
Comment

The world is facing the worst refugee and immigration crisis since World War 2 (Besley & Peters, 2015). Recent research has highlighted challenges for refugee and immigrant families in accessing early childhood services that are responsive to their cultural and linguistic identities and to the contexts of their lives. However, only a few studies have been located as having direct relevance for how pedagogy can address such challenges or of policy framing need in support of culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood services in New Zealand (e.g., Chan, 2011; Guo, 2010, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2015; Podmore, Hedges, Keegan, & Harvey, 2015). This special issue of *Early Childhood Folio* comprises a selection of articles around this topic. In combination, the articles offer insights into theory and approaches to working with culturally and linguistically diverse families and children in relationships that aim to be responsive and equitable. Most of the research on which these articles are based has been undertaken with teachers and families in early childhood centres. These research-based articles will inform practice and make a distinctive contribution to teachers who want to think critically about their own beliefs, communicate with children and families, and open up opportunities for their contribution.

Kate Morgan and Janette Kelly-Ware's article explores the value and usefulness of six selected picture books in promoting positive understandings of sex/gender/sexuality among young children. They chose the six books from an annotated bibliography of 60 picture books that were "gay friendly, challenged

gender stereotypes and/or were about family diversity" (p. 4). Kate and Janette acknowledge the often very deep and yet unanalysed beliefs that childhood is a time of innocence and that it may be damaging for children to be exposed to "worldly information such as diverse family structures or queer cultures". What makes this article particularly valuable for teachers is that it takes on board an understanding that some teachers are nervous about possible parental reactions and of what they might say to children in response to questions. For this reason, the six picture books chosen are at "low risk" for teachers who want to read queer picture books. The article provides a very practical and informed analysis of each book in terms of the storyline, illustrations, relevance and appeal to children. The books are a pedagogical resource, useful for helping both children and teachers to think critically about issues around queer culture, and gender/ family diversity.

Keryn Davis and Ruta McKenzie use an illuminating approach to explore data from an ongoing TLRI project on children's working theories about identity, language, and culture. The project is being undertaken in two very different "sister" early childhood centres: an English-medium centre where the dominant culture is Pākehā or Palagi (New Zealanders of European descent), and a Samoan language immersion aoga amata. Teacher researchers in the two settings have each interpreted the same examples of children's working theories about identity, language, and culture in action, thereby highlighting multiple cultural viewpoints. The article offers a window into children's working theories and how teachers can support and

encourage the child's identity, language, and culture. It further offers a valuable process for analysis that enables teachers to consider multiple cultural perspectives.

Jacqui Lees and a teacher researcher from Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten took part in a collaborative research project with University of Waikato researchers. They pinpointed the essence of the kindergarten's approach to cross-cultural learning and collaboration. She describes the "complexity and plurality of values" (p. 16) existing in the kindergarten's ethnically and linguistically diverse community and the overriding wish to negotiate these values and embed them within the kindergarten. This article is written from a teacher's perspective. It realistically discusses the very real difficulties in negotiating values, particularly where teachers and families hold different viewpoints, such as on dependence and independence. In this article, Jacqui discusses "finding out" processes that could be adopted by teachers in other settings. Interviews with families revealed their concerns regarding their child's language learning, and what the kindergarten could do to support home language learning. Children's drawings and story-telling about their drawings revealed how they communicated with their friends, and how they felt when children spoke to them in another language.

Another innovative research and teaching method was used by Simon Archard and Sara Archard in their article "Voices of Playgroup". This playgroup is supported by a qualified teacher (a supported playgroup) and attended by Japanese, Chinese, and South Korean families who have English as an additional language. Four of these families were given technical advice to create digital stories (a personal story using, for example, narrative, text, images, and sound) in which they considered how they saw themselves and their children in terms of learning and cultural identity. These parents also presented their stories to the parent participants and researchers in the study. Analysis of the stories showed that the parents held different levels of confidence and concern about how their children navigate

their different cultural worlds, and that the supported playgroup played a valuable role in helping children transition into the more formal educational settings in New Zealand by offering an opportunity for children to interact with others and experience and negotiate the expectations of a new country.

Two articles are by international authors who drew on their research in Australia and Sweden respectively. Karen Guo's study used focus-group interviews and questionnaires to explore perspectives on parenting from women belonging to seven culturally diverse communities in Australia. Her article reminds readers about the role of culture: the values, beliefs, and practices that are held by and enacted in families, and which can and do vary across families who may differ in background and ethnicity. One of the key findings was on the lack of confidence and security these parents held about their social status in Australia. Karen argues for early childhood centres to create a space to include parents' ideas and, most importantly, an environment that reinforces power sharing. This requires a change to "teachers' embraced power and tradition" (p. 29), a process that was also described in Jacqui Lees' article.

Finally, in Tünde Puskás' article from Sweden the seemingly contradictory ideas of national cultural reproduction and intercultural awareness are juxtaposed within the Swedish curriculum. The article explores findings from a case study of a newly arrived refugee child in an ethnically diverse Swedish preschool. The focus is on ways in which this child is incorporated within the Saint Lucia tradition, a celebration of light, which is part of the Swedish cultural heritage passed on in Swedish preschools. Tünde argues that the process of incorporation within this tradition serves to facilitate the child's participation in the peer culture. At the same time, the article raises important questions about unreflective enactment of traditional stories and rituals in early childhood settings.

Linda Mitchell (Editor)

Amanda Bateman (Guest editor)

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