would consent if they were able.

Munro and her colleagues (2005) provide a helpful summary of the issues regarding the choice between an 'opt-in' methodology for consent (with participants signing or indicating in some other way that they consent to participate) versus an 'opt-out' approach (in which participants are deemed to have consented to participation if they do not refuse participation with the stated timescale, included in the research information provided). They cite evidence that the opt-out method resulted in significantly higher interview completion rates and was supported by indications that children and young people were actually supportive of, and pleased to participate in, research, and "not getting around to returning a reply slip" was the reason for not returning the consent rather than "a genuine reluctance to participate" (p. 1033). Skuse and Ward (2003) reported that a number of the children they interviewed stated they enjoyed taking part in the research because it provided them with the opportunity to express their views and be listened to.

In what ways are parents, families/ whānau and peers involved in research?

Frequently parents and families have been involved in research about children or young people with disabilities, speaking on behalf of the children or young persons rather than the children or young people speaking for themselves. There is growing disquiet about the validity of view passed on by proxies (Lewis & Porter, 2004). Given a growing emphasis on finding ways for children and young people with disabilities themselves to participate actively and voluntarily in research, parents, family and whānau are also being interviewed. Their perspectives may then be referenced alongside, not in place of, the views of the participants with disabilities. The *Children with disabilities ethnographic exemplar* and the *Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar* provide local examples of where views of teachers, principals and parents have been sought in addition to those of the participants. Higgins, Phillips, Cowan and Tikao (2009) provide an example of research informed based on a kaupapa Māori framework where views of whānau have been sought in addition to those of the participants who are kapo (blind).

The *Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar* highlights ethical issues that can arise in dealing with accounts of participants and parents that contain discrepant information or information revealed by parents but not participants; of course, such differences also beg for further consideration of the validity of data that are not triangulated and/or may call into question the validity of certain data-collection strategies. In a British study using cameras and Talking Mats with young people with learning disabilities, parents' views of out-of-school activities were also sought to validate that the correct interpretation had been made by researchers of the photographic data and to collect more detailed information (Germain, 2004). In their investigation of friendships and other social relationships between teenagers with severe disabilities and non-disabled peers, Meyer, Minondo et al. (1998) asked same-age adolescent peers who knew the young people with severe disabilities well to assist in interpreting data, on the grounds that adolescents would be more likely to understand observed phenomena than adult researchers.

What are the methods of data collection/generation?

Ethnographic studies

Ethnographic research involving children and young people with disabilities has used methods and tools such as interviews, observations, field notes, journals, the drawing of pictures, use of animated cartoons on computers, and writing things down. The two exemplars at the end of this chapter provide two examples of local ethnographic research with children and young people with disabilities. Based on their reflexive ethnographic research with children and young people, Davis et al. (2008) believe that not all participatory techniques should be universally applied to all children. Different children have different experiences and competencies, requiring that the use of particular methods be questioned reflexively throughout the research process. They propose that there is much to be gained from “utilizing the everyday artefacts and structural processes of children’s worlds” (p. 235). Davis et al. provide an example of how the researcher’s gender blindness had led him to fail to identify what a girl’s interests might be as he attempted to forge rapport and communicate with her. On the advice of the girl’s teacher, he commented on the girl’s clothes, make-up, nail polish (everyday cultural artefacts) and how she looked; eventually the girl began to respond. Of course, this example might also highlight the need to consider researcher identity characteristics, such that a gender match between researcher-participant might provide a smoother pathway that is actually more comfortable for participants than elaborate compensating strategies.

Davis et al. stress that the research process has a fluid nature, and so methods employed may vary throughout. They argue for the value of a reflexive ethnographic approach in allowing time to overcome initial misunderstandings, suspend taken-for-granted notions, to establish working relationships with participants and to come to understand the multiple identities that participants may have and the details of the cultural processes they are part of. In summary, they argue that a reflexive ethnographic approach allowed for a more organic account to emerge which revealed that disabled children were capable of social action and that their world is as fluid as that of other social actors. The *Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar* also illustrates the value of a reflexive ethnographic approach in which the assumptions, values and experiences of the researcher are interrogated along with other data generated in the research.

Cue cards

A number of recent articles have focused on the use of devices, such as cue cards, Talking Mats and cameras to assist accessing the views of children and young people with disabilities. Lewis (2002) argues that eliciting responses to statements rather than asking for answers to direct questions is preferable to elicit views of children and young people with disabilities. Asking questions puts the adult in a position of power, and questioning can distort responses from participants. Using statements as prompts in small groups of children can also subtly encourage children’s responses more naturally triggered by responses from other children. Lewis (2002) used cue cards with children aged six to 12 with moderate learning difficulties to assist in generating a structured response from children, which built up a story reflecting continuity about the self. A strength of using the cue cards was that the response was generated without the interviewer interfering by asking questions, which might lead or distract the respondent. The cue cards were prompts for ideas about people, talk, setting, feelings and consequences associated with the event being discussed. The symbolic pictures on the cue cards were selected and trialled. The teacher introduced the children to the cue cards in routine story activities and the children became adept at using them before the research began. The research showed that compared with non-prompted accounts, the cue cards elicited more detailed and accurate accounts across a range of children and events, providing a way of checking that responses are fair and typical. The only group of children with whom the cue cards did not work well were those with autism spectrum disorder; the researcher considered that this was perhaps owing to participants latching on to a particular response and then repeating it across cards.

Lewis, Newton and Vials (2008) developed the approach with cue cards further, revising the cards and introducing two more cards. In the subsequent research, they identified two important principles: (1) children need to be taught systematically how to use the cards and required practice with them; and (2) presentation of the card should be an unspoken prompt whereby adults using the cards with the children demonstrate their willingness to listen rather than talk themselves. Children were able to learn how to use the cards as a whole class but once they had mastered how to use them there were many different ways in which they could be used with individuals, groups or the whole class for both teaching and learning purposes as well as research. Children needed time to handle the cards, and some children needed more than one set of cards to work with at a time. The cue cards were also useful for exploring more sensitive and personal issues.

Talking Mats

Talking Mats are another aid to communication using graphic symbols to represent topics, options and emotions. The symbols are moved around on a mat to facilitate discussion of a topic, and the strategy is supported by an extensive literature around the choice of vocabulary selected for use. Brewster (2004) was particularly interested in how to identify the specific vocabulary items without having these being the words of the researcher. Similar to how Meyer, Minondo et al. (1998) involved peers, she explored the use of peers—those close in age and experience to the participants—to contribute to vocabulary selections for a particular target group. The peers, like the research participants, had learning difficulties and no effective means of communication but they were effective augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) users. The researchers found that the peers tended to rely on the symbols present and only one additional symbol was suggested. Although it had made intuitive sense to involve peers in the selection of vocabulary, the process did not result in any significant changes. Brewster concluded that this development requires further investigation.

Talking Mats were used in combination with a camera to access the views of young people about their out-of-school activities. Germain (2004) provided 16-year-olds with moderate to severe learning difficulties with a disposable camera during a week-long term break and asked them to take photographs of their activities. The participants were provided with instructions on how to use the cameras and Makaton symbols representing the instructions were stuck onto the back of the camera. The photos were developed and returned promptly to participants who were asked to remove those they wanted to discard. They were then asked to sort the photos and place them under the Talking Mat symbol that showed how they felt about each activity in the photo. A photo was then taken of the completed mat. The process was repeated two days later with four of the participants to check for understanding of symbols and the validity of the method. The results suggested that the Talking Mat had been a reliable way of building understandings of young people’s likes and dislikes, with cameras adding another useful tool to provide a window into the world of young people with disabilities. Unanticipated events, such as a camera being lost, another not being returned, and problems developing photographs, led to a loss of data that would not have occurred had more conventional research tools been used. In common with researchers using cameras with typically developing young people, Germain (2004) notes that there is the potential for photographs to reveal things that had not been expected and thought needs to be given in advance as to how to handle these situations. The ease with which people and places can be identified in photographs also raises issues about whether or not the anonymity of research participants can be assured and sustained.

Talking Mats were also used in conjunction with Story Board Game to explore the perceptions of a child (referred to as Ian) who does not use speech to communicate (Ajodhia-Andrews & Berman, 2009). The Story Board Game was a tool created by Ajodhia-Andrews (the researcher) which had various picture symbols and blank spaces. The picture symbols were the same as those used for the Talking Mat. The researcher and Ian took turns to fill in the blank spaces to complete the story. The researcher also created a Magic Box, which was filled with various items that she thought Ian would enjoy when having a break from the research tasks. The researcher and Ian took breaks to maintain attention and reduce boredom. Ian was able to independently choose to play with things from the Magic Box, read, listen to music, dance and draw. Initially, the breaks were every three to five minutes but at some points there could be up to 30 minutes between breaks. Themes did emerge from the Talking Mat interviews about school life and interactive social activities. The responses that Ian made to the Story Board Game appeared to support the responses made using the Talking Mat.

The researcher felt that these tools enabled her to access, validate, and empower Ian's voice—not giving him a voice but enabling the voice that he possessed, full of meaning and insight—to be heard. Limited choice of symbols and the potential influence of the researcher's choices in completing blank spaces left after Ian's choices were limitations that the researcher discusses. While she discounts this limitation, she does suggest that future research might require that only the participant fill in the blank spaces to allow greater access to the child's perspective. She also advocates that researchers spend more time with their research participants before creating research tools to ensure that rapport can be established and the tools customised.

Other methods

Beresford et al. (2004) used a variety of methods to support the inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in a social care research project. The umbrella project focused on four different groups of disabled children and their families but the paper by Beresford et al. provides an account of how the research design, questions and methods developed for one group as the researchers responded to their needs and competencies. Children and young people with ASD exhibit characteristics that present challenges for researchers working in this area, including impaired communication (verbal and non verbal), difficulties with social interaction and restricted interests and activities (Preece, 2002). Thus, Beresford and her team utilise the Mosaic Approach, involving a range of methods used in early childhood research (see Chapter Two for full discussion). The team also attended academic seminars and practitioner training days about working with children with ASD. Their interviews with the children included a number of strategies, some designed to alleviate social anxiety. The strategies included:

- social stories to prepare the child about the researcher's visit (a detailed, step-by-step account about why a situation is happening, what will happen and interwoven with gentle, directive advice about how to react)
- asking the child to take photos prior to the interview about people, places and activities that were important to them
- conducting the interview while doing a familiar craft activity together (this was to minimize face-to-face interactions). The craft activity was looking at the photographs that the child had taken prior to the interview and making a poster with them
- restricting the conversation (interview) to concrete, here-and-now experiences.

The number of children who completed interviews was disappointingly small, something that the researchers attribute to parental unwillingness for their children to be involved. However, they did feel that four out of five interviews were successful in revealing four key issues that have implications for conducting research with children with disabilities:

1. It is important to look beyond discipline boundaries to search for relevant ideas for research methods. In this case, research methods used with preverbal toddlers informed the design of the project with children with autism spectrum disorder.
2. Practitioners working in health, education and social care may have skills and methods for working with disabled children that may transfer to research settings. In this case, the use of social stories and the poster-making activity were methods gleaned from practitioners.
3. Researchers need to be flexible and change and adapt aspects of their research to fit the needs and competencies of those they are working with. These changes should be transparent and documented. A balance needs to be struck between methodological rigour and facilitating participation. In this case, different research questions and methods were established for different groups of children taking part in the same project.
4. Reshaping the project and the development of methods that were appropriate for the successful inclusion of children with ASD took both time and money. It is important that those who fund research recognised that these

> are fundamental aspects of the research process and that research proposals and budgets need to be able to reflect these aspects of research and the resources they need.

This article is particularly valuable for its candid reporting of setbacks encountered in the research; the need to redesign the research approach, questions and methods; and the wide and serendipitous sources of knowledge and skills the researchers drew upon. We end this section on methodology with the reflections of these researchers. Beresford et al. (2004) note:

> the process by which methods are developed and what did and did not work in the course of conducting fieldwork often remains hidden and unreported. It is difficult to publicize failures, or to share the struggles and setbacks encountered in the course of a research project. Yet it is very important that the time is taken to consider and share the process by which methodological lessons are learnt. (p.184)

How are research findings analysed and communicated to participants?

There are well-established conventions for reporting quantitative data in publications, although these may be highly technical and thus not readily accessible for understanding by non-researchers. With regard to qualitative data, the processes for coding data, analysing data, selecting exemplars and interpreting the data are less transparent and vary widely from publication to publication. Qualitative studies commonly report that data were coded (either manually or perhaps with the assistance of a software package) and themes were identified but the decision processes for coding and identification of themes is often unspecified. Historically, this may be a consequence of restrictions on the length of articles, chapters or reports but author guidelines for journals are also rarely explicit about the level of detail required. It may be that educational research that is qualitative is a relatively 'young' tradition so that these conventions are not yet well defined but left to idiosyncratic editorial review processes (including preferences of editors and reviewers). Particularly absent are discussions regarding how data were interpreted—a crucial issue given that qualitative research is intended to give voice to participants yet data may be exclusively interpreted by adult researchers who may not even share crucial identities with participants.

The *Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar* is an exception and Ward provides extensive detail and appendices to make transparent the way she analysed her data and produced her representation of that data. Both Ward and MacArthur (see exemplars at the end of this chapter) indicate an increasing expectation that children and young people with disabilities will be involved in both the analysis and dissemination of research, and the collection of chapters from various research teams includes numerous examples of how children and young people with disabilities who participated in research were involved in these processes (Meyer et al., 1998). Lewis (2002) notes that it is now widely acknowledged that participants should have the opportunity to receive feedback from researchers but little has been written about this in research on inclusion. She suggests there is the potential for sensitive issues to arise in feeding back research findings, thus researchers need to consider implications in advance. Some researchers send out annual newsletters in accessible text using graphic or pictorial supports that update participants and their families who are involved in ongoing research. Such newsletters recognise that it can take a long time from the time that data are gathered to when they have been analysed, published and then disseminated.

Iacono (2006) argues that participatory research has paid attention to informing individuals about results of studies (their own performance, that of the group and the implications for people with intellectual disability in general) but whether this occurs in quantitative studies is not typically reported in the published literature. She suggests that although researchers are often required by ethics committees to do this, the process of providing feedback to participants may be neglected owing to lack of time or acknowledgement of the importance of this feedback for participants, families and others outside the research community reading typical scholarly publications. In her own experience, “participants do seek information about outcomes, and will feel cheated by researchers who neglect this important step” (Iacono, 2006, p.177).

Table 6.1: Summary of data-collection methods, tools and strategies and research examples in research involving children and young people with disabilities

Methods	Tools	Research examples
Interviews	Individual	Cameron & Murphy (2006); Garth & Aroni (2003); Higgins et al. (2009); Islam (2008) Monteith (2004)
	While doing craft activity	Beresford et al. (2004)
Ethnography	Participant observation, conversations, interviews, drawing, field notes, computers	Davis et al. (2008); MacArthur et al. (2007); Ward (2007)
Eliciting views	Cue cards	Lewis (2002); Lewis et al. (2008)
	Talking Mats Talking Mats with camera Talking Mat with storyboard	Brewster (2004); Wright (2008) Germain (2004) Ajodhia-Andrews & Berman, 2009)
	Picture Boards	Islam (2008)
Visual data gathering	Camera	Beresford et al. (2004)
Visual production	Eco maps, drawing	Islam (2008)

Ethical Issues

There are many ethical issues that are raised in the literature on researching with children and young people with disabilities. Many have already been raised in the preceding discussion; at each of the decision points of the research process, ethical issues are raised for researchers as a result of the combination of the potential vulnerability of children and young people with disabilities and their rights to be included, empowered to express a view and be listened to. The following are some of the more commonly raised issues that have not been canvassed so far in this section.

Lewis and Porter (2004) stress the importance of researchers establishing the value of the research they propose to people with learning disabilities. This means being clear about the aims and purposes of the research and reflecting on the following questions:

1. “How will the research be useful? How will it contribute to the lives of people with learning disabilities?
2. Will the research bring about change?
3. Have people with learning disabilities contributed to establishing the aims and purpose of the research? For example, Bourke et al. (2002) describe the role of a conference in enabling people with learning disabilities to contribute their ideas about the topic of the research.
4. Could research participants be harmed in any way through involvement?” (p. 192)

An important issue in research with children and young people with disabilities is whether the use of an experimental design would be ethical if it resulted in denying effective intervention/s to particular participants—either permanently as a ‘control group’ or temporarily in a single-subject experiment. Cuskelly (2005) raises these issues for the use of comparison groups in intervention research in particular. Researchers need to consider how they can offer successful or empirically validated interventions to those in a comparison group. There are strong arguments in favour of proper research designs, including comparison groups that have access to current ‘interventions’: in these designs, the research intervention is being compared with what is already available (presumably because it is believed to be or has been demonstrated to be effective) to determine if the experimental approach is more effective. What would then occur in medical research but may not always occur in the social sciences is that research approaches demonstrated to be better would be offered to those in the comparison group/s as well. It may be, however, that current funding levels do not permit this to occur.

Another set of ethical issues is related to what extent it is possible for researchers to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality in research involving children and young people with disabilities. Identifying the disabilities that children and young people have within a heterogeneous minority population may make them very identifiable, particularly in qualitative research with individual participants or in single-subject intervention research with individuals who have very low incidence disabilities that might identify them (eg, Rett Syndrome). The *Children with disabilities narrative exemplar* provides an example of how this issue was considered and a decision made not to include details about the disabilities of the participants. A disadvantage to this particular approach to solving the problem is that readers may not be able to determine enough information regarding for whom the research is relevant: this would be particularly problematic in intervention research to address particular learning challenges where the approach may not be appropriate for others who do not share particular characteristics. Researching innovative programmes that have high profiles may also render participants identifiable.

Participants may disclose information that researchers feel the need to pass on to ensure the safety of participants, and this may have the appearance of violating assurances that have been given about keeping information confidential. For example, Cuskelly (2005) and Lewis and Porter (2004) both contend there is evidence that children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse; this may be disclosed or suspicions may be aroused during research and researchers need to consider what they would do if this were to occur. In many venues, it is required that suspected abuse be reported to the authorities, and there will be occasions where researchers actually observe verbal or physical abuse that compels one to report an incident to someone in authority. Freeman and Mathison (2009) and Munro et al. (2005) discuss the need to limit the commitment to confidentiality whenever there is a threat to the health and safety of research participants, perhaps even requiring explicit reference in the informed consent process. Statutory requirements may also change during the course of research, which could not be predicted at the time consent is given. These points suggest that researchers need to ask whether or not anonymity and confidentiality can be guaranteed and sustained when researching with children and young people with disabilities (Lewis & Porter, 2004).

Lewis and Porter (2004) raise two additional issues relevant to this report. Current research with children and young people with disabilities—as with other children—emphasises the need to enable heterogeneous voices to be heard. They ask “How do we move from hearing individual children’s views, to helping children present a collective ‘choir’ which always and routinely includes those with disabilities and difficulties?” (p. 196). They also raise the issue of explaining to children why researchers have chosen to identify particular views despite having asked for, and hearing, a variety of views. It is important to enable children and young people to have input in ways that are not tokenistic. Badham (2004) makes a similar point when he argues that “It is often not clear what is changing for children and young people through their involvement” (p. 146).

Finally, Lewis highlights the ethical issue of the social responsibility of researchers. She argues that there are strong rights arguments around inclusion and people working in the field have strongly held personal values positions around inclusion. These particular aspects of this field, she suggests, “may make it difficult to sustain research endeavours that threaten to produce findings at odds with the prevailing orthodoxy. Researchers have a responsibility to acknowledge both their own value positions and whatever truth emerges from the research process” (Lewis, 2003, p. 112).

Table 6.2: Critical issues and questions raised

Critical areas for research with children and young people with disabilities	Questions that are raised
There is a tension between gatekeepers wishing to protect potential participants and protecting their right to participate in research.	Do gatekeepers understand enough about the competencies and rights of those they wish to protect?
There are complex issues in gaining consent, assent and recognising the dissent of potential participants.	Have researchers thought about whether or not it is appropriate to have proxy consent and if there are ways that participants can be empowered to assent or consent? Do researchers have adequate communication skills to effectively ascertain consent, assent and dissent throughout the research?
Not all participatory methods are appropriate for all participants.	Do researchers have adequate knowledge and communication skills to ascertain which participatory methods are most appropriate?
There is a need to find a balance between methodological rigour and empowering participation of different groups of children and young people with disabilities.	Are researchers flexible and able to make changes to research design, questions and methods to empower different groups to participate in the same research? Are these changes made transparent in publications?
Disabled children and young people are frequently homogenised as a group and multiple aspects of their identities are not recognised.	Do research methods allow for the accessing of views of different groups of participants with disabilities? Do research designs and methods allow for other aspects of identity to be recognised and made visible?
The influence of the values, experiences and preconceptions of the researcher and the structural environment they work in shape how they perceive children and young people with disabilities and what they think is possible.	Do researchers adopt a reflexive approach to their research and interrogate the way their own experiences and values shape different aspects and stages of the research process?
Issues of sustaining confidentiality and anonymity arise in research with small groups of heterogeneous minority groups.	Can researchers assure and sustain confidentiality and anonymity throughout all stages of the research?
The research must be relevant and meaningful when disable children and young people’s voices are being sought.	Are the ‘right’ research questions to benefit children and young people with disabilities being asked?

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Children with disabilities ethnographic exemplar

MacArthur, J., Sharp, S., Kelly, B. & Gaffney, M. (2007). Disabled children negotiating school life: Agency, difference and teaching practice. *International Journal of Children's Rights* (15), 99-120.

Interview details

Interviewer: Judith Loveridge
Interviewee: Jude MacArthur
Note taker: Mimi Hodis

Background to study

This paper presents data from a three-year ethnographic study undertaken by a team of researchers and funded through the New Zealand Royal Society's Marsden Fund. Jude MacArthur is an independent researcher who has recently retired from being a Senior Researcher at the Donald Beasley Institute for Research and Education on Intellectual Disability, Dunedin. Michael Gaffney was a member of the Children's Issues Centre and is now a member of the Centre for Research on Children and Families at Otago University, Dunedin. Sarah Sharp was the Māori researcher who worked with Māori children in the study. Berni Kelly was a visiting academic from Ireland who had done her doctoral research with children with disabilities, some of whom were as young as two years. She joined the project for three years. Gaffney and MacArthur have worked in the education sector, Kelly in the area of social work and Sharp's background was in anthropology.

The project developed out of earlier work by MacArthur and Gaffney which had been concerned with the social experiences at school of disabled children and young people. In the earlier project, however, participants had only been talked to in their homes, not observed in their schools. This earlier work showed that disabled students experienced bullying at school and were often socially isolated. Questions were raised about the impact of these negative experiences on their developing sense of self- and group-identity, and it was decided to do a longitudinal study that explored disabled students' school experiences in greater depth, and considered the impact of these experiences on their identity. The transition from primary school to secondary school was described in the research literature at the time as being a particularly challenging phase in disabled children's lives, hence the study focused on this period. The study placed a priority on the perspectives of the disabled students themselves. The participants in the study were aged 10-14 and included nine disabled children (seven pākehā and two Māori) and seven of their non-disabled peers (matched for age, gender and classroom). The matched non-disabled children were included for comparison purposes and, in particular, to tease out any issues that seemed to be unique to disabled children.

In this research the term 'disabled children' is used to signify the ways in which children who have impairments are 'disabled' from fully participating in society because of physical and social barriers. This use of the term is consistent with the social model of disability and with the language that is used within the disabled people's movement.

Aims and objectives

MacArthur describes the main objective of the study as "to explore disabled children's experiences from their points of view". Specific aims were:

1. To explore the construction of personal identities in 11-13-year-old disabled and non-disabled children in regular schools, tracking the trajectories of students' identity as they make the transition from primary to secondary school.
2. To identify impairment, structural, cultural and other factors in regular New Zealand schools, which may contribute to identity and notions of difference.

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3. To challenge and develop theorising about disability to include the perspectives and experiences of children and developmental theory.
4. To explore method and methodological issues associated with the role of the researcher in the classroom and their relationship with children and teachers (this 4th aim was added following fieldwork in 2004).

Access and consent processes

"*We did not choose schools. We chose children*" (MacArthur, Interview). Families of disabled children were initially approached through *The Family Network*, a local group of parents and professionals with an interest in disability issues. Once families had been informed of the study the researchers waited for interested families to approach them. Initial meetings were held with children and parents together, and subsequently with the children alone to discuss the children being involved in the research. These discussions were conducted in ways that respected the children's rights, autonomy and particular ways of communicating. The researchers felt strongly that they needed a long lead-in time to make sure that the children, parents and teachers were happy to be involved and this was factored into their grant application:

> *We needed time to build relationships with the children, the parents and the teachers. You need good relationships so that people's rights are respected, the research has integrity and to get good quality data. You just can't take shortcuts, particularly with children. The Marsden fund was fantastic; they were flexible and understanding about these things. (MacArthur, Interview)*

Schools were informed about the research and permission to conduct the research was sought from the board of trustees for each school, the school principal and each of the children's teachers. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any stage; the principles of anonymity and confidentiality were adhered to. The identities of all participants were protected through the use of pseudonyms, changing some identifying features and avoiding using labels for impairments. Matched peers for the disabled students (referred to as the focus students) were sought following approval by the schools for the research to be carried out. All children and young people in the disabled students' classes and their families were informed about the study in general terms (to avoid the identification of focus students), and they could choose not to be included in school observations.

Data collection, tools, strategies (how specific to children/young people)

The study was an ethnographic one and the primary form of data was field notes. The researchers went for at least five half days every month to each school for two to three years, sitting in the classroom and being in the playground observing, interacting and taking notes. The researchers interacted with all the students, the teachers and the principal. They made sure that they did not interact more with the disabled children than the other children in the class. Each researcher established their role in slightly different ways:

> *We each used our backgrounds and personality to establish a role that was right for us, for the class teacher, and right for the class as a whole, and this has influenced the data we collected. Michael and I have backgrounds in education, and I have been a teacher, so we tended to be more interactive in the classroom than Berni, in particular took a fly on a wall approach and she has lots of very detailed field notes. She managed to observe some very interesting situations; the children had a really trusting relationship with her. We also engaged with teachers in different ways, again partly reflecting our own backgrounds. In the case of one student, the researcher became quite actively involved in supporting schools to deal with some very challenging issues. We needed to appreciate that the schools were willing to have us there, they were helping us to learn. It was important for the relationship to be reciprocal, if we could help we would. No one role was better than the other; it was important that we each established a role that was right for us. (MacArthur, Interview)*

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Semi-structured interviews were carried out each year with the children, their parents/caregivers, teachers and school principals. A range of response formats was used to interview the children; some were conversational interviews; some wrote their responses; some used animated cartoons on the computer; and one boy told the researcher things through the odd comment and by drawing pictures as responses to questions that were left with him. *"It was important to be flexible and to respect their rights and wishes. However, the primary data was field notes"* (MacArthur, Interview).

Analysis

The analysis has been an on-going process of trying to identify ideas coming out of other people's research or the literature and see how that fits with the data. Theoretically our work has been strongly influenced by developments in both Disability Studies and Childhood Studies. We have tried to bring together ideas from both fields, and to consider how our data fits with or departs from these. We have noticed, for example, that disabled children's perspectives on impairment and disability are not necessarily the same as adults'. We are exploring what this means for the social model of disability which has been very influential, but has emerged primarily out of the experiences of disabled adults. We have spent hours around the table working through the data thematically. It has taken a lot of time and a lot of discussion. It is an interactive process where we each contribute our own understandings from our own observations, and from our own background and experience. We were guided by our initial research questions on identity and we were clear at the outset that our emphasis was on identity. But when you are observing in the classroom you are struck by what needs writing about. Our focus did evolve, definitely. We used articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to critique disabled children's experiences of school and we have written that up in the article in the International Journal of Children's Rights. We are still working on the analysis relating to identity and transition, it is very complex. (MacArthur, Interview)

Reporting back and dissemination

There has been a reporting back session with each family and with the schools involved but not yet on the issue of identity as the analysis is ongoing.

We planned initially to take the data back to a focus group of older disabled young people who had been through the transition, 17 to 20 year olds, and to get their perspective on our data, reflecting back on their own experience. But now we are thinking of taking the data back to a focus group of the participants themselves for comment and to consult with them about dissemination and so allow them to be more active in the process of improving education. To do this we will need to take it back to the ethics committee. There are issues to do with anonymity to think through. (MacArthur, Interview)

Ethical issues

Consent was continually negotiated throughout the study:

We continually checked with the children throughout the study asking things like 'Is this going OK from your point of view' or 'is there anything you want me to change about the way I am in class?' The comfort of the children was very important to us and we were continually working on this, and looking at their body language. (MacArthur, Interview)

Sometimes we felt ourselves compromised. Sometimes we observed things that were disadvantaging students but we couldn't discuss it unless the student wanted it discussed. If the student said 'no' you had to leave it at that and sometimes that can be quite hard. On the other hand, there were times when we were able to work with the student and their teachers to improve a situation at school. It has been very clear to us that ethical issues are not addressed purely through ethical review at the beginning of a study. Unanticipated issues arose for all of us, illustrating how ethical research involves an ongoing process of critical review by researchers. If we were uncertain about an issue or event, we would discuss it with each other, return to our ethics guidelines, and work through it. (MacArthur, Interview)

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Insights and hindsight

The longitudinal nature of the project helped to build good relationships, trust and mutual interest with students and adults at school. These relationships enabled the researchers to collect the valuable data they did. The commitment and planning from the outset to highlight children's perspectives and prioritising these enabled children's perspectives to be secured. With hindsight:

> *We would be more interested in the planning stages in how we can involve children and young people in checking the analysis of the data and in the promotion of the findings in a way that enables them to change things for others in schools. When we designed our study in 2002 there was not such an emphasis on this. Hopefully, if we can take our findings back to the actual participants in our study, rather than to a focus group of others, we will have a better chance of disseminating our findings in ways that are respectful to their views and preferences. (MacArthur, Interview)*

Critical messages for this report

If researchers want to learn abut children's views and experiences you need to make that the focus from the beginning; from the outset you have to decide that this research is about children's perspectives. (MacArthur, Interview)

This research highlights the importance of longitudinal research for building relationships, collecting good quality data that highlight students' perspectives, and for tracking the influence of students' school experiences.

Questions that are raised

1. How can children and young people, disabled and non-disabled, be involved in the checking of the analysis of data and dissemination of findings?
2. What are the ethical implications of trying to be responsive to the impact of changing ideas about research practices?
3. How does the role that individual researchers construct affect the kinds of data that are generated or collected?
4. What should guide your response as a researcher when your commitment to respecting the wishes of children (eg, when they say no) comes into conflict with what you know would be in their best interest? (See ethical issues above.)

Other related references

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Young people with disabilities narrative exemplar

Ward, Angela R. (2007). *Students with disabilities talk about their friendships: A narrative inquiry.* A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, Massey University. Massey University: Palmerston North.

Interview details

Interviewer: Judith Loveridge
Interviewee: Angela Ward.
Note taker: Mimi Hodis

Background to study: who undertook research, funding; relationship to other research

The impetus for this research came from Ward's experiences as a teacher in a secondary school in New Zealand in the 1990s when mainstream teachers were being challenged in their thinking about Special Education. In particular it was the situation of one student who raised questions about the social relationships and friendships of students with disabilities that Ward then went on to pursue in her doctoral research. In adopting a narrative inquiry approach Ward also interrogated her own experiences as a child at school, a student teacher, a teacher, a parent and a researcher to locate herself in relation to the study and the students whose stories she heard whilst doing her research. Ward is a lecturer at Massey University College of Education.

Aims and objectives

Ward's fundamental research question was: "What is the nature of the social relationships and friendships of four students with disabilities in New Zealand; and what factors shape these relationships?" (Ward, 2007, p.1).

The goal of her study was "to expand knowledge regarding interaction, social relationships and friendships of students with disabilities by investigating their lived experience as told from their personal perspectives" (Ward, 2007, p.81).

Ward was also interested in shaping teachers' pedagogies: "I really hope that teachers will read the students' narratives and it will make them think about their pedagogies and how they facilitate and/or create barriers to students' relationships as well" (Ward, Interview).

Access, consent processes, role of parents, families and community

Ward sent a letter with a brief explanation of her research to the principals of 15 secondary schools, along with the research information sheet and an expression of interest form. Ward met with principals who expressed an interest in the research to outline the research and answer any questions. Letters for the board of trustees, the information sheet and an organisational consent form were also provided at this meeting. Through this process four schools were selected to take part in the research. Through consultation with relevant teachers, students who could be potential participants were identified, information sheets and consent forms were provided for the families. Meetings were arranged at each participant's home with the participant and their parents to discuss the research. Four students and their families, teachers, principals, teachers' aides and some of their friends consented to take part in the research by being interviewed. Ward asked each participating student to nominate a friend that she could approach about the research and the student signed a consent form indicating that the friend could be approached. The information sheet and expression of interest form were given to the friend by the liaison teacher. Written consent was obtained from the friends when Ward interviewed them. Once teachers had consented to Ward observing in their classroom, information letters for students and their parents/caregivers were provided explaining what Ward would be doing and giving them the option to request that Ward not take any notes about them/or their child. None of the children or parents requested this.

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In discussing the processes of gaining access to participants Ward commented on the importance of having a liaison person within each school for gaining access to participants and for helping with the logistics of the research:

One of the things that was useful about gaining access was having someone in the school as a liaison person, someone who knew the students who fitted the criteria for the research. We discussed possible participants and they had links to parents. They worked out the timetables for visiting classes, approached all the teachers and teacher aids to ask if they would be happy to have me observe in their classrooms and if they would be available to be interviewed. The liaison person was vital. I couldn't have done it without a liaison person. (Ward, Interview)

Data collection, tools, strategies

Field texts were generated through collecting students' stories by "audio taping the unstructured interviews/guided conversations using open-ended questions" (Ward, 2007, p.107). Tapes were transcribed by Ward as soon as possible after the interview and in the process of transcribing the tapes Ward began reflecting and making notes. The transcripts were then used as the basis for the subsequent conversation with the participants. *"The interviews became a type of conversation because I got to know the students and their context well. It became easy to follow their line of thought and I wove the questions into the conversations"* (Ward, Interview).

Field notes were written after the interviews, including notes about body language, descriptions of the context, anecdotes and reflections. *"A lot of the writing during the research process was useful for the analysis but I see that writing as part of the data collection as well"* (Ward, Interview). Field notes were written up during observations in the classrooms, hallways, playgrounds and canteens of the schools. *"Observations were really useful. I would have liked to have done more observations. Seeing the other students that the participants were talking about and putting their stories in context was really useful for getting a holistic picture"* (Ward, Interview).

Throughout the research, Ward kept a journal of her ongoing experience of the research and reflections on the analysis of the stories and observations. Various documents, including student reports, Invididual Education Plans (IEPs), school policies and prospectuses were collected, read and referred to in the process of analysing the stories.

Analysis

Ward provides a detailed account of the analysis. She explains "*From a narrative inquiry perspective analysis is on-going. You start the analysis right from the beginning*" (Ward, Interview). The analysis began with the first interviews. As tapes were transcribed and transcriptions were coded, Ward wrote responses and memos as she identified the emerging threads and patterns in the narratives. These formed part of what Ward refers to as her research narrative. Ward used the N6 version in the NUD*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing) series to organise the field texts, which included 78 transcribed interviews, notes and stories from observations, field notes, journal entries and documents. Repeated readings of the transcripts and the synthesised field texts contributed to the crafting of questions for the next interview. Reading and re-reading all this material she searched for themes, patterns and plot lines.

In presenting the students' stories, Ward wanted to "create evocative text that would focus on the essence of the experiences as well as engage the reader in a dialogic and reflective experience so I chose to represent the stories in poetic form" (Ward, 2007, p.129). In the process of restructuring the stories into poetic form Ward used editorial filtering, selecting stories that were pertinent to the research question, removing linking words, asides and text that were not central to the story but only using the students' words. A detailed description of the process used is provided in the appendices of the thesis.

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Ward presented her discussion of the students' stories as a narrative response to the students' stories, using the literary device of an unsent letter. In these letters she responded to aspects of the students' stories, drawing on the field texts, her research narrative (memos and a journal that were written during the analysis and relevant literature and research. "This enabled me to figuratively 'speak' to the students and to reflect in my analysis my being in relation to them as I responded to and interpreted their stories" (Ward, 2007, p.127).

Reporting back and dissemination

I didn't feed back to them in a formal written manner but throughout the research I was continually feeding back to them in the next interview. I did not give them transcripts of the interviews. I did not want to burden them with reading a lot or with being confronted by things they had said six months earlier. I made books for each student of their stories as they appear in the thesis. I think the way that we now work with students in research has moved on to an expectation that they will be more involved in analysis process. (Ward, Interview)

Ethical issues

Ward went through a complex University ethics approval process for her research but she emphasises:

In a narrative inquiry the ethical part is paramount; you are always aware of your relationship to the student. I was surprised at the sensitive issues the students raised, often their eyes would fill with tears but they were happy to keep talking and I really needed to respect that and be sensitive to and respectful of what they had said. (Ward, Interview)

On two occasions stories from a teacher and a teachers' aide ran counter to the stories of the students and two of the mothers told stories about incidents that the students themselves had not shared with Ward.

This raised a dilemma for me of 'whose story counted?' My decision to include each of these stories in my responses to each of the students was informed by the aim of my research to give a holistic crystallized narrative of the students' experiences. Critics might argue that the adult voice is being prioritised. However, this was not my intention which was instead to place these stories alongside the students' stories. (Ward, 2007, p.127)

In considering her ethical obligation not to harm her participants Ward wondered what impact the 'unsent letters' might have on the student and how they might interpret the inclusion of the competing stories of the teachers and parents. However, she made a conscious decision to include the stories. The students had consented to her talking to the teachers, teachers' aides and parents so were aware of this possibility and she was clear that these responses were her interpretation of stories she had been told.

One of the students who had participated in the research died after Ward had completed the third interview, about 18 months into the research. Ward did not hear about her death initially but when she did she contacted the school liaison person and she in turn contacted the mother on behalf of Ward. The mother indicated that she wanted Ward to continue with the research. Ward then contacted the mother and the mother shared the circumstances of her daughter's sudden death from pneumonia and reiterated her willingness to be interviewed again. Six months later Ward met with the mother: "*We had a very moving interview and she was very adamant that I continue with the research*" (Ward, Interview).

Insights and hindsight

Just listening to the students worked really well. Interviewing them over two years worked really well. I got to know them, I could analyse changes and as they got older they became more reflective. They also learnt a lot. That was an important part of the process. It was learning for them. I think some of the things we talked about influenced what they did. One boy in particular became more agentic. (Ward, Interview)

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With hindsight Ward thought that she would explore ways that students could be involved more in the analysis process.

Critical messages for this report

This research emphasises the importance of listening to students. It also emphasises the importance of doing so over an extended period of time so that relationships have time to build and there is the opportunity to reflect on changes. There is also a strong emphasis on the relational aspect within an ethic of care.

Questions that are raised

1. How can students be involved in the analysis in a way that is not a burden for them?
2. How should the accounts of multiple participants about a common incident be managed so as to respect what each participant has shared?

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

Judith Loveridge

Each section of this report has examined many issues of involving children and young people in research conducted in different educational settings, covering a great deal of detail and specific information relevant to different contexts. This final section moves beyond the detail of the various sections and the exemplars in providing an overview of key overarching themes that characterise the most crucial issues in doing research with children and young people.

Sinclair (2004) asserts that "Participation in practice has moved a long way in the past decade but, as is often the case in new ventures, each step forward alerts us to how much more we need to learn and understand to be effective whether as researchers, practitioners or policy-makers" (p. 116). Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) argue that as the field matures and recognises its relative immaturity, there will inevitably be more critical and reflexive reflection about decisions made at different points during the research process where children and young people are involved. Researchers must engage reflexively with the issues and problems that arise in those contexts in which they are working. They must also consider how their own biography as a researcher and received ways of doing things influence the choices they make about research design, research questions, ways of gaining access and consent, ideas and expectations about participants, choices about data-collection methods and analyses and what evidence is included or excluded from reported findings.

The field has moved beyond an initial, overt enthusiasm about children and young people's involvement as a panacea for what were considered to be problems in research with children and young people; today's discussions of these issues represent a more considered and measured response as well as recognition that participant involvement can also introduce elements of risk and harm. We caution, however, that the issues raised in this document reside very much within a particular moment and context—these will be supplanted by others in the future. Interestingly, there is nothing in this report about the involvement of children and young people in research involving experimental designs or intervention studies. It should be emphasised, of course, that today's ethical and informed consent protocols arose primarily from research traditions that are described as 'quantitative' and/or biomedical, designed to protect those involved in research from potential harm and to balance benefits with the inevitable possibility of harm that is present in any research endeavour. The relative absence of expanded discussions of these issues in some fields may be because additional complications are introduced by larger scale group designs; additional issues regarding conflicts of interest may also be inherent in educational intervention research just as is the case in biomedical intervention research. Whatever the reasons, the lack of emphasis on these issues in certain research traditions signals scope for further enhancement and enrichment of the concepts and processes for involving children and young people in research as the situation changes.

As researchers increasingly involve children and young people in research (rather than just talking as adults about how to do it), there is a growing willingness to be more open and transparent about what has actually happened in relation to different aspects of the research process. This is particularly so around gaining access and consent and methodologies used or modified during the research process. As we have noted throughout this report, processes around the analysis of data—particularly qualitative data—still remain largely invisible. These accounts and the exemplars show that actually doing research with children and young people involves a certain 'messiness'. Gaining access to participants does not always proceed as envisaged, the measures or tools do not necessarily work in the ways that were anticipated, full data sets may not be obtained owing to school activities taking precedence or data getting lost, and so on—these are only some of the complications that can have an impact on the sources of evidence in research. The literature suggests that in light of this ‘messiness’, researchers must be attentive and responsive to what they observe, hear and apprehend throughout the research process; be willing to consult with children and young people and members of their communities, including being sensitive to cultural perspectives and values; and be prepared to be flexible and adaptable so as to offer children and young people ways of participating that respect individual and group differences. Being transparent and accountable about each aspect of the research process (which is not as tidy as text books about research sometimes suggest) and about the adaptations made, will benefit other researchers as they design research projects. This transparency can also engender respect and willingness in children and young people to be involved in ongoing and future research (Bishop, 2008; see also *Secondary school mixed methods* and *Secondary school mixed methods action research exemplars*).

Another theme common across all sections of the report is that involving children and young people in research requires substantial time and resources, more so than usually anticipated. Funding processes do not always take into consideration the time needed to build trust, to consult with and involve children and young people in meaningful ways, to work in culturally respectful ways, to develop and trial appropriate measures or tools, or the resources needed to support children and young people’s participation, including appropriate places in which to work. Ethical review processes also do not typically reflect timing issues, nor do they allow for the tensions arising from research approaches that require consulting with children and young people for their input before determining details of the research approach and gaining ethical approval.

After an initial burst of enthusiasm for including children and young people in all aspects of research, a more measured position is emerging that recognises that it may not be appropriate to involve children and young people in all aspects. Projects may be driven by agenda that are set by adults, agencies, and/or policy directives as well as by previous research findings. It is also possible that children and young people may be willing to participate but not be particularly interested in being involved in all aspects. Research involvement may also become a burden for children and young people (as well as for family members who are supporting them in the role). Fitzgerald and Graham (2008) reflect that their research with young people about participation has required them “to suspend our judgements about whether and to what extent young people want a ‘choice’ or ‘voice’ (or both)” (p. 67). Their findings and those of Badham (2004) indicate that young people are very keen to see evidence that their engagement in processes of consultation and decision-making has mattered and has not been tokenistic. Similarly, the research literature suggests that it is important to share research findings with participants to engender a sense that their contribution has been recognised and valued and has potentially been transformative. Fitzgerald and Graham found that young people did “not always want to participate as researchers, preferring instead an advocacy or advisory role providing feedback and ongoing consultation” (2008, p. 71). A number of researchers are pointing to the benefits of including children on advisory boards and to consult with them throughout the entire research process, including about effective dissemination of findings. As noted, ironically, constraints arising from limited funding and ethical review requirements may make it particularly challenging to incorporate the participation of children and young people in advisory roles into the design of research projects.

A related theme also emerging across the different sections of the report is the perceived benefits of intergenerational projects. In some of the literature in this area, the argument has been made (similar to early feminist arguments) that children and young people—not adults—should do research with children and young people. Nairn, Munro and Smith (2005) reflect on the importance of the age of the researcher and argue that there are benefits accruing from the involvement of both adults and young people working together in research. Fitzgerald and Graham (2008) also reflect positively on the combination of young people working with skilled adult research partners; they report that young people talked about “the importance of ‘discussion’ with adults, citing the opportunities that conversation opens up for affirming, challenging and developing them as people” (p. 68). Fielding (2004) reflects on different approaches to student voice and argues that “the importance for transformation is more likely to reside in arrangements, which require the active engagement of students and teachers working in partnership than in those that either exclude teachers or treat student voice as an instrument of teacher or state purpose" (p. 306). Mannion (2007) too argues for the need to reframe 'listening to children' and children's participation so that the lived experience of children and adults is better reflected. He argues that the socio-spatial aspects of these processes and child/adult relations needed to be included in analyses: "We need to 'go relational' and 'spatial' if we are to 'get real' when researching lives of children because children's lives are interdependent with the lives of adults" (p. 406).

The interdependence of children's and young people's lives with others has also been a recurring theme. They do not live as independent, isolated individuals but are embedded within or at least connected to the lives and relationships of their immediate and extended families, peers, other adults such as teachers, and their communities. The implications of this interconnectedness, and the multiple dimensions that may contribute to a child's or young person's sense of identity, must be incorporated into thinking about if, how, when and why to involve children and young people in research. Another consistent theme within the literature is that research should be of benefit to children and young people either directly or indirectly. Many findings of research are predicated, in fact, not on perceived benefits to the participants but on assumed future benefits to others and the wider society. Nevertheless, researchers may need to pay increased attention to how research can enable children and young people to learn more and how they may personally benefit from the process of being involved in research.

Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) reflect many of the points that have emerged in this report as part of methodological discussions. Concerned about the uncritical ways that participatory research techniques have been taken up and the claims that have been made about them, they suggest that it may be useful to think about participatory research as having methodological immaturity. Thus, it has potential and is in a state of becoming, not yet arrived. They argue that:

> For us, what matters is not so much the methods used but the ways and the spirit in which they are used: the methodological *attitude* taken. Good research practice cannot be reduced to ingenious techniques, planned in advance and carefully applied. Research is inherently unpredictable: the best laid plans are liable to go awry. Methodological immaturity privileges open-ended process over predefined technique. (p.513)

Clearly it is an exciting moment to be engaged with involving children and young people in research. Time and reflexivity are of the essence to ensure that researchers can ethically navigate each phase and aspect of the research process in the contexts in which they are working.

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