



# ***Children's voices in family dispute resolution: reflections on the practice context***

Never Stand Still

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# Structure

- Construction of children
- 'Child awareness' and children's voices
- Perceived practice, actual practice
- Reflections from my research
- Conclusion

Question:

How do we define 'the child'?

# The construction of children

- ▶ How do practitioners construct / understand children?
- ▶ How do these constructions link in with ideas about child inclusion?
- ▶ How do these constructions link in with the actual practice of including children's voices in family dispute resolution?

***construction → narrative → implementation***

# Child awareness, children's voices

What does it mean to be 'child aware' as a practitioner working with separated parents and (at times) their children?

- “(*Good practice is*)...understanding where our views about what's good for children actually come from”  
[Participant C:P3:33]

In what ways are children's voices being included in family dispute resolution with separated parents?

- Outside the room vs. inside the room

# Perceived practice, actual practice

- Duncan Helm [2010, 2011] on rationality and intuition in social work assessments
- Social construction and qualitative research

# Reflections from my research

- Call for the formulation of criteria / best practice principles when including children
- The gap between what we *want* to do, and what we *actually* do
- Dominant narratives around high conflict, children and childhood

“Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself. They came through you but not from you and though they are with you yet they belong not to you.”

-Khalil Gibran-

# Conclusion

- Greater attention to the unconscious – intuition, values, personal beliefs and narratives
- Clarification of goals for child awareness / inclusion, and where these goals originated



# Questions

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