

Study reveals young children's insights into food access and wealth

August 27 2014



A new study by Murdoch University education researchers has highlighted the sophistication of young children's ideas about access to food in terms of wealth and poverty.

Murdoch University researchers Dr Sandra Hesterman and Associate Professor Libby Lee-Hammond investigated how [young children](#) understand the need for food from a perspective of wealth and poverty.

Around 50 [children](#) (aged 6-7 years old) from a low-income community in metropolitan Perth took part in the study.

"The children attended a school where approximately 40 per cent of the

population are Aboriginal and there are many recently settled migrant families in the area. More than 40 different first languages were spoken at home," Prof Lee-Hammond said.

The children were asked to conceptualise, draw and talk about the basic and universal need for food.

They had to draw items found in their fridge at home and had to compare an image of a full fridge and an empty fridge.

"During the group discussion following this task the children expressed a very rich understanding of inequality and disadvantage," Prof Lee-Hammond said.

"We found that young children understand the relationship between work, money and access to food and were able to identify ways they could make [food](#) distribution around the world more 'fair'.

"They talked about pay day, hard work and saving, and had a range of ideas of how people could make the world more equitable.

"Through this study we have shown that young children understand the 'big issues' affecting children around the world and they are very able to develop ideas and behaviours that can have a long term influence for change.

The study won the Equality for Sustainability Award from the Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire and the Swedish International Centre of Education for Sustainable Development.

It was one of only four projects awarded from over 70 applications at the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) conference.

"We were delighted to receive this award, as the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education is the only Early Childhood body with advisory status with UNESCO."

The Murdoch team have collaborated with Dr Marianne Knaus from Edith Cowan University and Mary Vajda from OMEP WA on this project.

Citation: Study reveals young children's insights into food access and wealth (2014, August 27) retrieved 23 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2014-08-reveals-young-children-insights-food.html>

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