



## International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood

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### Editorial

The first four articles included in this edition of IJEIEC were keynote presentations at the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood's (CEIEC) 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference *Honoring the Child, Honoring Equity 7: Transforming Connections - Local & Global Possibilities*. The key theme of this conference was the exploration of the place of children's rights, human rights and equity throughout the early childhood and children's services field – in pedagogies, practices, programs, policies, theories and research. The central questions driving this exploration included:

- What troubles us and what should we trouble to honor children's rights and honor equity?
- How can/do we act as change agents in our local contexts to make a difference?
- What are the limits and the possibilities in working for equity in diverse cultural contexts?
- What do we need to rethink and/or do differently to construct safer and fairer lives for all children?
- How do we/should work with cultural dissensions and tensions?

- How can we know the world differently in order to transform it?

The four keynote speakers addressed these questions through their life experiences and research. **Chris Sarra** reflected on his time as Principal of Cherbourg State School to explore how he worked with teachers and Aboriginal children to see their true identities as “smart, young, black and deadly.” In his article he highlights the power that dysfunctional mainstream Australian mindsets of Aboriginal people have on Aboriginal communities and educational programmes for Aboriginal children. He argues the importance of educators seeing the capacity for all children to feel proud of their identities and discovering the “true colours of Aboriginal children.”

**Gloria Boutte Johnson** and **George Johnson** examine educational practices in US classrooms and the extent to which they honor (or don't honor) the diverse identities of the children, families and communities attending schools. They use the voices/reflections of three culturally and linguistically diverse adults to advance an exploration of this issue. Through their stories they foreground the ways in which educators

“inadvertently contribute to the legitimization and reproduction of the existing, unequal social order.” They argue the importance of critical pedagogy in teacher education programmes to assist teachers to question and reflect on the impact of their practices for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

**Sue Atkinson** draws on her PhD research in which the voices of local Indigenous Elders are used to explore ‘Indigenous Self Determination and Early Childhood Education and Care in Victoria.’ In her article she underscores the Elder’s role disrupting “colonial discourses of Aboriginality and colonial and non Indigenous early childhood spaces.” She argues the importance of early childhood practitioners engaging with Elders’ voices as a means of becoming more informed about “social justice issues around Indigenous Inclusion in the early childhood curriculum.”

**Beth Blue Swadener** draws on her research from Kenya and the USA to explore the “contrasting socio-cultural and geopolitical contexts” in which children’s rights, voices and participation are positioned and enacted. She uses the narratives of children and youth in Kenya, stories from the USA and reflections of visits to local municipalities in Victoria, to explore how adults can transform their relationships with children “to create greater reciprocity and respect in our ongoing struggle for human rights.” Becoming stronger allies for and with children and their communities, she asserts, is one way of taking action against the oppression children face in their daily lives.

These articles are complemented by two articles and two practitioner perspectives. **Sally Barnes** explores the complexities involved in exploring the relevance of a national curriculum for early childhood. She traces the broader political and philosophical factors that have created barriers to forging a national curriculum for Australian schooling and offers a number of critical questions that could drive the debate for an early childhood national curriculum. **Kellie Rolstad, Beth Blue Swadener and Kathy Nakagawa** present their findings from a research project that explored the extent to which the dual immersion model supports critical pedagogy in the classroom.” They draw on the voices of teachers, children and their parents to highlight the ways in which dual immersion supports children to develop new views of language use and enables them to form friendships and alliances across cultural and linguistic barriers.”

**Carol Smith** reflects on her anti-bias work with Persona Dolls in poor urban and rural communities and well-resourced middle class areas in South Africa. She shares her work in a 2004 pilot project in partnership with the Western Cape Education Department with teachers working with children in diverse social and cultural communities as a means of emphasising the ways in which Persona Dolls can be used to challenge oppression in early childhood communities. **Jane Frances** draws on her work with children with disfigurements (and their families) to highlight the way in which people’s reactions to disfigurement can negatively impact on children’s identities and access to positive social and educational experiences. She offers a

number of examples from practice to explore strategies for creating more equitable and inclusive early childhood educational communities for children with disfigurements. This edition also includes a book review by **Melissa Love** on The Sage handbook of gender and education.

These papers collectively highlight the challenges and tensions that exist in enacting children's rights across a diverse range of contexts. Drawing on research and practice and the voices of children is a critical means of advancing an exploration the place of children's rights, human rights and equity in throughout the early childhood and children's services field.

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