That child needs a good listening to! Reviewing effective interview strategies

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Abstract

This paper provides a review of effective methods for interviewing young and vulnerable groups of children and the influence of their voices on decision-making from the English-speaking literature. Very few studies are designed to address questions of effectiveness. Of those that do, there is evidence to suggest that interviews with young children are enhanced by the use of activity- and computer-based techniques. Quite young children can participate successfully in interviews though their responses are affected by question format. Age, gender and family circumstances will also be an influence. Descriptive-analytical studies in the family, educare and social welfare context suggest that a range of multi-method techniques is being employed to access children's views and that these may be beginning to influence decision-making. Not all young children are as yet asked for their views though involvement increases with age. The impact these have on policy, however, may be less certain. Children want their views to be listened to and treated with genuine consideration, nevertheless, and may not necessarily be upset or offended by questions probing sensitive areas. The current emphasis on widening children's opportunities to talk, however, may risk creating a culture in which children are expected to talk. Extending the range of documented themes to include child survival, renegotiation of parenthood or children and violence that better encompass global issues are discussed.

Introduction

This study was commissioned by an English local authority serving a large multi-racial and ethnically diverse city area. The aim was to review the range and effectiveness of methods of listening to and consulting with young children under twelve years and, more specifically, the early childhood phase (birth to eight years). The focus was young children's views and key experiences of families, pre-school and school provision and, in the case of vulnerable groups, of services related to care and protection, they received.

The principle objectives were to examine:

*   *Methodology*: different approaches used in research with and consultation for listening to young children and evidence for their effectiveness;

*   *Impact*: evidence gained on children's experiences and priorities in relation to the impact of listening on practitioners, parents and young children themselves, where this existed, in order to challenge the relevance of services (education, care and welfare services) to their needs, aspirations and wants.

Given the current impact on children of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa through family illness and death, poverty and malnutrition with consequent denial of access to healthcare and education and/or the need to provide full-time parental care, the topic of listening to young children by practitioners, policy makers and academics has a growing relevance and importance in the South African context (United States Agency for International Development, 2000).

Background

Recent times have seen an increasing interest in accessing and understanding children's perspectives on their own lives that have legal, political, economic and academic origins. Suffice it to say that whilst at the statutory level, legal instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (1996), and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) have been far-reaching and possess a wide scope for action, local government structures may provide a more appropriate context and level for the development of granted and exercised rights for child participation. In this context, children as well as parents become clients of the services they receive and, as such, have independent views about improvement of these.

As well as practical and ethical dimensions to the development of child- or young person-centred approaches, there has been a significant conceptual or theoretical contribution to the debate from the sociology of childhood to our growing understanding of childhood and youth. From this perspective, children and young people are being seen as 'social actors', actively

constructing (and reconstructing) themselves in different social contexts (James and Prout, 1997). The implications of this are that children are active in constructing their own social worlds, thinking about and understanding the meaning and significance of their own personal lives. A methodology is required that places the child at the centre of focus, recognizing their social relationships and cultures as worthy of study in their own right. Mayall (1996) has argued that this approach needs three components: first conceptualising and accepting young children as competent reporters of their own experiences; second, giving children voice means taking them seriously and placing their views at the centre of the analysis; and third, aiming to work *for* children not *on* them in order to influence social change.

The review of evidence for effective methods of interviewing such children and the impact of children's voices on local policy making was thus informed by three key questions that focused the present work.

Questions

The first two questions were oriented towards methodology:

• what are effective practices of engaging with young children?
• what range of approaches are being used?

The third was oriented towards children's participation in decision-making in their lives:

• how and in what contexts can the voices of children be used to influence the development of policy?

Methodology

The research questions provided a framework for the subsequent stages. They determined the kinds of studies to be reviewed and, thus, helped to make explicit key characteristics that the review was able to answer. Once the questions had been made explicit, the characteristics were then set out in a number of statements that were called *inclusion* and *exclusion criteria.* The following criteria were used.

Included were:

▸   Papers reporting studies conducted in or after 1987;
▸   Papers written in English (reported studies conducted predominantly across England and Wales, though some studies from other English-speaking countries were included);
▸   Papers reporting an empirical study;
▸   Papers focusing on children from birth to five years, though papers referring to children up to twelve years were also consulted.

Excluded were:

▸   Papers about forensic interviewing, related to child abuse (that is, concerned with the use of leading questions, 'false memory' and sexually explicit material);
▸   Papers referring to young people over twelve years;
▸   Papers about interviewing children where reference to methods was omitted or insubstantial;
▸   Short reviews and summaries of existing research;
▸   Literature not subjected to peer-review;
▸   Papers providing only commentary or opinion of existing research.

Definitions

Search terms were as follows:

'interviewing children'; 'interviewing vulnerable children';
'children's opinions'; 'children's views'; 'children's voices' ;
'using children's opinions'; 'using children's views';
'engaging with children';
'listening to children';
'consulting children';
'children's perceptions';
'children's perspectives'.

Electronic data bases searched were as follows:

Database	Number of References:
Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts	269
Social Services Abstracts	139
Sociological Abstracts	334
Medline	681
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	201
Child Poverty Action Group	44
Web of Science	102

A number of other people, organizations and websites were also consulted.

Once the studies to be included had been determined, the next step was to obtain copies of the relevant papers through a process of library visits, including other University collections, private sources such as the National Children's Bureau and interlibrary loan. A data extraction proforma was used as the basis for constructing the review for the thirty-two included studies that were then grouped into two main categories according to design: small controlled studies (six papers or 18%); and descriptive-analytical studies (twenty-six papers or 82%). The controlled studies addressed review question 1, oriented towards effective interviewing strategies and the descriptive-analytical studies addressed questions 2 and 3, providing vivid and innovative examples of interview techniques, as well as being oriented towards children's participation. The next section reports the findings from this review process, using these categories. Examples are drawn from the review of a literature that is mainly from England and Wales, with some contributions from New Zealand and North America, thus, representing 'first world childhood' The implications of this will be re-examined in the closing section.

Effective methods of questioning

The first group of studies considered the influence of different questioning conditions and different question formats, as well as the age, gender and differential family experience of the respondents, on children's responses.

Conditions for questioning

Wesson and Salmon (2001) examined the effectiveness of drawing and re-enactment as a means of facilitating verbal reports about emotionally-laden events of sixty children aged five and eight years in one of three interview conditions: drawing and telling; re-enacting and telling; or simply telling. For children of each age group, drawing and re-enactment enhanced the amount of information reported relative to a verbal interview. Furthermore, drawing and re-enactment elicited a greater number of items of descriptive information than did the verbal interview.

Priestley and Pipe (1997) complemented this study by examining the conditions under which toys and model items facilitated children's accounts of personally-experienced events. One hundred and nine, five- to six-year-old children were interviewed about an event in which they had participated (visiting a pirate). Experiment 1 varied the similarity of the props (small-scale models or toys) to the items from the event while Experiment 2 and 3 varied the number of model items and the method of their presentation. Results showed that increasing the physical similarity of the props to items from the event, adding spatial layout cues (setting out props in the same spatial arrangement as the items they represented from the original event), or increasing the number of props provided, enhanced the facilitative effects on children's accounts.

Powell, Clare and Hasty (2002), by contrast, compared the effectiveness of conventional verbal techniques with a computerized assessment tool designed to provide interviewers with knowledge of children's understanding of spatial, temporal, numerical and coloured items that might be relevant to any clinical setting. The effect of the computer programme (compared to a standard verbal assessment or no assessment at all) was examined on four- to five-year-old children's recall of an independent event and their enjoyment of the interview process. Overall, the children rated the assessment conducted on the computer more favourably though the verbal assessment elicited responses that were

more consistent with their responses about the event than the computerized assessment. However, there was no difference in the accuracy and detail of children's responses about the independent event, irrespective of whether the children received the computerized or verbal assessment, or no assessment.

These studies suggest that young children's responses can be enhanced by the use of drawing, enactment and props, and that assisted methods add to their enjoyment.

Question format

Waterman, Blades and Spencer (2001) randomly selected one hundred and twenty-eight five- to nine-year-olds and twenty-three adults, who were told two short stories and then asked questions about the stories. Half of the questions posed were answerable based on the information provided; the other half were not answerable. Within these categories, half of the questions were closed questions (requiring only a yes/no answer) and half were 'wh' questions (why, what, where, who or when) that requested particular details to be provided. All participants performed at ceiling with answerable questions. With the unanswerable questions, there was an effect of format. The majority of children and adults correctly indicated that they did not know the answer when asked unanswerable wh-questions. The majority of children, however, and just over one-fifth of adults, provided a response to the closed (that is, yes/no) unanswerable questions. It was concluded that when children and even adults, are interviewed, interviewers should be cautious in their use of closed questions. Where possible open questions or wh-questions should be used. If closed questions are necessary, then follow-up questions may be necessary to check the interviewee is not attempting to answer a question to which they do not know the answer.

Peterson and Biggs (1997) also looked at wh-questions (which request specific information) and yes/no questions that merely require confirmation or denial. From the emergency room of a children's hospital, they recruited ninety-two thirteen-year-olds for interviews on the subject of traumatic injuries necessitating hospital treatment. The interview consisted of free recall ("Tell me what happened when you hurt yourself?") and probed recall (consisting of open-ended and specific wh-questions). Yes/no questions were problematic for preschoolers. All children were usually accurate when they said "yes", although two-year-olds were significantly less so. Children's "no" answers

were problematic and preschoolers' "no" answers no more accurate than by chance. A possible explanation advanced was that young children say "yes" when they are certain of their answer but if at all uncertain, they are biased towards saying "no". This bias declined sharply as children reached school age and continued to decrease as children got older. Overall, it is clear that open-ended questions should be used with young children, where possible, and that closed questions may need to be explored with follow-up probes.

Respondent characteristics

Hay, Zahn-Waxler, Cummings and Iannotti (1992) also used props to interview forty, five-year-olds about conflict with peers, based on a simulated dispute between two glove puppets. In this case, children's recommendations about tactics to be used in resolving conflicts were affected by gender and experience of being cared for by a depressed mother. Girls in general recommended more socialized tactics than boys did. It was concluded that five-year-olds hold a systematic set of beliefs about conflict with their peers that transcend gender and differential family experience but, at the same time, the general approach they take to solving this sort of social problem, and the coherence between their recommendations and their actual behaviour, are sensitive to the family experiences associated with maternal depression.

It is clear from this small group of studies that both factors in the context and process of interviewing, as well as characteristics of the young children themselves will influence the type, accuracy and detail of responses made and that methods used will require very careful planning to ensure the most effective outcome. The next section considers the range of methods of listening to young children generated by the descriptive-analytical studies.

Interview approaches

Multiple methods

The 'mosaic approach' of Clark and Moss (2001) for listening to three- and four-year-olds in pre-school settings, used multi-method and participatory techniques to combine visual with verbal approaches, including mapping and modelling, drawing and collage, taking photographs, child-to-child interviews, drama and puppetry. Children and adults co-constructed meaning through

observation, active listening, gathering documentation, interpreting and responding. Wing (1995) also used participant observation and in-depth interviews to explore kindergarten, first and second grade children's perceptions of classroom activities that they believed would be included in a book that the researcher was writing.

The Daycare Trust (1998) employed multi-method approaches, too, in three nurseries by inviting suggestions for making a teddy enjoy nursery, offering paper and pens to make drawings and a Polaroid camera to take pictures. Ensuing conversations were then tape-recorded.

Evans and Fuller (1996; 1998) also sought children's perspectives on nursery class experience through role-play, using push-button telephones to take part in an open, tape-recorded conversation with a researcher, focusing on why they attended nursery school.

Bond (1995) elicited what three young users of family centres thought of services provided in the context of telling a new child what to expect at the centre and how it could be improved, using drawings and captioned photographs.

Listen and talk conversations

Others, such as Farrell, Tayler, Tennent and Gahan (2002) have employed a conversational style to comment on their experiences and possible advice that might be given to a new friend (pictured) entering the service in order to have a good time. Cousins (1999) also adopted a 'listen and talk' conversational approach and role-play interviews to find out how new school entrants might help adults plan their educare.

Participatory techniques

Thomas and O'Kane (1998a and 1998b; 1999a and 1999b; 2000a and 2000b) drew directly on 'participatory' methods where concrete and tactile techniques have been found to appeal in exploring the participation in decision-making of children eight years and over. One method created a 'chart of decisions' by generating the names of significant adults along the top of a grid, identifying key decisions in the lives to place down the side, and selecting a red, yellow or

green sticker to indicate whether they had 'no say', 'some say' or 'a lot of say' in making the decision concerned. Other methods generated a 'story of a day' with choices made in its course and drawing of a favourite place or something feared, such as depicting a review meeting or social worker. The 'pot of beans' for rating the amount children participated (one for 'not much', two for 'a little' and three for 'a lot') and 'decision chart' proved powerful. In group sessions, games, wall-posters, drawings, jigsaws, panel discussions and role-play were also used to explore social work practice with children.

Combining interviews with other techniques

Farnfield and Kaszap (1998) supplemented semi-structured interviews for children seven years and over with prompts such as flow charts, eco-maps identifying key family members and the nature of their relationship with the target child, as well as sentence completion book and attitude scale. Smith, Gollop and Taylor (1998) asked children to describe verbally or draw the people with whom they lived in order to stimulate talking about living situations.

Shemmings (1996) also reported working with vulnerable children using a mixture of semi-structured, audio-taped interviews and questionnaires to ascertain reactions to case conferences. Butler, Scanlan, Robinson, Douglas and Murch (2002) explored views concerning divorce, using interviews and a range of other data collected using an activity book. Morrow (1989), too, used structured activities for twelve-year-olds to draw and write on 'who is important to me in the family', sentence completion, questionnaires and group discussions. Wade and Smart (2002), meanwhile, listened to the views of children of six to seven years and nine to ten years on parental separation through small focus groups where issues were explored from a hypothetical perspective. This was followed up by interviews exploring their own personal experiences.

Finally, Fisher and Johnson (1990) asked seven- and nine-year-olds to tell four stories concerned with interpersonal family conflict: child angry with mother; child angry with father; mother angry at child; father angry at child. They were, then, questioned individually by an interviewer who had recorded their stories.

Semi-structured interviews

Smith (1995) also used semi-structured interviews to explore views of children from five to twelve years on playcare. Strickland-Clarke, Campbell and Dallos (2000) used semi-structured interviews to investigate children's views on family therapy involvement. In this case, sessions were replayed on videotape to assist children's memory and they were invited to describe how they were feeling. Reich and Kaplan (1994) used interviews for children six to twelve years about the effects of psychiatric and psychosocial interviews. Boswell (2002) explored the parenting role of imprisoned fathers with children from three to nineteen years through interviews.

In general, multiple-method activity approaches have been successfully adapted for talking with and listening to very young children, though focus groups, conventional interview and questionnaire methods are increasingly common as the middle years of childhood are reached.

Key themes

The topics for research and consultation with children are wide-ranging though three key themes emerged from the review of children's views: the family; pre-school and school provision; and services they received.

The family

Morrow (1989) found that children had an accepting, inclusive view of what counts as a family and it emerged that love, care, mutual respect and support were key characteristics. The centrality to children of parents, especially mothers, as providers of physical and emotional care, was clear from their accounts. Girls in particular described their mothers as important as someone to talk to.

Wade and Smart (2002) explored parental separation and drew the conclusion that there was no single type of family that experiences divorce and change since the processes of divorce and separation take different forms in different cultures. Butler, Scanlan, Robinson, Douglas and Murch (2002) suggested that children experience parental divorce as a crisis in their lives but that they are able to mobilise internal/external resources to gain a new point of view.

Boswell (2002) examined the particular separation involved with imprisoned fathers. Responses did not fit into neat categories, some children were old enough to have formed judgements about their father, others were still pre-occupied with emotions. None was untouched and all would have preferred not to have been in this situation. Most appreciated any opportunities for contact and would have liked more. All looked forward to their father's return. The need for more normalising child and family visiting was considered.

Fisher and Johnson (1990) investigated changing views of family conflict. In general, family conflict themes of childhood concerned the failure of children to fulfil social obligations, the inadequacy of parental helping behaviours and, to a lesser degree, children's disappointment at the frequency of parent-child association. Helping behaviour and social obligations, however, dominated family conflict stories.

The importance of adult involvement and emotional support threads through children's accounts.

Pre-school and school provision

Young pre-school children in the Clark and Moss (2001) study were asked about their everyday experiences in the setting: the routines, the role of children and adults, the activities and the premises. Children talked about practitioners as well as other children being their friends. They felt that it was important for adults to keep order and help them feel safe, as well.

Children in the Daycare Trust study (Day Trust, 1998) also thought their friends provided a support system and talked about looking after their friends. As shown in the previous family context, feeling safe and loved was important. Some children liked adults to help them to do things and to play with them and were proud of things they had made and done for themselves, for instance, they liked being able to get a drink when they wanted. The garden was among their favourite activities.

Children in the Evans and Fuller study (Evans and Fuller, 1996; Evans and Fuller, 1998) were asked for the reasons they advanced for attending nursery. Their reasons included play, conforming (having to), being unaware (not knowing why), practical, domestic and educational as well as self-gratifying (pleasing them).

Children in the Wing study (Wing, 1995) thought about classroom pursuits in terms of work and play. Distinctive elements, like the previous study, included the obligatory nature of activities, also included was the cognitive and physical effort required, the involvement and evaluation of the teacher, and the fun children experienced whilst engaged in activities. They also saw some activities as 'in-between' work and play.

As other studies showed, overwhelmingly relationships were of fundamental importance to children in the Cousins study (Cousins, 1999). They enjoyed being in school and liked teachers. They liked calm people and calm settings. They did not like being laughed at, shouting and being bullied. They liked playing with their friends, having fun and freedom to explore, playing outside, cooking food and eating together. They also liked finding out about all sorts of different things and different people. They had curiosity about science, were motivated to learn to read and had a need to 'natter'. They were beginning to write, role play with real money in a shop, build with bricks and make patterns and shapes, paint, collage, construct lots of models and choose art materials.

Children in the Farrell, Tayler, Tennent and Gahan (2002) study believed that they attended their child and family centre to learn to do things and to prepare for the future. Positive aspects mentioned by younger children included play equipment and by older children, specific subjects, activities and people. Negative aspects focused on adverse behaviour of other children. Younger children would advise a newcomer about fun activities and older children about knowledge of and compliance with instructional rules and protocols. Bond's children felt family centres provided opportunities for social contacts, sharing problems and gaining in confidence (Bond, 1995). They also provided for children's social development and offered a safe play-space. The majority of Smith's (Smith, 1995) 'playcare' children liked the opportunity to attend after-school and holiday clubs. Such centres allowed them to meet and play with friends, using centre equipment, take part in activities and have fun. Views were divided as to whether such centres should operate on a 'free play', 'semi-structured' or 'unstructured' basis. Clearly children liked some control over what they did and when they did it, valuing choice and independence.

As in the previous section, the studies highlighted the importance attached to relationships with adults and other children as well as the social and educational opportunities provided by educare settings outside the home.

Social and care services received

In the Thomas and O'Kane studies (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998a and b; Thomas and O'Kane, 1999a and b; Thomas and O'Kane, 2000a and b), more 'looked after' children in the eight to eleven years age groups were felt to be attending social care reviews and planning meetings that concerned them but the likelihood of their attendance varies with age and other factors. The overwhelming reaction to the involvement of children and young people in case conferences was positive. The young people, whilst not wishing to be upset in the meeting, did not necessarily regret going to the conference. They did, however, express clear views on how they could have been better 'emotionally prepared' before the meeting to reduce or minimise their discomfort as well as helped afterwards to make sure that they had understood what had been decided. Children did not like adults arguing in the case conference, especially if the disagreements were between professionals and their parent or carer. Quite a few young people thought that their views had not always been sought. Although they did not always want to speak, they said that they wanted to be given the opportunity to do so. A number of children felt that although they had been present, they had not really participated. Some children would have preferred to have had someone 'independent' in the meeting to give them support and encouragement.

Smith, Gollop and Taylor (1998) attempted to ascertain the most effective way of involving children in decisions concerning their lives by examining intervention in children's lives following expressed care and protection concerns. More than half said that they did not know or understand why they were in care, although sometimes this conflicted with the caregiver's or social worker's view. The majority showed some confusion about roles of the professionals, agencies and processes that affected their lives. Most appeared to have been consulted on decisions about their lives in relation to where they lived or their contact with birth families but not all children were asked for their views by those making the decisions.

Farnfield and Kaszap (1998) investigated children's views of professional help. Four major themes concerning the 'helpful adult' appeared: general qualities; counselling skills, ethical stance; and the ability to make things happen (helpful outcomes). The unhelpful adult was categorized in terms of: physical behaviour; verbal behaviour; social behaviour; and attitudes. An important finding was that the profession of the adult mattered far less than whether or not they possessed the qualities of the helpful adult.

Strickland-Clark, Campbell, and Dallos (2000) investigated vulnerable children's views on their involvement in family therapy Common themes emerged: being heard/not feeling heard; coping with challenges; bringing back memories; concern about relations with other family members; needing support in sessions; expecting to be judged; viewing sessions with apprehension; feeling misunderstood; having difficulty in saying what they were feeling. Indeed, the analysis clarified that 'being heard' was a key category for the children. Reich and Kaplan (1994) also interviewed children about the effects of psychiatric and psychosocial interviews. Positive responses were received to all aspects, and no negative effects were reported. Most interviews were enjoyed. None indicated they would withdraw because of the questions they were asked. Interestingly, children were not upset or offended by psycho-social questions.

Beyond vulnerable groups, there was evidence of the participation of children in services that affect their lives. Chapman, Emerson, Gough, Mepani and Road (2000), for example, consulted groups of children and young people in London on their views concerning decision-making related to health matters. A wide range of messages for decision-makers on health matters was generated. They wanted better information in more accessible language, reduced pollution, better housing, action against drugs, smoking and drinking, and improved safety.

Overall, despite the sensitive areas involved, children wanted to be consulted about key decisions affecting their lives though a need to be properly prepared and supported was also indicated. Here, as in previous sections, the importance of sensitive and helpful adults is highlighted.

Impact

With respect to the impact of listening to individual children, some children, as noted in the Morrow study (Morrow, 1989), felt listened to in their families. However, others did not. In terms of specific crises, the Wade and Smart study (Wade and Smart, 2002), for instance, indicated that the focus on the identifiable transition in divorce obscures understanding of profoundly different experiences of family life and transitions. Children, it was felt, needed real rather than token choices in this process.

With respect to the impact of listening on practitioners, the value of one-off contacts to 'ascertain' their views, it was thought, was highly questionable and met legal process rather than the needs of children. Working with children, it was concluded, is a skilled activity and many young children prefer play-based methods rather than talk. Children themselves pointed out that having fun and being cheered up are essential ingredients in managing change. Overall, divorce is one of many separation problems that some children face. When parents are unable to help, children's most accessible source of support is from other family members and friends. Children are highly discriminating about accepting outside help. They want their views to be listened to and treated with genuine consideration, and they also appreciate having things being done for them.

With respect to the impact of listening on institutions outside the home, although many children prefer to keep their family lives private when in school, schools can play a significant role in promoting children's agency and providing a contact point for the dissemination of information. Boswell (2002) also identified the need for schools to develop supporting strategies.

Farrell, Tayler, Tennent and Gahan (2002) concluded that children's lived experience contributed to new knowledge and to the development of democratic communities in which children and families were free to participate. The extent to which this knowledge is actually having an impact at the strategic and policy level is less certain. However, it should be remembered, as noted by Wade and Smart (2002), that widening opportunities for children to 'talk' may benefit some children at the risk of creating a culture in which they are expected to talk.

Conclusions

With respect to review question 1, a small number of controlled studies highlighted the importance of question format, the use of enactment, play props, drawing and computer-based approaches, as well as the potential influence of age, gender and family circumstances on young children's responses in interviews. With respect to review question 2, the larger number of identified studies provided evidence of young children's increasing involvement in the major decisions being taken in their lives. Paradoxically, it was the controlled studies using children as subjects in manipulated conditions with their responses being measured that provided the evidence of effective

interview strategies. This contrasted with the rich descriptive-analytical studies that positioned children's perspectives in the foreground. The extent to which children's solicited views actually influence policy-making is less clear. From the perspective of children's rights to participation, however, these studies do begin to uncover for critical examination factors that influence views concerning children's exercised participation in areas of life where traditionally adults have made decisions on their behalf. Increasing children's opportunities to talk, however, may carry the real danger of creating a culture in which children are expected to talk. Hopefully, such investigations will make some small contribution to establishing the importance and promotion of exercised rights by children. That said, it should be noted that this is review of literature that carries assumptions about the nature of a child and childhood that are protected and 'schooled'. This view of the child is contested by globalization that generates a different set of themes, such as child survival, renegotiation of parenthood or children and violence, even the disappearance of childhood and where 'love' and 'safety' cannot be presupposed.

The review goes some way in identifying effective methods for gathering children's key views and experiences. The challenge is now to consider how and in what context the voices of 'unequal' children, street children or working children, for instance, can be used to influence the development of policy for those living in more challenging social, cultural and political circumstances.

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