
Comment

An emphasis on critical thinking, a questioning of taken for granted assumptions, and rights-based thinking are framings for many of the articles in this issue.

The Disney movie, *Frozen*, is popular with young children; it contains powerful messages that children absorb but which have rarely been brought to the surface in relation to young children's play. Janette Kelly-Ware sets out to analyse messages about gender within this movie, exemplifying its impact in a kindergarten setting. She describes a vignette of a boy acting out the role of Elsa from the movie; and another of a boy refusing to dance to a song from *Frozen* because "it's a girl's song". Each vignette reveals different issues related to gender performativity, which Kelly-Ware defines as "a key aspect of gender relations involve[ing] the repetition of certain ways of saying, being and doing" that over time and with repetition form identity. A main message is that this can be limiting when teachers, parents, and children accept gender as a fixed framework and do not recognise possibilities inherent in "doing gender".

A commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and an associated understanding of young children as citizens underpins Jenny Ritchie and Jared Lambert's research and advocacy for children's civic action to be recognised and encouraged within early childhood settings. Their article analyses data from Katoa Kindergarten in Porirua where "pedagogical approaches implemented by the New Zealand teachers created a climate that was rich with examples

of young children's civic action." They offer many examples of civic action that were categorised in one of two domains as "child-led" or "intentional teaching". Both were a powerful means for promoting civic action in this kindergarten and supported a shift to a complex view of citizenship that entailed children enacting civic care and responsibility.

EJ White and team, in "Pedagogical Dialogues with 2 Year Olds in 'Preschool' Settings", address a somewhat under-researched topic and one that is worthy of investigation as increasing numbers of 2 year olds are being enrolled in early childhood centres that traditionally catered for 3 and 4 year olds. The article presents findings from a TLRI study that makes use of multiple cameras from multiple standpoints to capture different visual perspectives on the same events. The researchers used dialogic methodology to analyse verbal and non-verbal language forms and their meanings. Their intriguing findings are used to highlight the powerful role teachers can play through for example, offering a strong language model, paying attention to non-verbal cues, including watching, and providing rich interactions in flexible learning environments.

Loran Duley, Tara McLaughlin, and Alison Sewell carried out a collaborative action research project in which they aimed to explore teaching practices to more effectively support children's prosocial behaviour and social development. The setting was a private ECE centre. The project involved innovative use of puppets in two strategies. In the first strategy, children were presented with a social conflict scenario, and invited to help the puppets solve the conflict

with the use of prosocial strategies. The second strategy involved teachers prompting children's thinking about how they resolved social conflict in the "puppet hui" when conflict occurred naturally during the children's play.

Health, safety, and risk-taking are foregrounded in two articles. The first, by Sue Stover, examines tree climbing as curriculum from a survey in ten early learning centres in the greater Auckland area. Children in these centres climbed trees regularly either on their own site or on their regular outside excursions. As well as enabling children to experience nature, tree climbing was identified as having many benefits that ranged from strengthening dispositions, such as perseverance and concentration, to gains in physical development and co-operation with others. The roles of teachers were carefully

elaborated, and rules constructed for each setting were discussed. Stover draws attention to the 2017 *Tē Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) which highlights the value of "risky" play, and presents some challenges for teachers and managers in navigating the complex issues in tree climbing.

Finally, Susan Bates's article "Early Childhood Teacher Health and Wellbeing: Rights, Risks and Implications" is a review of research on teacher health which shows that "the health risks to ECE teachers are multiple and often serious. They include musculoskeletal injuries and conditions, exposure to numerous infections, reproductive health issues, hearing and voice strain, as well as deterioration of mental health and burnout." The article is framed in reference to human rights promoted by the World Health

Organization, the United Nations, and the International Labour Organization. It offers a salutary warning of the repercussions if health risks are not addressed, and the need for good management and teacher knowledge.

Linda Mitchell

Editor

Reference

Ministry of Education. (2017). *Tē whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa—Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington: Author.

EARLY CHILDHOOD FOLIO SPECIAL ISSUE

Call for Papers

People, places and things: Implications for New Zealand's strategic plan for early learning.

Guest Editor Sonja Arndt and Editor Linda Mitchell

Early Childhood Folio is seeking articles for this special issue. It follows the University of Waikato Early Years Research Centre annual teachers' conference of the same name, and the publication of the government's draft strategic plan for early learning. This issue seeks articles that are research-based and that highlight implications for the development of the strategic plan.

Articles should follow the guidelines for writers for *Early Childhood Folio* and be submitted for this special issue by 10 January 2019.

Author guidelines are available on the NZCER site <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/nzcerpress/early-childhood-folio> or email the guest editor sonja.arndt@waikato.ac.nz

