

What does it mean for early childhood educators to support young children to access their CRC rights?

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A voice for young children

SEASONS OF CHANGE EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2014

In this session:

- Background
- Historic image of child/parent
- CRC change of image of child
- What does this mean for ECE?



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The study question:

- What factors influence/impact on adults' enactment of young children's rights in the family as outlined in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child?

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Article 12 UNCRC

- Respect for the views of the child

“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”



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In relation to article 12

- “one of the most widely violated and disregarded in almost every sphere of children's lives” (Shier, 2001 p. 108).



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Historical images of children

- “Children under Roman and Common law described as incapable of legal speech, incapable of harm, incapable of wrongful intent, mentally disabled and mentally disordered”

McGillivray 2011



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Historical image of parents

Dominant Discourse

- Not responsible
- Have complete control over children
- Not caring



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1924 Geneva Declaration

- 5 rights all provisions
 - child will be fed and housed
 - allowed to develop normally
 - first to access relief
 - able to earn a living
 - talents devoted to the service of fellow man



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Complication

- CRC is the only convention that “includes provisions that recognise the legitimate influence, indeed right, of 3rd parties on the exercise of another individual’s rights” Tobin 2011 p 72



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New Role for parents

- provide food and shelter
- provide opportunities for development

The beginning of possible nurturing relationships?



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Dominant image of child

- “pygmies among giants, ignorant amongst the knowledgeable, wordless among the articulate..... And to the adults, children everywhere represent something weak and helpless, in need of protection, supervision, training, models, skills, beliefs, ‘character’”

(Margaret Mead 1955 in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003)



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1959 Declaration:

Right No. 6

- “The child, for the full and harmonious development of his personality, needs love and understanding. He shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his parents, and, in any case, in an atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security”



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Continuing new role for parents

- Provide love and understanding
- Care and responsibility of parents
- Affection
- Moral and material security



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Dominant image of child

- Be seen and not heard
- Ask to leave the table when finished eating
- Only speak when spoken to
- Bring up a polite, well behaved child that has been conditioned to function appropriately in society and not bring shame on family.



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1989 UNCRC

- 40 distinct rights
 - - 16 from previous declarations
 - - 18 new still provision and protection
 - - 6 new rights (participation rights)



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The new image of child

“social actor from the beginning of life, with particular interests, capacities and vulnerabilities, and of requirements for protection, guidance and support in the exercise of their rights”



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What does this mean for those involved with young children?

- “It is important that the eyes with which we look at children should themselves be full of potential” (Teruhisa 2006)



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Reality

- “All modern societies survive by requiring and produce “regimes of truth” about how we should think, act and feel towards ourselves and others” (Foucault 1977)
- “Those in authority determine who is the child” (Freeman 1992)
- Culture shapes the brain” (Siegel , 2011)



Australian Human Rights Commission

- National Children's Commissioner tabled her inaugural report in 2013 to Parliament:
- <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/childrens-rights-report-2013>
- <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/what-does-children-s-rights-report-2013-say>



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Statement of Intent on Supporting Young Children's Rights

- The right to be heard-
- Freedom from violence, abuse and neglect
- The opportunity to thrive
- Engaged citizenship
- Action and accountability



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First Steps

- Read draft statement of intent
- Take part in survey
- Keep in loop re updates – ECA newsletter
- ECA Vic AGM November 19 2014



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Listening:

- “young children can tell adults much about daily lives and what makes them feel that their needs and opinions are valued” (MacNaughton, 2007)
- “Compassionate deep listening”. We can learn so much about our own perceptions and their perceptions. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2001)



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Supportive Relationships

- “The sense of identity which grows through continuing relationships is the basis for children to be seen, and to see themselves, as people to be consulted.” (Alderson, 2000)
- “In a relationship, integration entails each person’s being respected for his or her autonomy and differentiated self while at the same time being linked to others in empathic communication” (Seigel, 2011)



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Mindfulness

- Mindfulness creates a space between impulse and action – allows us to be more flexible in our responses
- Mindsight- to describe our human capacity to perceive the mind of the self and others (Siegel)
- Intersubjectivity – involved in reciprocal relationship (Hughes & Golding)



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