

Invited Paper

Children's Views of their World

Freda Briggs

University of South Australia

Abstract

This paper discusses findings from research with Australian and New Zealand children of 5-8 years over a three year period plus an additional study involving 900 Tasmanian children concentrating on their views of grandparents. The research has provided a rich qualitative data base on children's thinking about many topics. Teachers, schooling, religion, leisure and grandparents are the main topics focused on in this paper. The findings demonstrate the value of talking with children and hopefully this paper will inspire others to research children's views.

Key Words: Children's views; teachers; school; grandparents; leisure time; religion

Background

For more than 30 years, I have taught family studies in early childhood teacher education courses and supervised students on teaching practice in early childhood settings. Children always assume that I'm another student's grandma and are as curious about me as I am about them. Although appointments are made, I was often left sitting at the back of the classroom waiting an hour or more for students to teach. I spent this time not only talking to children but seeking their views on a number of issues. I found they held a stereotyped definition of what constituted a family at a time when family structures were changing. Their views were often at odds with their own life experiences. Some lived in single parent families, blended families, grandparent-led families, foster families, step-families and some had same-sex parents but irrespective of their own family structure, children said that a family consisted of mum, dad and a boy and a girl. They perceived the role of mothers as cooks, laundresses and dish-washers even when mums were professionals or dads were single parents staying at home. Fascinated by this, and thinking it would be an excellent opportunity for students to learn more about children's thinking, I set Year 3 student teachers the task of listening to children. A mature-age male who had been an at-home single dad throughout his six-year-old son's life was horrified to hear his son say that dads work and earn lots of money while mums stay at home and do the housework. A decade later, I received funding to pursue a serious study.

Young Children as Capable Interviewees

Five to eight year-olds were chosen because I believed they would be articulate, open and honest. This age group is comparatively uninhibited with strangers in an interview situation. They are aware of media and technology and have been attending school for sufficiently long to have opinions about teachers and a range of issues.

In a pilot project we started out with 20 questions and found children were capable of answering many more. We ended up with a semi-structured interview schedule with 106 questions. To my amazement I found that the novelty of adults seeking children's opinions

was such that they answered all the questions and, at the end, some made up questions and fired them at me. Others concocted questions that they answered themselves. So we added more. Who would have thought that children as young as five could concentrate for a whole hour!

Why did it happen? First, most school interviews took place in the principal's office. Sitting in the principal's chair behind a big desk empowered them; with legs dangling, they behaved as miniature adults. When they returned to their classrooms, they seemed to shrink and looked like little children again. Second, children enjoyed themselves because their opinions are seldom sought in everyday life. I emphasised that their ideas were very important and they 'grew taller' by the minute. They enjoyed having one-to-one adult attention. They often insisted on giving lengthy detailed answers and it was difficult to cut them short. For example, when asked about the level of bullying in school, they insisted on revealing the names of all the bullies and victims they knew as well as details of their crimes and punishments over the past year.

The Research

The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions designed to help children express their understanding of a range of social, moral and safety issues relevant to their world. We were interested in:

- their school based and extra curricular activities, roles, responsibilities and relationships with immediate and extended family and peers
- the 'imperial' practices of adults
- the practices of children's social groups
- their physical environment
- responsibilities of parents, grandparents, siblings and children
- knowledge of religion and religious figures
- moral values relating to rewards and punishments
- safety issues
- cultural understanding
- children's views of school, school management, friends and teachers
- children's knowledge relating to birth, death, police and politics
- their social activities, and
- the influence of media and technology.

Australian children were interviewed in rural, remote and city schools from all jurisdictions. Some were distance education students sailing around the world or living on remote outback stations...all interviewed by radio telephone. New Zealand children were interviewed in both the North and South Islands as well as on the Picton Ferry, on planes and at the Fijian Resort at Nandi where I was attending a conference.

Initially we asked schools to recruit children to represent the broad range of cultural, ethnic, religious, social and economic groups. The project had to meet the standards required by the university ethics committee which meant that parents had to sign formal contracts written in English legal jargon on university letterhead stationary. Not surprisingly, at the end of the first year I found that the vast majority of interviewees were from middle-class two-parent families of European descent. There were no children with disabilities and virtually none from low socio-economic, indigenous or NESB families. I realised that I had to move out of the school system. This was time-consuming involving much more travel and expense. An acquaintance who runs a single parent's support group gave me access to children in

domestic violence shelters. A charity for blind children accepted a substantial donation for computers in return for the inclusion of children with vision impairments in the study.

To empower children, we let them choose the location for interviews and I ended up in some unusual places. A girl at Tawa (NZ) insisted that I sat in her cubby house and her two-year-old brother squeezed in to be part of the act. Kiwis at the Fijian resort would only talk to me if I paddled in the sea alongside them. Some children insisted on being interviewed at McDonalds and two girls would only talk to me outside in the rain while they leapt up and down on a big trampoline.

How Children View ‘The Family’ Today

Children now define the family as a group of people who care for and love each other and, in particular, love children. They say that families are not necessarily blood-related and don’t have to live under the same roof; the emphasis being on caring and doing things together.

What created this change away from the traditional stereotype of mum and dad living together under the same roof, with mum doing the domestic chores and dad earning the money? Many children said they had two families, two homes, two mothers, two fathers and lots of friends. One boy’s father disappeared at the time of his birth, his step-father divorced his mother, his step-mother divorced his father and his mother provided several father-figures in de-facto relationships. He spent time with all except his own dad and counted himself lucky to have such a big family. Another boy said he had eight grandparents who were a great advantage for Christmas and birthday presents. They were all regarded as family because they looked after him when his parents abandoned him. One said:

I’ve got a few granddads. I’m not sure how many. I don’t see them all. My brother and sister have one each and I have one but they’re not the same people. They’re all different. I think we have four granddads and four grandmas in our family. That’s because we kids have different dads.

What came through was how positive and resilient the children were. Whatever their situation they could articulate the advantages, for example, having two homes meant two lots of toys and two lots of friends.

It was difficult to tell how many children lived with de-facto and step-fathers because they were all referred to as dad. When we asked children about the roles of mums and dads, traditional views persisted in rural and expensive independent schools because few mothers were in full-time employment outside the home.

When we asked “who is the most important person in a family?”, five year-old girls named their mums, because they needed them, for example: “to part my hair”...” .. “tie my ribbons” and “fasten my shoes.” From six years and older, boys were more materialistic, viewing dads as most important because they “have most money and can provide expensive treats.”

Fathers were deemed to be most important in low socio-economic and farming communities. Dads in low socio-economic areas were the ones most likely to retain traditional roles. The adored dads are those who involve children in their work and hobbies. They take sons to market to sell livestock or vegetables and buy them treats after the sales. While indigenous fathers (Maori and Aboriginal) take some responsibility for household chores they also act as cultural role models by taking sons camping, fishing and shooting, cooking fish and rabbits on open fires. Dads are deemed to have the most difficult jobs although children acknowledge that rural mums also feed animals, milk cows, grow vegetables, drive trucks

and tractors and undertake many jobs associated with the male role as well as home making and child care.

Most children believed that all family members are equally important. Some even suggested that the most important are those least able to take care of themselves such as babies, the very old and those with disabilities. City children accept that mums work outside the home and dads share parenting and household tasks. Many city dads take responsibility for cooking. Children prefer their culinary efforts to mums' because they serve pasta and pizza without vegetables.

Most children believed that mothers have the easiest (and, therefore, the best) jobs because they are seen to have more freedom than dads (especially if they are not in full-time employment). They spend more time with families and their work is viewed as the least tiring. Children's perceptions of fathers' work revolve around the time they spend away from home.

Interestingly when we asked children who provides the most fun, mum or dad., all said dad even when they only saw him for a couple of hours a month. Dads kick balls around, engage in horse-play and provide treats. Sadly, children said that fun with mum happens only occasionally when they go shopping and buy ice creams. Mothers are too busy to play games.

How Children Spent their Out of School Time

Most children spend their leisure time watching TV and playing violent computer and play station games that give them nightmares. The exceptions were children in independent schools whose mothers monitored exposure to media and took them for sports training and music lessons. Blind children in special education centres were as inactive as their sighted friends, their faces glued to TV screens. The parents of blind children in mainstreamed schools had a different attitude and my problem was finding a free evening to interview the children when they did not have sports practice, playing netball or tennis with bells in balls.

Before and after-school programs were well attended. Children liked the variety of activities plus the availability of playmates. Metropolitan children who go straight home from school rarely play outside with friends. Home-based friendships now seem to be a thing of the past, except in rural communities. Some Asian children seldom see parents. When families own and work in shops and restaurants, children attend both before and after-school care and are collected by child minders who look after them until 11pm seven days of the week. During school holidays, they attend vacation care and visit relatives in other countries like China, Taiwan and Vietnam. Children with parents in horticulture pick vegetables and help with delivery at weekends and after school.

Children's Views on and Relationships with Grandparents

Children's perceptions of grandparents are consistent across socio-economic groups. Grandmothers are great carers. They 'spoil' grandchildren 'rotten' with presents and treats and they 'love them to bits'. Children say "Grandmas even love you when you're naughty." Grans knit and sew clothes and provide endless supplies of ice-cream and chocolate. One child said:

Some clean their houses but mine has a cleaning lady. Grandmas just do jobs that aren't difficult and at 55 they can retire. Mine looks like Hyacinth Bucket in *Keeping Up Appearances* (a TV comedy).

Another said:

Grannies sleep in tiny beds when granddads are dead. They live in very tiny houses and buy toys for grandchildren. They make apple pies, give surprises, baby-sit, cuddle you and leave lipstick on your cheek. They always bring back nice things from their holidays.

Grandmas are all different. Some have thin legs or fat knees, big soft laps and wobbly bottoms. Some wear jeans and sneakers. Some have big bras and baggy knickers hanging on the washing line. They wear funny swimsuits and comfy slippers. You can see their knickers when they bend over while weeding the garden. Some play tennis, go to the gym, conduct choirs, drive trucks, fix plumbing, build submarines, travel round the world and play in brass bands. One takes her grandchild into the office and lets him play on the computer. He gave me her name and said if I asked her nicely she would let me play too.

Modern Grans paint toenails, some had husbands and some had three husbands. The least popular were grandmothers from other ethnic groups who produced food that “kids don’t like” – Italian grandmas “cover everything with tomato sauce.” Foreign born grandparents can also be racist. One child, for example, said his Asian Gran ignored him because his dad married a Kiwi. She didn’t put his photo on the sideboard with those of other grandchildren and made rude comments about them, not realising that he understood. Another disowned her daughter when she married an Aboriginal man.

As for Granddads, children perceive that most are on their side. They get into trouble for children. They take them to McDonalds and buy bubble gum and fizzy drinks that mothers ban at home: They play boisterous games and tease. They also argue with grandmas.

Mine pokes his tongue out and pulls a face and if nanna finds out, she tells him off.

Not all granddads are perceived positively however. Some are described as lazy, grumpy old men who sleep a lot and snore in their sacrosanct chairs between reading the paper and watching TV news. No one is allowed to speak while the news is on. The adored granddads, like dads, involve children in their work and hobbies, take them on trucks and tractors, take them into their tool sheds and make and fix things. They make sailing boats and sail them, make kites and fly them. They go go-karting, camping, fishing, boating and do things that dads can not or do not have time to do. One even had a radio that enabled his grandson to eavesdrop on planes and police cars. Another said, “He has work motor bikes. I ride on them and on the back of his ute chasing sheep. I have more fun on the farm than anywhere else.” Some had steam engines and trains. These are all activities that appealed to the boys.

Grandmas are the tops according to the children. They share a common bond with children and have a common enemy: the children’s parents. Grandparents are the second line of defence for children in crisis. (COTA National Seniors 2003; Government of Tasmania 2003; Justice Cabinet Committee 2005). In 85% of families, grandparents care for children for a prolonged period of time. In a third of families, Grans provide day-care while parents work. More than 10% rear a grandchild for more than six months with no parent present. Once upon a time, these arrangements were associated with orphans and poverty but not any more. Drug related crimes, child abuse, imprisonment, homelessness, mental illness, car accidents, murder and child abandonment by immature mothers have been identified as the main reasons for grand-parents being forced back into the parenting role. Over 50% of the children of women prisoners’ live with Grans and there has been a 60% increase in the imprisonment of women in the last 10 years (Justice Cabinet Committee 2005; Correctional Association of New York, 2006). The traditional grandparent saw grandchildren in small

doses and sent them home at the end of the day. Now, grandparents are often the glue that holds families together. With the exception of indigenous families, grandmas buy children lots of books and read stories, make things with children and boost their self-esteem. As one child said, "Grandma says I'm good at everything, even blowing my nose."

In 2004 I found that 60% of NZ children identified as having learning disabilities had lived for long periods with grandparents (Briggs 2005). When children were sexually abused by an older brother or mother's boyfriend, their mother frequently protected the offender and sent the victim to live with Gran. When grandparents lacked the knowledge, experience and support to cope with children's emotionally disturbed, behaviours, there was a high risk that the children would end up in foster care. I met several such children. They said if they had known what was going to happen they would have kept abuse secret. They perceived that they were punished while their abusers remained unpunished in the comfort of the children's home.

Professional families and mothers with new partners often move to other cities or countries leaving some children with only phone and occasional contact with grandparents that prevent a bond being formed. Contact also seems to differ according to educational level. In low socio-economic areas, Grans tend to live in close proximity, integrate with the daily life of grandchildren and provide physical labour. Well-educated, better resourced grandparents help financially enabling children to enjoy a much higher standard of living than they would if they relied on parents' salaries... but they may not see much of their grandchildren.

Religion

Grandparents are the ones most likely to take children to church and teach religion. Children who went to church think of spirits as ghosts – even drawing a picture of Casper from the movie. Children from church schools were confused about why we celebrate Easter and Christmas.

Most children were told by adults that when someone dies they go to paradise or heaven to live with Jesus. In Adelaide we have a suburb called Paradise. Adelaide children believe logically that Mary and Jesus are married and live in a brick veneer house in this suburb and you go to live with them when you're dead. Some grandparents tell children that their dead relatives became stars; but these children said they did not believe this. Some had seen pictures of Mars and Pluto or just knew that planets and stars were uninhabited.

Children believe that dead people retain their senses. They said things like: "People buy lots of flowers and put them on the coffin and on graves because dead people like to see and smell them." A New Plymouth girl who had just attended grandma's funeral said, "People say kind things about you when you're dead. They stand at the front of the church and use a microphone but the dead person can't hear you because those silly men put the lid on the box." Children are told that dead people go to heaven. So where is heaven? It's above the clouds of course, children said. How do you get there? They had a logical explanation: "At night time, Jesus comes with a spade, digs up the box and takes you there." I didn't ask children about those who are cremated!

Heaven means you lie on clouds. You don't wear clothes because you're nearer the sun. If you get too hot you can come down to a lower cloud.

Most children had been in planes so I asked whether they'd ever seen people on clouds. No they hadn't. "Why do you think that was?" Because we didn't fly high enough was the swift response. One boy described heaven as like a multi-storey car park with Jesus, Mary and God on the top level, angels on the next, good Christians on the next and serious sinners in

the basement. Hindus and Muslims were not mentioned. Not surprisingly, some children were afraid that, having removed someone they knew, Jesus might come back and take *them* away.

Children thought that people went to church to pray to God for the things they want and can't otherwise obtain. Children said that praying obviously does not work because adults go back each week and pray again; they would not need to do that if prayers were answered.

Children's Thoughts about School

Girls like school from day one but most boys do not. Boys like school less each year and their self-esteem declines simultaneously. Previous research has shown that boys do less well than girls in secondary schools and universities (Buckingham, 2005) but it was a surprise to find that this begins in primary school. When Australian and New Zealand boys were asked what they enjoyed most about school, most replied "recess and lunchtime." This was because they can do what they like and engage in physical activities. There is clearly scope for research into boys' views of kindergarten given that their dislike of school relates to a reduction in freedom, choice and opportunities for activity.

Most children, both boys and girls, disliked "work" the most. Work was defined as:

What teachers make you do when you are doing something else that you prefer to do.

Work is what the teacher makes you do when you don't want to do it.

Work is what you have to do before you can engage in activities or use the computer.

Boys said they rush work so that they can have a free choice of activity. This begged the question, 'Are schools failing to cater for the needs of boys in this age group?'. Alternatively, 'is disliking school part of the macho male culture?'

Only two schools were enjoyed by boys. One was an elite independent school; the other a multi-cultural school at the opposite end of the socio-economic scale. The boys reported their favourite activities were reading and writing. Teachers met to discuss this finding. In both schools, they concluded that this was because children were given a great deal of involvement in curriculum decision making and their emphasis on early literacy enabled boys to research and use their reading and writing skills to pursue their own interests. Boys were obsessed with sport and many played in junior teams. Results changed weekly so they always had something new to write about. In contrast, the girls at these schools were less enthusiastic because they had fewer interests and were more comfortable with traditional teaching. Irrespective of social class or ethnicity girls possessed up to 36 Barbie dolls. They drew pictures of them that were virtually identical and had little to write about.

When asked what teachers do to make children feel good, the answer was invariably, "Praise (or reward) me for good work." This included the receipt of stickers from both teachers and principals.

When children start school they quickly learn rules and enjoy telling you what they are and who breaks them. They soon learn teachers' expectations. According to the children, to please teachers you have to:

- be good, well-behaved and obedient
- do good work.
- sit up straight on the floor with legs crossed and hands on knees

- line up nicely and don't talk
- put your hand up and don't speak until you are told that you can
- don't talk when the teacher is talking, and
- use good manners and be polite.

Teachers make children unhappy when they:

- 'tell us off'.
- 'yell', 'Shout' or 'Growl'.
- punish e.g. 'Give you time out', 'Give you a detention', and
- 'put you on a sad step' or a 'naughty chair' or you 'stand with your back to the class against a naughty wall'.

When talking about the ways teachers make them unhappy, some children replicated teachers' angry faces, producing exaggerated scowls, pursing their mouths, tightening eyes and looking upwards with a look of despair. Clearly, children are aware of teachers' moods and what is permissible or denied when the mood is good or bad.

When asked about the behaviour that gets them into trouble, children referred to aggression, swearing and not listening or responding to teachers. The main method of punishment reported was 'time out'. Surprisingly, this was feared by children who had never experienced it, "Because everyone knows you've been naughty." The naughty child faces the wall, sits on a naughty chair or stands on a naughty mat for a prolonged period of time (which is boring given that time passes slowly when you're young). The child is usually placed in a position where he/she (and, usually, it is 'he') can be seen by others; sometimes outside the principal's office. This is perceived by compliant children as shameful and embarrassing or, at the opposite extreme, the naughty ones show off and gain kudos from older students. If sent out into the corridor they pull faces at children in the classroom and make them laugh. Time-out was especially resented when delayed until recess or lunch-time, depriving children of the opportunity to release energy and engage in free play. In some schools children could write a statement about their misbehaviour which must include a plan to remedy it. This was then read out to the class for comment – and caused children some embarrassment. Two schools had a 'Bad Class' specifically for repeat offenders. All schools sent seriously naughty children to the Principal's office, usually at lunchtime. Physical punishment has long been banned in state and Catholic schools but paradoxically, some Christian schools still use it. When parents enrol children they sign permission for corporal punishment to be used. In one school, three members of staff were authorised to inflict punishment with a wooden paddle.

Children viewed principals as having several roles which can be classified as managerial and welfare. The principal:

- is the 'boss' of the school who makes everything happen and tells teachers what to do
- cares for the teachers and kids and looks after the school
- sits in his office for a large part of the day playing on his computer
- keeps children safe
- sometimes teaches children (in small schools)
- shows parents and visitors round the school
- goes around the playground picking up other people's garbage, and
- punishes naughty children.

When there is more than one principal, the male is assumed - often wrongly - to be the boss.

Children had an understanding of the concepts of fair and unfair. They said that school principals are fair because:

They only tell you off if you've already had lots of warnings.

The principal is fair because he looks after everyone ... even the bad kids.

The principal is unfair (to himself) because he picks up paper that he didn't throw on the ground.

By comparison, class teachers were judged to be both fair and unfair. Fair teachers gave children tasks that were within their capabilities, gave stars and stickers, praised for effort and balanced 'work' with opportunities for fun. Fair teachers made allowances for children who were sad or unwell and gave naughty children the chance to redeem themselves. Teachers were deemed to be unfair when they punished the whole class when only one or two children were at fault. Their worst crime was delaying recess or lunch time for a few minutes because only one or two children had not packed away equipment. Children recalled such incidents months later.

Some children complained of unprofessional behaviour; for example, the teacher who publicly destroyed a child's work because it was perceived as unsatisfactory. Some referred to teachers who punished or favoured children on the basis of gender, for example depriving all boys of recess or outdoor activities or favouring girls because one boy misbehaved. The children expressed a strong sense of social justice.

Involvement in Decision Making at School

Class meetings and class representatives were features of State schools. Independent schools did not 'pretend' to be democratic. State school staff enthused about the level of student involvement in decision-making but children were cynical. Student reps said their responsibilities were limited to domestic matters such as how to reduce litter left in the yard and keep the school clean and tidy. There was universal agreement that teachers make all major decisions and when children's choices are different, they are over-ruled. Children said they were invited to make suggestions for excursions but destinations were always chosen by teachers regardless of the majority vote. In other words, despite the good intentions of staff, unless children were involved in serious issues and their opinions acknowledged and respected, they became cynical about the system and suggested that student participation was a game that teachers' play to make children believe they have power when they have none.

What Children Can and Can Not Talk with their Teachers About

Although teachers are mostly viewed as caring, children do not believe they can talk to them about anything other than learning and bullying problems in the playground which must be reported to the teacher on yard or playground duty at the time. Children in schools fraught with social problems and child abuse were told that if they had a problem, they must sort it out with the person concerned. While teachers probably did not intend children to interpret this as child abuse victims having to tackle their abusers, that was the perception that children gained.

New Zealand and Australian children believe that teachers have no power outside their classrooms (other than on playground duty) and they are incapable of helping to resolve problems that arise elsewhere. Children believe they can only confide in their mothers and if mums don't respond, no-one else will help them. Children said:

If I have problems at home its nothing to do with the teacher because it's none of her business.

You couldn't tell the teacher about private things. It's nothing to do with her.

The teacher wouldn't know who it was. She doesn't live in my street.

You couldn't tell her about problems at home because she couldn't do anything about it.

Given that safety programs had been used in most schools involved in this research, this finding has serious implications for child protection. It would appear that teachers are avoiding disclosures of abuse by not informing children that school staff can be members of their support networks.

Conclusion

Given that we asked 106 questions this paper has only been able to give you a taste of the research findings. Research with young children is both valuable and enjoyable. Educators benefit from knowing what children think and what we could do better.

Most books about childhood and child development have a common feature; children are not given a voice in the research. Studies have traditionally focused on the measurement of children's health, growth or performance rather than what they know, think, experience and say. Researchers collected data from the parents, psychologists or health professionals' perspective. Even when it was obvious that children should have been involved, they were ignored. For example, some studies about children's experiences of starting school only involved interviews with parents and teachers. Although New Zealand researchers have done more than most to involve children, the NZ Council for Educational Research restricted interviews to parents and teachers when they researched the competency of five- and six-year olds. And yet we know that parents tend to under-estimate the competence of children with disabilities and over-estimate the competence of children they consider to be gifted.

Why are children's views ignored? Is it that researchers lack the skill of encouraging children to talk? Are children viewed as incapable of expressing opinions or, alternatively, do researchers think that children's views were not worth collecting.

Goodnow and Burns (1985) over two decades ago warned of the dangers of relying on adult opinions. They listened to young children and adults and found many mismatches between children's and teachers' expectations. If we don't research with children, students in social work, child care and teaching are unlikely to gain any reliable understanding of children's concepts, how they perceive themselves, their peers, relationships with adults and their social and learning environments.

It is obviously important for educators to understand how children construct aspects of their experiences so that we can provide the best learning environments. The centre of childhood research must be the individual child and the young child's voice must be heard. Researchers need evidence to show both the individuality and the common experiences of children to gain the most comprehensive picture of childhood.

What this means is that while researchers can explain and interpret aspects of children's lives using their research tools, they must use individual children both as their unit of observation and as mediators of information.

References

- Briggs, F. (2005). *Safety issues for children with disabilities*. Paper presented to the Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, Wellington, N.Z., February.
- Buckingham, J. (2005). Gender divide in road of learning. *The Australian*, April 5.
- Correctional Association of New York (2006). Women in prison project (http://www.CorrectionalAssociation.org/WIPP/publications/women_Focus2006).
- COTA National Seniors (2003). *Grandparents raising grandchildren – A report of the project commissioned by the Hon. Larry Anthony, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs*.
- Government of Tasmania Joint Standing Committee on Community Development (2003). *Report on issues relating to custodial grandparent*. Tasmania.
- Goodnow, J.J., & Burns, A. (1985). *Home and school: A child's eye view*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin
- Justice Cabinet Committee (2005). *Children of prisoners' project: Steering Committee report*. South Australia: Justice Committee.

Acknowledgments

This paper is a shortened version of a Keynote Address given at the 10th NZ Early Childhood Conference, Porirua, Wellington, in November 2006.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Freda Briggs is Emeritus Professor in Child Development and Foundation Dean of the Institute of Early Childhood and Family Studies at the University of South Australia. She has been a consultant and researcher for New Zealand Police Youth Education programmes since 1985. Freda recently received the Order of Australia and the Queen's Centenary Medal and she was the inaugural recipient of the Australian Humanitarian Award for her work to help disadvantaged children. She received an ANZAC award in 1997 for research of importance to Australia and New Zealand and was the first civilian to receive a citation from New Zealand Police for years of generosity in the provision of research and advice.