

# **Young children's participation as a living practice: the role of material and emotional relations during the transition to primary school**

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## **Abstract:**

Children's participation rights have been a core theme of childhood studies in research, policy and practice. However, despite thirty years since the UNCRC, meaningful participation for children remains patchy and subject to persistent challenges in implementation. Taking an optimistic view, this chapter traces how young children's participation rights were lived and experienced during one encounter from a larger ethnographic research project in Scotland. The authors reflect on a visit with nursery children to their future primary school. The chapter makes three key arguments. First, emotional and material relations are constitutive elements of social life that produce how participation rights are lived and experienced by different people in the same situation. Second, material and emotional relations are themselves mediated by temporality, interwoven spatial contexts, and memory—among other considerations. Finally, the chapter joins the wider literature challenging an 'implemented or not' model of rights, and the tendency to default to simplistic narratives about participation rights in practice.

## **Keywords:**

early childhood education, children's rights, transition to school, participation rights, ethnography, emotions

## **Introduction**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) enshrines children and young people's right to express views about the wide range of matters that affect them, and to have those views taken into account. For three decades, the UNCRC and the 'participation rights'

enshrined within have been a catalyst for participatory research, policymaking and practice with children and young people. However, despite rhetorical enthusiasm for the Convention, persistent challenges remain regarding how the normative rights enshrined in the UNCRC are translated into actual, real life practices. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) notes that longstanding practices and attitudes can impede children and young people's right to be heard, and a wealth of research and practice attention has been devoted to changing those attitudes. However, there has been a lack of attention to the material and emotional elements of participatory work.

In this chapter, we analyse one encounter during a larger research project, in which Cara (an early career researcher) and Teresa (an early years nature play pedagogue) accompanied four nursery children on a visit to their new primary school. We examine how participation rights were made real in this visit, incorporating a discussion of some of the fluid, fleeting, and enduring material and emotional relations that emerged. Tracing these associations have helped us more fully understand the ways that participation rights were lived and experienced during this compulsory time of change.

### **Materiality and emotions in young children's participation rights**

#### *Young children's participation rights: a case for optimism*

Young children<sup>i</sup> are entitled to all the rights enshrined in the UNCRC, meaning that children's Article 12 rights to express their views, and to have those views taken into account, should be implemented from the 'earliest stage' of life (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005, para. 14a). Despite positive rhetoric about young children's participation rights, there are serious barriers to those rights becoming real. Many barriers stem from underpinning conceptualisations of early childhood. For example, early childhood is often framed as an essential preparatory stage of life rather than a rich time in its own right. There are strong global messages about the fragility of young children's developmental trajectories (Wastell & White, 2012) which can easily lead to a pervasive deficit view of early childhood (Nxumalo & Brown, 2020). Another, related barrier stems from hierarchical beliefs about adulthood as a time of expertise and (early) childhood as a time of incompleteness (Alderson, 2008).

We acknowledge these barriers to young children's participation, and also present a more optimistic view. Alderson (2008, p. 141) highlights the feelings that support young children's meaningful participation rights, including trust in young children's ability to think creatively, enjoyment and excitement in working cooperatively with young children, and confidence that participation is vital and rewarding. And indeed, there has been a wave of activity around young children's participation rights that challenges the common barriers. For example, Clark and Moss's seminal work on the Mosaic Approach (2001) has inspired ongoing scholarship and practice in the field of consulting with young children. MacNaughton and colleagues (2004; 2007a, 2007b, 2008) have created in-depth resources and examples of how young children can inform policymaking, as well as critically examining some of the tensions and opportunities in participatory work with young children. Lansdown (2005) embraces young children's evolving capacities and reminds us that it is the adults who must remove barriers rather than excluding young children from participatory work (see also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2005, para. 14c). Other authors have unpacked the socio-cultural values and views about childhood that facilitate participatory work with young children and sought to help research and practice move past common barriers (Kjørholt, 2011; Layland, 2012; Wall et al., 2019).

#### *A gap around material and emotional relations*

Over time, childhood studies and children's rights studies have paid a great deal of attention to the relationships and politics of participation rights. For example, the term 'living rights' has been proposed, echoing persistent calls for rights to be understood at grassroots level (Hanson & Nieuwenhuys, 2012; Harris-Short, 2003; Reynaert et al., 2015). Moosa-Mitha (2005) helpfully describes participation as 'presence' for children, asking how the voice, contribution and agency of the child is acknowledged in their many relationships. However, while rights are increasingly viewed interdependently and relationally, those interdependencies tend to focus on human relations, particularly relationships between children themselves or between children and adults (e.g. Abebe, 2012; Davis, 2011; Mannion, 2007, 2010; Percy-Smith, 2010; Tisdall, 2008, 2016).

There has been far less attention paid to materiality—the way the ‘stuff of the world’ is intertwined into social relations (Rogers et al., 2013). While the field of childhood studies has recently made a noticeable turn toward taking materiality seriously in theorisations of childhood and particularly children’s agency (e.g. Esser et al., 2016; Spyrou, 2019) it is less likely to see participation rights specifically being examined in this way. There are exceptions (e.g. Aitken, 2018a, 2018b; Oswell, 2013), and non-human actors can indeed be found in the participatory literature. For example, Hultgren and Johansson (2019) discuss the ways that participation happens in the meeting between people, places and things in a public library. However, the role of non-human actors is mainly framed in terms of passive use by humans. Similarly, Martin and Buckley (2018) report on children’s participatory photography of their early years spaces, noting a strong focus on materiality but again analysing it in terms of passive use by children. We wish to explore an alternative approach that examines in more depth the specific and fluid roles of non-human actors as entangled participants in participatory initiatives. As Latour (2005) argues, non-human actors are key participants in the dynamic associations of social life, including in the formation and re-formation of inequalities and power asymmetries.

Even less attention has been paid in the participation literature to the role of emotional relations and how emotions may shape, facilitate, and impede the ‘living’ of children’s participation rights. Emotions have increasingly been studied through a relational lens, by sociologists and human geographers, as ‘one of the driving forces of human behaviour, interaction, and social organization’ (Davidson et al 2012; Stets and Turner 2014, p.1). Rather than locating emotions solely in the individual psyche, here emotions are theorised in relational ways—arising through, and formative of, bodily relationships between self and others, and between self and the world (Burkitt 2014). As Ahmed (2014) argues, emotions are implicated in, and constitutive of, the patterns of our lives and how subjects come to be understood in society. Emotional relations are embodied (Burkitt, 2014), intertwined with non-human actors (Harris, 2015) and contribute to our ways of knowing about ourselves and the world (Barbosa da Costa et al., 2015). Emotions are therefore extremely relevant to how rights become real. In some areas of childhood studies, emotional relations have been taken quite seriously—for example, in children’s geographies (e.g. Blazek and Windram-Geddes, 2013). Some researchers have also incorporated emotional relations in to their work on participation: for example, Pinkney (2011) traces the complexity of emotion work in welfare

services, while Kina (2012) engages with how participation workers view their work emotionally. Mannion and l’Anson (2004) similarly look at the adult element of emotion including memories of professionals’ own childhoods. Although, as these examples illustrate, emotional relations have been identified as central aspects of participation rights (e.g. Kina, 2012; Thomas, 2012), overall they tend to be mentioned rather than engaged with in depth (Kraftl, 2013). When participation rights are the focus, it is unusual to see emotional relations analysed in detail.

## **Background to the study: expanding the analytical frame**

### *Ethnographic study of children’s participation rights as a living practice*

This chapter is drawn from a wider ethnographic study undertaken for Cara’s doctoral research. The project explored how young children’s participation rights were lived and negotiated in one early childhood setting in Scotland, where Teresa worked as a pedagogue. At the fieldwork site—here called Castle Nursery—practitioners worked with children from six months to five years old, with the setting being open from 8-5:45, five days per week. The project went through ethical reviews at the university and local authority government levels<sup>ii</sup>. Cara engaged in participant observation, visiting Castle Nursery three to four mornings per week, for a period of eight months. Although the nursery was nominally split into two age-based groups (the ‘birth to three space’ and the ‘3-5 space’), the children were supported to move between spaces and there was a lot of age-mixing and sharing of spaces at the nursery. During the fieldwork, therefore, Cara moved fluidly between spaces at the nursery, rather than focus on one or the other of the age-based groups. She also visited the nursery’s Forest Kindergarten site, here called Wild Wood. During the fieldwork and afterward, Teresa and Cara formed a close relationship and have kept in touch since it ended.

### *Analytical framing: beyond child-adult relations*

As discussed in the literature review, research on children and young people’s participation has tended to focus on human relations. This project was initially no different. Proponents of children’s participation have sometimes been critiqued for portraying participation as a ‘bland’ and ‘cosy’ process (Woodhead, 2010, p. xxii) without a deeper examination of how

rhetoric matches up with reality. Equally, when participation is examined in depth, there has been a tendency to frame adults as oppressors of children, or focus entirely on children themselves as agents of their own destiny (Mannion, 2007). There has been less research on how children and adults participate together (Wyness, 2015). In response to these critiques, Cara undertook this research project with a focus on analysing child-adult relations at Castle Nursery in terms of how participation rights were actually lived and experienced in everyday life.

Although this analytical framework was fruitful, it was also too limited. Almost immediately upon starting fieldwork, it was apparent that child-adult relations were inextricably linked into spatial and material relations at the nursery—for example, the ways that children and adults moved fluidly between the playrooms and outdoor spaces. Similarly, non-human actors such as toys, costumes, animals, and plants were interwoven into the way participation was being ‘lived’ at the setting. It was clear that the theoretical framework needed to be more expansive and to take into account a more fluid, dynamic understanding of participation rights as part of entanglements of interactions between many different actors (Haraway, 2016; Latour, 2005). The emotional nature of these interactions was also very apparent, particularly in the ways that emotions, bodies and place were intertwined (Seymour et al., 2016) at Castle Nursery as part of the doing of participation rights. However, as an early career researcher, Cara was nervous about asking too many questions, bothering the children and adults, and prying too deeply into people’s lives. She was also reluctant to represent people’s emotional experiences as some kind of detached researcher expert. Therefore, it was not until years later that Cara and Teresa discussed the more delicate and emotive nature of the school visit analysed in this paper.

*A note on the research context: the transition to primary school*

This chapter takes place during the transition from nursery to primary school<sup>iii</sup>. Despite this, transition itself is not the focus of this paper, and therefore a full review of the literature on transition is beyond its scope (see Dunlop and Fabian, 2007; Perry et al., 2014). In terms of young children’s participation rights during the transition, McNair (2016) argues that it is professionals’ views that are privileged, with children’s own views overlooked because they

do not always fit easily into existing systems and pressures. This is the case in research as well, with some qualitative research exploring children's own views of the transition, but little quantitative work that actually asks young children themselves what they think about their experiences of primary school (Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, 2014). McNair (2016) argues that it is in fact the complexity of the relationships and systems in school that contributes to children's own views being downplayed. Rather than embrace flexibility and heterogeneity, the professionals working in schools may feel more comfortable sticking to predetermined procedures. Institutional constraints such as top-down hierarchies, high ratios of children to staff, and rigid timetabling create further barriers to participation (Blaisdell et al., 2020). However, a better engagement and understanding of children's views could make not just the transition, but educational spaces generally, more just (McNair 2016). It is in this spirit that the chapter turns to the role of material and emotional relations during our own encounter with the primary school.

### **Revisiting our experiences: a dialogue about material and emotional relations during a visit to primary school**

In this section, the authors recount our own experiences on the school visit, in dialogue with each other. The school visit took place in 2014. Our account in this paper is based on: a re-reading in 2018 by Cara of her field notes about the school visit, this time through a material and emotional lens; an in-depth discussion in 2018 between Cara and Teresa about our experiences of the school visit, and our writing in 2019 about our memories of the school visit. We follow Ahmed (2014) and Latour (2005) in asking what materials and emotions did in the encounter with the school in terms of young children's participation. In keeping with these scholars, we examine the role of material and emotional relations as part of an entangled analysis rather than as artificially separated from each other. Our accounts also reflect our different experiences, positions and voices. Cara begins with her account, as a researcher experiencing the school visit, followed by Teresa's response as an experienced play pedagogue.

***Cara:***

Near the end of fieldwork, Teresa invited me to come along on a school visit with Kirsten<sup>iv</sup>, Alina, Maddie and Susan, who would be attending the same primary school. I was happy to be invited but also a bit worried about intruding on a sensitive time. I knew Kirsten had been to school the previous year, but it had not gone well—she returned to the nursery. I thought this could potentially be a difficult and strange feeling for her to be returning to school spaces. As we travelled to the school in a taxi, I tried to make myself small and unobtrusive to the children.

On the visit we were taken around the school by two older primary school students (Primary Six, about 11 years old). The tour was very generic; the P6 students were probably executing a route they had followed many times before. I doubted they had much control over the tour route themselves, and there was also not much consideration for what the Castle Nursery children might want to see and do at the school.

The Castle Nursery children rarely had more than a few minutes to explore any of the spaces we visited. In one of the P1 classrooms we were invited to enter, but only for a few minutes, before our tour guides (politely) moved us on. In another class we peered in the door but weren't invited in. Although it was a school day, we encountered very few children on this tour, mainly seeing them when we briefly looked into the classrooms and then later when we went to the playground. The corridors were very quiet, and I felt the corridors were also telling me to be quiet.

The school building and controlled quiet seemed to silence Kirsten as well. She usually radiated confidence in her interactions with the people and spaces at Castle Nursery; a practitioner once described her to me as being 'so powerful'. During our school visit, however, Kirsten was nearly silent, speaking only when spoken to directly. It was not until later in the visit, when we were alone on the playground, that she seemed to relax. On one side of the playground was a small, grassy garden area with a chair carved out of a large tree stump. Kirsten climbed up into the chair and gazed mischievously down at the rest of us. 'I'm the queen!' she laughed.



Kirsten was not the only member of the group feeling uneasy during the tour. I was quite uncomfortable in the school spaces, and Teresa also seemed ill at ease. This was particularly noticeable in the quiet corridors, where from my perspective it seemed like Teresa took measures to constrain the children's movements, although she also seemed pained about making these interventions. For example, as we followed our tour guides, the long, empty corridors seemed to call to Alina to move her body—she swooped her arms, ran her hands along the walls and at one point ran ahead of the group. At Castle Nursery this would have been unremarkable, but at school Teresa gently took her hand to prevent her from running again, saying 'I'm sorry darling, but we need to stay together.' In the gym hall, Teresa seemed aware that the tour guides wanted to move on and encouraged Alina and Susan to curtail their play and keep moving through the school. On the playground I thought Teresa seemed a bit more relaxed, but it was not until we reached the small garden area—where we were alone—that (like Kirsten) she seemed to be fully at ease.

At the time, I didn't know how to ask about this unease I sensed in Teresa or the conflicts in her practice that came up during the visit. I thought of her as quite a subversive person when it came to power structures. It was naïve of me, but when we visited the school, I was surprised that she wasn't issuing any challenges to the regimented practices we encountered, and seemed to discourage the children from doing so. To some extent I thought Teresa was even complicit in the practices, as evidenced by her reluctant intervention when Alina was running in the corridor. The word 'complicit' now seems like a strong overstatement that reflects my lack of understanding of the situation. It was clear that she was walking an extraordinary tightrope that I didn't fully understand, as she attempted to balance her own strong opposition to 'schoolified' practices with her commitment to children's participation.

***Teresa:***

Throughout the transition process as a pedagogue there is a sense of holding emotions: the child's, the family's and your own.

Throughout the school visit I was aware of the resonating emotions and was mindful of the whole-body immersion in the school spaces of Alina and Susan, whilst sensitive to Kirsten's

inwardly reflecting approach. There were waves of a rhythm which involved stepping in to support and stepping back to support, a reflection & dialogue of emotions. There is a recognition of yourself as the professional working in collaboration with another educational setting, respecting the P6 guides, whilst also navigating the fine line of recognising and loving each child for whom they are.

Reflecting upon the visit, I was drawing on information from the child/ren, parents, and fellow staff at Castle Nursery, as well as my knowledge about the child/ren's relationship to the concept of school. This might include their past experiences, the time of day we visited, and children's prior knowledge of the school environment including through siblings, nursery, playground and friends. Holding these knowledges, there were several elements pertaining to the tightrope walking which I would highlight about the school visit, from my perspective as a visiting practitioner:

~The transition visit, time and date were organised and presented by the school.

~Two of our children visiting the school (Susan and Alina) attended the primary school nursery part time, splitting their week with Castle Nursery. Of interest, they were the ones who both contested the formality and constraints within the indoor environment of the school! (which may have been associated with flouting embedded adult/school rules). Both girls had a strength, energy and self-determination which were sometimes met with confusion or even negative labelling by adults. For me it was important to respect their integrity while also being wary of how quickly children are labelled.

~I had accompanied Kirsten a year earlier upon a prior visit to a different primary setting. During that visit, Kirsten was invited to attend an all-school assembly where she was asked to sit in the front row alongside other visitors. Kirsten opted to indeed sit at the front but asked that I join her, which I did through positioning myself at a non-obscuring edge of a row. She enjoyed the assembly show and she appeared

quietly reflective. Kirsten then went on to attend the school. However, her parents had concerns regarding how tired, exhausted and distressed she was, and mentioned specific issues Kirsten experienced regarding the movement through what Waite (2011) refers to as a paradigm shift from nursery to P1. Her parents asked for help regarding understanding their rights to delay school entry, which was informed through an open dialogue within the centre staff, including a strong emphasis on Kirsten's own perspectives. Kirsten then returned to Castle Nursery for a further year. The school visit discussed in this paper, therefore, was the second time that Kirsten had been through the transition process to a primary school.

~A further ethical dilemma presented upon the day of the visit was that the children's guides were two P6 children. Whilst they were respected by the school staff to lead the visit, I felt there was an onus upon us as accompanying adults to ensure that the guides were not reprimanded for permitting movement and sound to resonate through the silent corridors.

~The space did indeed invite the explorations of echoes, moving bodies at speed and what might have been seen within the Castle Nursery as the affordance of children having an embodied dialogue with the space to make sense of it. Regarding the ways that I constrained some of the children's movements, I did feel that I was complicit in our children's conforming to the schools' expectations. In part this was in order to respect our two P6 tour guides, who gave quiet reflective accounts of their school experience (all of which was quite new as they had recently moved to new and bigger premises).

~In contrast, on other visits I was covert in supporting such explorations as I had sole responsibility. The presence of the two P6 children created a sense of responsibility to try to ensure we were respectful of their relationship with their school whilst also being mindful of potential repercussions from the teaching staff.

~A further niggle throughout the visit was that I had recently visited a primary school in Sweden where their shared school ethos, stated ‘we love our children for whom they are’. I had felt joy at discovering an approach that appeared to hold the same sense of integrity of childhood we were endeavouring to maintain within our Froebelian principled setting. It incorporated half a day outdoors within a nature setting. Whilst observing the children within the Swedish school they seemed to have freedom to explore the school environment, through whole body exploration (as Rasmussen (2004) discusses how children themselves make sense of place). At the end of the school day in Sweden, the children gravitated to the trees, disappearing within the canopy, some hopped over the fence and joined the Kindergarten children, there was no rush to leave the school environment. During the Castle Nursery children’s visit to the primary school, I held my own visit to the Swedish school in mind. Reflecting upon our own Castle Nursery children’s transition as compared to the Swedish setting, I felt I was part of (as Ken Robinson (2006) describes) setting our children up to do low level clerical work.

### **Analysis and discussion: the fluid shaping of young children’s participation rights**

Participation rights are about decision-making, but they are also about a broader sense of ‘presence’ for children and young people within their many relationships (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). In particular, Moosa-Mitha grapples with issues of power, asking who is afforded a sense of presence, when, and how. As her theorisation of rights demonstrates, participation rights are inherently political, bound up with the patterning of broader social relations—for example, the ways that gender, race, and economic marginalisation lead to differential experiences of social participation. Participation rights are deeply connected to the diverse ways that children exercise agency, and how that agency is shaped by children’s relations with other people, but also with materials, things, policies, etc (Aitken, 2018b; Esser, 2016). In our analysis of our visit to the primary school, we can see that relations with emotions and materials are also inherently political. As Ahmed (2014) argues, emotions reveal—and simultaneously create—investment in social norms, and perhaps move us into a different relation with social norms that we wish to contest.

Three key points emerge from our reflective dialogue, regarding how participation rights, emotions and materials were intertwined. First, the narratives do indeed highlight that material and emotional relations are important in how participation rights are lived. For example, the physical school building made a difference in the encounter (Latour 2005) but in varied ways. The school building seemed to quiet Kirsten, in a way that Cara interpreted as a silencing of her participation rights. Teresa's interpretation was different; she wondered if Kirsten's reactions to the school building indicated not a totalised silence but an expression of quiet agency and reflection, a waiting and watchful presence. For Alina, in contrast, the school building enticed her to move and run—and she was perhaps feeling enjoyment in making her presence known, flouting some of the school rules. These two examples are instructive. They illustrate the complexity of what participation rights can mean. It is easier to say that Alina's 'presence' was strong—perhaps reflecting a simplistic ideal of the autonomous, agentic child who participates actively and influences her surroundings—but later she was quieted down by Teresa, who did not want her to get in trouble or be pre-judged in the school spaces. Participation rights are about children expressing their views, and having those views taken into account (including in everyday life such as this encounter) (Alderson, 2008). However, as Kirsten and Alina's examples illustrate, the process of recognising and implementing those rights is rarely straightforward.

Second, while material and emotional relations are important in the narratives, there are even more complex flows and relations to draw out. For example, the role of time and memory are intertwined into the narratives, namely in Kirsten's experiences, but also in Teresa's description of being haunted by her trip to Sweden. At the same time that she was acting in ways that made her feel complicit in school practices, Teresa held the Swedish school in her mind as a place with integrity and love for children. She felt that in the Scottish system, she was part of 'setting up our children to do low-level clerical work'. Here, Teresa's actions at the school visit were not only driven by the materials and people right in front of her, but also by memories, experiences and emotions from the past. The material and emotional aspects of children's participation rights should therefore be understood in terms of interweaving between contexts, a breaching of temporal and spatial barriers (Hörschelmann, 2018). While material and emotional relations remain a key factor in how participation rights are 'lived', those relations are themselves mediated by histories and memory.

Finally, we join the wider literature that troubles any idea of an ‘implemented or not’ model of participation rights. This is in keeping with other literatures on children’s rights as lived and experienced in ambiguous ways (e.g. Hanson and Nieuwenhuys, 2012; Liebel, 2012). In particular, our reflections illustrate the usefulness of material relations as an analytical tool when considering children’s participation rights. While, like Aitken (2018a), we are cautious of some scholarship of the ‘non-human’ that fails to include a political edge, an analysis of material relations can in fact bring those ambiguous and unsettled politics more clearly into view. Weaving in an analysis of emotional relations offered us further insight. In Ahmed’s (2014) words, emotions are the ‘flesh’ of time, showing the time it takes to move, or move on from traces of experiences past. Emotions circulate, stick (or don’t) and help us trace patterns of histories, including injustices and relations of power. As our school visit illustrates, the way that actors assemble and re-assemble in certain encounters may be fleeting, or more durable (Latour 2005)—and it is through these patterns of entanglements that the normative standards of children’s participation rights become interpreted and lived.

## **Conclusions**

Children and young people’s participation remains a popular idea that has been difficult to translate into meaningful practice. Particularly in Western European, Minority World countries like Scotland, young children spend a great deal of time in institutions that are organised and run by adults, who may or may not have a particular orientation toward participatory work. Our research has demonstrated that while child-adult relations are a key factor in how participation rights become real (or don’t), there are more complex and dynamic relations at play. In this chapter, we have made three key arguments. First, that emotional and material relations are constitutive elements of social life that produce how participation rights are lived and experienced by different people in the same situation. Second, that material and emotional relations are themselves mediated by temporality, interwoven spatial contexts, and memory—among other considerations. Finally, the chapter joins the wider literature challenging an ‘implemented or not’ model of rights, and the tendency (sometimes our own) to default to simplistic narratives about participation rights in practice.

Tracing these relational flows and associations have helped us more fully understand the ways that participation rights were lived and experienced during this compulsory time of change in children's lives. Our analysis may be helpful in relation to early childhood pedagogies that strive for participatory work. For example, rather than cling to a narrow idea of 'voice' or participation as children expressing a clear, actionable view through speech (Aitken, 2018b; Komulainen, 2007; Oswell, 2013), our research demonstrates that the ambiguities of participation work need not be hidden away. It is not only children who have a 'presence' (Moosa-Mitha, 2005)—voice, agency and contribution—in social life. By being more attentive to the complexities of emotional, material, and other relations, practitioners and children may be able to move together within these flows into more participatory ways of working.

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<sup>i</sup> Children under the age of eight years (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005), although in this chapter we mainly discuss children in nursery settings who are five years old and younger.

<sup>ii</sup> An in-depth discussion can be found in Blaisdell (2016).

<sup>iii</sup> Children in Scotland generally begin attending primary school in August of the academic year when they are between four and a half and five and a half years old (Education Scotland, no date).

<sup>iv</sup> All of the children's names in this paper are pseudonyms.