JOURNEY WITH ME:

WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS THROUGH CHILDHOODS

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Abstract

Dominant assumptions and views of children and childhood inform and guide educational policy and practice and have worked to institutionalize meanings of children and childhood. Within the sociology of childhood, literature has challenged these assumptions by recognizing the lived realities of children as contextually specific and historically dynamic, and by acknowledging the existence of multiple situations and perspectives of childhood (James & James, 2012; Mayall, 2002; Prout & James, 1997), however, these understandings are majoritively considered from an adult perspective. This qualitative study welcomes children's perceptions and narratives into discussions of children and childhoods by exploring five children's perspectives and narratives. This study is influenced by the Mosaic approach, "a multi-method, polyvocal approach that brings together different perspectives in order to create *with* children an image of their worlds" (Clark, 2017, p. 17). Semi-structured conversations, photography and child-led walking tours of their neighbourhoods provided the participants with an opportunity to express their thoughts, opinions, and retellings of their own lived experiences. Working within a social-critical paradigm and underpinned by the sociology of childhood, critical childhood studies, and post-structuralism, the aim of this inquiry is to explore from the perspectives of children themselves. Employing poetic inquiry alongside a thematic narrative analysis the child participants' narratives are explored through the discussions of adult/child constructs; freedoms, restrictions and resistance; relationships; and been, being and becoming, and their decision-making and influence on curriculum. In conclusion, recommendations for future practices and areas for further research are discussed. Positioning children, rather than adults, as the storytellers of their lived realities this study works to de-objectifying children in conversations of children and childhood and seeks to acknowledge children as active and valued members of society, and

important tellers of their own stories.

Keywords: children, childhoods, narrative inquiry, walking tours, poetic inquiry, participatory research methods, mosaic approach, critical childhood studies

To Camden. You are a constant source of inspiration. I am forever grateful for the privilege of being your parent, and for the profound impact you have had on my life. I dedicate this to you with lots of love. Throughout your many journeys to come, may you always feel loved and supported through all your wanderings and wonderings.

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Chapter One: Introduction

"Once upon a time" …

Invitation

If you are a dreamer, come in

If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,

A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer...

If you're a pretender, come sit by the fire

For we have some flax-golden tales to spin.

Come in!

Come in!

(*Where the Sidewalk Ends*, Shel Silverstein)

Introduction

*"You're too **young** to understand" … "I will tell you when you are **older**" … "Act your **age**" … "When you **grow up** you will understand real problems" … "Everything was so different when I was your **age**" … "**Youth** is wasted on the young" … "Because I am the **adult**, and you are the **child**" … "I wish I was **young and carefree**" … "You are at **the age now**" … "It is **time to grow up**" … "These are the **best years** of your life" …*

As a child, perhaps you have heard these statements, or as an adult you may have uttered them. These are just a sampling, there are many other similar assertions, which are often declared without much thought: societal tropes that are repeated over and over again. Our Eurocentric society is governed by dominant assumptions of what it means to be a child, or an adult, and thereby establishing two often dichotomous spaces: childhood and adulthood.

Context

Dominant theories and conceptualizations of children and childhood continue to inform and guide educational policy and practice and have worked to institutionalize meanings of children and childhood. Driven in part by the sociology of childhood, current literature has challenged these assumptions by recognizing the lived realities of children as contextually specific and historically dynamic, and by acknowledging the existence of multiple situations and perspectives of childhoods (James & James, 2012; Mayall, 2002; Prout & James, 1997). Understandings of children and childhoods, however, are majoritively considered from an adult perspective. This study builds upon literature that recognizes the multiple stories of children by welcoming children's perceptions and narratives into discussions of children and childhoods.

Significance and Purpose of Study

This study has two main objectives: to contribute to sociological discussions of children and childhood, and to listen and hear children's voices and stories through the research process. The purpose of this study is not to provide a definition of children, or to determine what childhood is, but rather by providing alternate possibilities in the consideration of children and childhood, to broaden the conversation, to resist a single orientation, and to welcome the ambiguity of disorder and unknowingness into considerations of children and childhoods. This study aims to be both scholarly and socially significant, as it provides first-hand information on children's perspectives and experiences therefore adding new knowledge to discussions of how children and childhoods are perceived and considered within our society.

Leading scholars in the field of childhood studies recognize that the perspectives of children vary from those of adults (Clark, 2017; Mayall, 2008), and adults often have a narrow comprehension of children's perceptions and experiences (Dockett & Perry, 2005a; Harcourt, 2011). Building upon this, I explore children's perceptions, ideas, and stories of how they understand their social identities and position as a child in relation to adults and to the world around them. Through this study, I work to bring forth children's perceptions and experiences of their social situation through the stories they tell of themselves. In acknowledging that the experience of childhood is not universally predictive, but is fluid and contextually specific, I believe it is imperative that current conversations of childhoods include stories of children from their narrative perspectives.

This research study, which builds upon my previous work (Barnikis, 2015; Barnikis, et al., 2019), additionally aims to further explore and to create research methods and frameworks to support children in representing themselves and their experiences. Emerging, in part, from the

sociology of childhood there has been a shift from research *on* children to research *with* children (Tisdall, 2016; Burke, 2005; Dockett & Perry, 2005a; Punch, 2002). This literature acknowledges the importance of speaking with, and listening to, children, and views children as capable and competent informants in the research process.

Mayall (2000) states, “re-thinking children and re-thinking childhood is difficult” (p. 245). I agree, and further believe that it is essential. Swaminathan and Mulvihill (2017) position qualitative research questions as a “tool that can stimulate different types of thinking” (p. 2). Building upon this notion, Goodson and Sikes (2001) maintain that data gathered from a qualitative narrative inquiry can “disrupt the normal assumptions of what is ‘known’” (p. 7). Current understandings of children and childhood continue to be informed predominately from an adult perspective. Positioning children, rather than adults, as the storytellers of their lived realities I believe, not only adds new knowledge to the field of childhood studies but may also work to further diffuse dominant societal assumptions. By de-objectifying children in conversations of children and childhoods, we can shift to acknowledging them as active and valued members of society, and important tellers of their own stories.

Research Question

Dominant assumptions and views of children and childhood continue to inform and steer educational policy and practice. The grand metanarrative of developmental psychology and its construction of the “universal child” institutionalizes meanings of children and childhood. Many current scholars working within the field of childhood studies, however, challenge these constructions and assumptions. These scholars recognize the lived realities of children as contextually specific and historically dynamic and acknowledge the existence of multiple situations and perspectives of childhoods (James & James, 2012; Jenks, 2005; Mayall, 2002;

Prout & James, 1997). Despite this shift, current understandings of children and childhoods are still predominantly considered from an adult perspective.

This study builds upon literature that recognizes the multiple stories of children by welcoming children’s perceptions and narratives into discussions of children and childhoods. Positioning children as the narrators of their lived realities adds new knowledge to discussions of children and childhoods and may work to further diffuse dominant assumptions entrenched in an over-reliance on developmental psychology. Drawing from this research’s key aims to contribute to sociological discussions of children and childhoods, and elevate children’s perspectives and stories through the research process, the research question that drives this study is: How do children perceive, conceive, and narrate their experiences of childhood?

As the opening poem suggests, I invite you to explore alongside myself and the participants of this study. Come on in, and let’s take a journey together…

Chapter Two: Theoretical Frameworks and Positionality

"I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship".

(*Little Women,* Louisa May Alcott)

Paradigm

A paradigm is "a set of overarching and interconnected assumptions about the nature of reality" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p .5). Paradigms identify researchers' philosophical orientations and influence all stages of the research process including how meaning is constructed from the data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Throughout this research project, I will be working within a social-critical paradigm. Prior to the 1970s, most educational research was grounded within a positivist paradigm, which aims to uncover universal truths, conceptualising knowledge as being fundamentally ascertainable versus something which is socially constructed (Donmoyer, 2006). Conversely, a social-critical paradigm maintains that ideas of reality and knowledge are shaped by power structures within political, historical, cultural, social and economic contexts, which are "crystalized over time" into dominant structures that become understood as "natural and immutable" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.110). As such, this paradigm aims to reveal societal structures that create and foster dominant ideologies and the status-quo which works to oppress others. Further it is understood that "if the problem lies in an oppressive society rather than in the individual, the solution is a societal, rather than individual, change." (Huss, 2016, p. 85-86). A social-critical paradigm acknowledges the systemic injustices and inequalities which are embedded in, and perpetuated through, dominant social discourses and aims to identify, question, and transform these structures through critical analysis and action.

This study is grounded in the individual experiences and narratives of the participants, and as such throughout this research project, I am not seeking to identify or declare any universal "truths." Within this study, the relationship of myself and the participants is central to the inquiry. This is reflected in a social-critical paradigm where ideas of reality and knowledge are understood to be "value-mediated," as the researcher and participants are "assumed to be

interactively linked, with the values of the investigator (and of situated "others") inevitably influencing the inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.110). A social-critical paradigm upholds the fundamental intensions of this research project, as it makes space for a thorough exploration of human experience, acknowledging oppressive structures and systems, and aims "to link the notion of historical understanding to elements of critique and hope" (Giroux, 1988, p. 213).

Theoretical Frameworks

A theoretical framework is a lens through which to explore an area of inquiry. Drawing upon existing theories and ideas, a theoretical framework contextualizes the research project. Theoretical frameworks support researchers in making transparent their theoretical assumptions, interpreting the meaning emerging from their data, and evaluating the recommendations developing from the research and for future research (Kivunja, 2018). An additional characteristic of a social-critical paradigm is that it does not seek to identify a single theory as "absolute truth," rather, it aims "to understand theories as evolving sets of ideas embedded within a specific sociohistorical time and space" (Huss, 2016, p.86), and refuses to view or define participants through a single lens. As such, there are several key theoretical frameworks which are foundational to this study.

The sociology of childhood. All stages of this study are underpinned by the sociology of childhood. Developing from the 1980s, scholars working with in this framework seek to establish children as active participants in their lives, in the lives of others, and in the world around them (Matthews, 2007; Mayall, 2002; Prout & James, 1997). Prior to this progression in childhood studies, within the field of sociology, children were mainly considered "as passive recipients of care and socialization in the family and other social institutions" (Chen, Raby & Albanese, 2017, p. 3), or as objects of study within the field of development psychology (James

& James, 2012). With the development of the sociology of childhood, however, researchers have shifted from viewing children as objects of research to recognizing children as social actors who should have "a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data" (Prout & James, 1997, p. 8). Working within this framework, scholars draw attention to how children "influence, organize, coordinate and control events taking place in their social worlds" (Alanen, 2009, p. 170), or in other words, highlight children's active participation in influencing the world around them. Building upon this framework, and reflecting back to my research intentions, children should have the opportunities to offer their own views and narratives to discussions of children and childhoods.

Kincheloe (2002) states, the "vision of a desirable politics of childhood helps children articulate their own agendas and construct their own cultural experiences and facilitates their understanding of the complex dynamics that shape their relationships and interactions with adults and the adult word" (p. 39). By listening to children and valuing the ways in which they perceive the world around them, I wish to move past objectifying children in research, to recognizing them as competent experts in their own ideas and experiences. Therefore, my research seeks to explore how children perceive and conceive childhood, thereby honouring and acknowledging children's individual narratives and insights.

Scholars working within the sociology of childhood reject the notion that children experience childhood universally, and further assert "childhood is not a natural state; rather it is a social construct and a social institution" (Berman & MacNevin, 2017, p. 27). This aligns well with the objective of this study, as I aim to explore the individual experiences of children, and do not seek to generalize these experiences as universal of all children, or childhoods, but rather to focus on "local and specific constructed realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 253).

Post-structuralism. Greenwood and Levin (2008) assert that knowledge "is inherently collective" and further, knowing is "a socially constructed and socially distributed phenomenon" (p. 66). Language is used to describe what we know. Thinking with a post-structuralist framework, we "know the world through textual representations of it" and we construct discourses to help "make sense of our lives" (Hatch, 2002, p. 18). Post-structuralism derives from structuralism which asserts that structuring oppositions such as *true/false*, are fundamental to dominant societal understandings (Lesko, 2012). Post-structuralism aims to disrupt these structuring dualities by offering alternative possibilities to dominantly perceived oppositional relationships.

Foucault (1981) maintains that the order of discourse is the "conceptual terrain in which knowledge is framed and produced" and comprises of "all those rules, systems and procedures which constitute, and are constituted by, our 'will to knowledge'" (p. 48). Foucault argues society's "will to truth" is the most significant "procedure controlling and limiting discourse" (p. 56) as all other regimes are in service to society's fixation on creating distinctions, and more specifically on making the distinction between what is true and what is false. Foucault (1981) argues, more significant to society than the actuality of truth, is its desire to make the distinction between true and false. Prevailing Eurocentric discourses of children and childhood have become known as "truths," and work to further uphold dominant societal assumptions and practices. For example, the discursive construction of the universal child through development theory has greatly limited conversations on children and childhood, regulating what can, and cannot, be said, and further, by whom (this will be further discussed in following sections).

Power and discourse are intertwined. Discourse is "both an instrument and an effect of power" (Foucault, 1981, p. 51), and determines what knowledge is deemed valid, tolerable, and

even thinkable (Foucault, 1981). In examining ontological implications of discourse, Foucault explores the notion of exteriority. It cannot be assumed that discourse and reality are one and the same, however, it is also critical to not solely focus on the essence, or even "truth" of the discourse itself, but to how discourse functions within society. An awareness of discourse can not only expose power structures, but also create space for other possibilities; "a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1981, p. 51). The dominant discourse of universal developmental psychology has influenced the construction of children and childhood in contemporary Eurocentric society. The question is not whether these constructions hold truths, but rather what is being done with these assumed truths, and how may recognition of discourse create room for other possibilities. A Foucauldian perspective, building upon a post-structuralist framework, may provide space to trouble established assumptions and conceptualizations of children and childhoods.

Critical theory. Critical theory also serves as a theoretical framework throughout this research project. Critical theory strives to "probe beneath the surface" of systemic practices which perpetuate "observable phenomena" thereby helping individuals to better understand them (Sears & Cairns, 2010, p. 48). Critical theory sheds light on how dominant societal structures and institutions shape and perpetuate inequality and oppression. Milner (2013) urges for society to "unpack, shed light on, problematize, disrupt, and analyze how systems of oppression, marginalization, racism, inequity, hegemony, and discrimination are pervasively present and ingrained in the fabric of policies, practices, institutions, and systems in education" (p. 1). Critical theory challenges, "how the status quo maintains inequality" (Schneider, 2004, p. 90), and moves from examining and focusing on the individual, to investigating the larger system in which the individual is a part. Critical theory is both a way of thinking and a method of critique

(Barakett & Cleghorn, 2008), which can be employed to challenge familiar everyday values and practices, instead of further perpetuating power imbalances of dominant societal views and systems.

Critical childhood studies. The field of critical childhood studies aims to explore and challenge dominant societal structures of power and oppression, which influence conceptualisations of children and childhoods. Developing from critical studies, this theoretical framework builds upon the sociology of childhood's view of children as marginalized in adult-dominated society (Mayall, 2002), where many aspects of children's lives are regulated and restricted by adults (Punch 2002). As Walkerdine (2012) further asserts, "the study of childhood must be able to understand the discourses and practices in which childhood is produced and the way that the positions within those practices are experienced and managed to produce particular configurations of subjectivity" (p. 121). The framework seeks to study and theorize diverse childhoods and acknowledge that complex and distinct experiences of children should be explored through multidisciplinary lenses drawing upon various frameworks and methodologies.

Historically, the knowledge produced by children has often been unconsidered or dismissed, and in response the transdisciplinary field of critical childhood studies works to elevate the perspectives and experiences of children. Critical childhood studies calls upon research "to move beyond claims of authenticity and account for the complexity behind children's voices by exploring their messy, multi-layered and non-normative character" (Spyrou, 2011, p. 151). Critical childhood studies highlights experiences of children which challenge normative ideals produced by dominant societal discourses. Working within this framework, Spyrou (2019) troubles the "child-centeredness" of childhood studies and calls for a more relational approach "to studying children as part of assemblages and emerging phenomena which

matter provides an alternative direction for the field which allows it to explore the dynamism and complexity of the social" (p. 319). Within this framework, the study of children and childhoods should not just offer increased knowledge, but should also elevate children's perceptions and experiences, not just in the research process, but also in social and political action.

Researcher Background and Positionality

Flick (2018) argues that research questions often stem from researchers' experience and social positioning. Swaminathan and Mulvihill (2017) further explore this possibility of personal experience as a starting point for research, and they maintain, "personal experiences can trigger ideas and questions leading to research" (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 22). I believe my past experiences have led me to my research interests, and with such awareness, I am also mindful of the importance of examining these experiences more closely in order to be as transparent as possible to my social location. Within qualitative research, reflexivity is an important and necessary component of the research process to help make clear the researcher's positionality (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017). Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017) maintain, "we interrogate ourselves concerning the ways in which research is shaped and staged around the contradictions and paradoxes of our own lives" (p. 95). In other words, it is important for the researchers to consider how they are situated within their research.

McCaslin & Scott (2003) state the researcher "is the primary research instrument in qualitative investigation," and further describe researchers "as the artists holding their palettes and applying every stroke to their paintings" (p. 453). It is, therefore, essential that researchers identify, and be transparent of, all biases and pre-conceived notions they may hold towards their research subject (McCaslin & Scott, 2003). My research interests explore varying conceptualisations of children and childhoods and children's perceptions of the world around

them, and more specifically how children perceive and conceive of their own experiences of childhood. I hold the position that children are often marginalised in our Eurocentric adult-dominated society. All too often, children's voices are dismissed as being immature, non-significant or unreliable, even when relating to issues directly concerning them. How children are conceptualised within a society influences how children are perceived, and to what extent their voices are heard and acknowledged. When I reflect upon how I consider children's position in society, I call upon hooks (2015) who maintains, "ours is a culture that does not love children" (p. 73). Although seemingly harsh, and perhaps difficult to come to terms with, I believe there is validity in this statement. Through this section, I wish to explore personal experiences, which I believe inform how I conceive children's position within our dominant Eurocentric society.

As with Kuhn's (1995) reflection on disclosing family secrets in her writing, throughout this section I need to question "am I making public what I have consciously known before, but never before revealed, or am I seeking knowledge that is new to me as it is to you?" (p. 2). I believe this exploration will allow for both. When describing my research project, I feel confident in discussions of methods and purpose. I find, however, the question of why I am personally invested in the research less comfortable to discuss. It is not to say, however, that I have not given thought to my positionality, but primarily in relative brevity, quickly drawing upon an influencing experience without much in depth exploration or analysis. This section will allow for a thorough reflection on how my past experiences have shaped how I approach my current research. Although I am somewhat aware of their influence, bringing reflection of several experiences together, calls for a "preparedness to meet the unexpected" (Kuhn, 1995, p. 3), and in doing so, further situates myself within my research to establish "a solid fame from which to paint a coherent picture" (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 454). For this exploration, I present my

experiences under the headings of; seen and not heard, (in)tolerance and disruption, (un)care and relationship, and violence.

Seen and not heard. I begin my reflection with my own childhood, where I believe some of my earliest views of my research topic were informed. I believe if I am going to explore the childhood of others, I first must consider my own childhood, and explore how these experiences inform my current conceptualizations of children and childhoods. When I reflect on my childhood, I recall many favorable and pleasant experiences, however, my views of how I considered myself as child in the world were influenced by a very specific and dominant narrative. As a child, I was constantly told by the adults in my life that “children should be seen and not heard” and that “children should not speak until spoken to.” The utterances of these phrases were not made in anger or as a threat, however, they were spoken often. I believe that these phrases influenced how I navigated childhood, as I was very aware of two distinct social groups: children and adults. Throughout childhood, the social structures in which I was imbedded led me to believe that adults’ position in society was more important than children’s position. This, I believe, influenced my self-confidence and my perception of my self-worth. When interacting with adults, I would never offer my opinions or views, unless I was directly asked. Further being asked directly led to great discomfort and anxiety, as I often did not feel confident in my response. I was a very shy child, especially with interactions with adults, and it took a long time, well into adulthood, before I gained the confidence to express my own opinions and thoughts.

This narrative of children being “seen and not heard” has influenced how I approach my research. I am interested in exploring children’s individual perceptions and experiences, and in uncovering frameworks and methods which aid with this exploration. As laid out by the United

Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children have the right to form and express their opinions on matters that affect them, and further, they have a right for these views to be given due weight. I become frustrated and angered when a child's thoughts and opinions are dismissed simply because they are a child. Devine (2002) maintains, "children's identification of themselves as citizens is influenced by the discourses concerning children and childhood which govern their world" (p. 305). For example, in Canada, particularly Ontario, young voters are often criticized for being apathetic. I argue that we need to move from viewing young populations as indifferent in the democratic process to looking at how society has limited their democratic voice. How can one expect a population, who has been continually told, explicitly and implicitly, that their views are not important, or are not "mature" enough to count, to suddenly believe that their opinions do matter just because they have reached the age of majority? How can humans believe their experiences and opinions are worthy if they are not listened to until an arbitrary day, when society suddenly deems them credible?

(In)Tolerance and Disruption. A few years ago, I was standing on a streetcar heading home. It was rush hour, and the streetcar was crowded. I was standing at the back of the streetcar when a baby near the front began to cry. As I looked up, my eyes meet the eyes of others on the streetcar. As the crying continued, my gaze met the frustrated, impatient, and angry faces of those around me. Although there had been much noise on the crowded streetcar before, suddenly the cries of the baby were disrupting the commuters "peaceful" ride home. I use this term with a dose of irony, for those who ride the streetcar will understand that peaceful is not a word often associated with rush hour streetcar journeys. The reactions of those around me, teeth clenching, exaggerated sighs, eye rolling and muttering under their breath, appeared to illustrate that these cries were a major disruption and annoyance. Suddenly, a man several people in front of me

yelled out "Get off! Just get off!" I remember feeling shocked, however, what occurred next surprised me further. Other people on the streetcar appeared to agree with the man's statement. There was laughter and nods of approval, not from everyone, but there was a sense that most people agreed with the man and did not think he had over-reacted. The crying continued for a while, and then ceased at an ahead streetcar stop, presumably as the baby and caregiver got off the streetcar. Sighs of relief and mutterings of, "Thank you!" and "About time!" immediately followed the departure of the baby. This experience hangs in my memory illustrating the prevalent and often excused intolerance some adult society can display towards children. I am not suggesting that the cries of babies are to be joyfully embraced by all, however, I find this often-presented response to "disruptive" babies upsetting and illustrative of society's often annoyance towards children in which Cobb (2005) argues, "children can be most anything, other than themselves" (p. 119).

Building further upon the notion of children's "disruption" of adult-centric society, I draw upon the article, "Passengers Push for Child Free Seats" (Quenqua, 2010), published on *The New York Times*' website. The article discusses the justification of child-free airline flights and child-free sections on airplanes, which have been implemented by some airline companies. Quenqua (2010) begins the article by maintaining that for passengers, sitting next to a child on an airplane is their second greatest fear of flying, and further infers that for some, only an airplane crash would be worse than sitting next to a child on an aircraft.

This view of children as disruptive is prolific, and is perpetuated throughout various media outlets, which saturate our society. Many online articles discuss the recent trend of some restaurants banning children from their premises including, an Italian restaurant in North Carolina (Simoneaux, 2017), and a pizza restaurant in Florida (Tavss, 2017). These articles do

acknowledge that not everyone is in support of the ban, however, the comments sections of these online articles are overwhelming populated by support of the restaurants' ban of children. Spiteful and aggressive comments highlight an adult-centric attitude towards children. Some of these comments include: "about time there was someplace (sic) to go absent (from) shrieking, unruly children," "take the kids somewhere else and let adults enjoy themselves," "kids ruin everything," (Tavss, 2017); and "no adult wants to be around someone else's kids!!," and "more than once I have walked out of a restaurant after hearing brats crying at the top of their lungs upon first walking in" (Simoneaux, 2017). These sentiments are not confined to the United Sates, a restaurant in Toronto put a sign up in its window a couple of years ago banning "badly behaved children" from its premises. Badly behaved adults, however, are apparently welcomed as no sign is posted indicating otherwise. These sentiments, which reflect a Western individualistic culture, are often propagated through media outlets, and work to uphold and further perpetuate dominant societal assumptions and views of children and childhood.

(Un)care and Relationship. As a pre-service early childhood education student, I completed practicum experience at several childcare centres throughout the city. Although there were exceptions, some of my experiences left me feeling upset and angry. My first practicum experience, in a pre-school room at a childcare, was not a pleasurable one, and opened my eyes to the lack of care that can be present within these settings. The ECEs in the classroom, my mentors, appeared to have little interest in the children, and were very authoritarian in their communications with the children. In the classroom, the ECEs would often not interact with the children, but rather with each other. They spent much time on their cell phones, frequently shopping online. The children were often yelled at for any slight variance from expected behaviour, for example not sitting in the proper crossed legged position on the carpet. There

were times when the ECEs mocked the children and audibly referred to the children's "problems" or "shortcomings" in front of the children themselves.

Within this childcare setting, daily classroom activities with their stated outcomes (as required by city licensing) were posted outside the door of the classroom informing parents and visitors of the days' on-goings. These practices, however, were never actually carried out in the classroom. The staff took turns quickly filling out the activity forms during the children's lunch (a social time in which they could be engaging with the children). The forms were filled out because they were required to by the city. The only time, that the forms were referred to were by inquiring parents, and in response, the staff quickly made up a vague story about a child's involvement in the questioned activity: an activity, which never took place.

When my evaluating professor came for a visit, everything shifted. The staff in the room, while still not necessarily engaging in best practice, demonstrated decent practice. There was no yelling, or shopping online. Children were spoken to, and activities reflecting the program plan were carried out. This I found extremely upsetting. The staff in the room knew and understood how they should conduct themselves, however, on a day-to-day basis they acted in complete opposition. They chose authoritarian control and disinterest over care. Had the staff continued to act in the same manner in front of my evaluating professor, that would have been one thing, illustrating a certain level of ignorance, however, by changing their behaviour, they demonstrated an understanding and knowledge of how things were supposed to be. They possessed the knowledge and skills, and yet they actively chose to act in a manner that displayed very little care for children.

I am not implying that this childcare is representative of all childcare settings. Throughout my various practicum experiences, I experienced exceptional centres where

children's well-being and worth were given top priority. Although not an unquestionably representative example, experiences of (un)care like this do exist, and I believe are often not spoken about. Children are frequently placed in situations, situations of trust, where power is misused.

Violence. The next experience I wish to reflect upon took place in a graduate seminar class in which we were discussing the week's reading from bell hooks' (2015) *Feminism is for Everybody*. One student brought up that she felt hooks was too harsh in her discussion of adult violence against children. In her book, hooks (2015) maintains this violence "is a norm in our society" (p. 73). In the seminar, what followed the student's statement was her assertion and justification of employing corporal punishment on children. She admitted to having hit her own children and strongly argued that hitting children is not abuse. What ensued was a thirty-minute debate on whether adults should be allowed to hit children. At the beginning of the discussion, I made my opinion clear: it is fundamentally wrong for anyone to (ab)use their position of power or authority to verbally, physically, or emotionally hurt or intimidate another person. My points were met with eye rolls from some of my peers and arguments were put forward, such as: corporal punishment is used to teach children what is right and wrong, to teach them respect, and sometimes as a parent you just get so frustrated there is no other option.

Although in Canada the educational system and the judicial system no longer legally employ corporal punishment to teach children right from wrong, the legal use of physical force against children set out in the Criminal Code of Canada is steeped with ambiguity. Section 43 of the Criminal Code condones the use physical force against children by parents, and those assuming parental roles, as long as "the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances" (Barnett, 2016, p. 1). In 2004, in a ruling of six to three, the Supreme Court of

Canada maintained that Section 43 is not unconstitutional as it does not violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court concluded that Section 43 does not "infringe a child's rights to security of the person (section 7) or a child's right to equality (section 15), and it does not constitute cruel and unusual treatment or punishment (section 12)" (Barnett, 2016, p. 2). One of the dissent judges, Justice Marie Deschamps, argued that section 43 of the Criminal Code does in fact violate Section 15 of the Charter as it "encourages a view of children as less worthy of protection and respect for their bodily integrity based on outdated notions of their inferior personhood" (Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law v. Canada (Attorney General), 2004, para. 232). I algin with the views of the Hon. Deschamps and others who advocate for the repeal of Section 43.

In the 2004 ruling the justices clarified that the force "must not harm or degrade the child" (Barnett, 2016, p. 2). The ambiguity in the wording of this statement is infuriating, not to mention dangerous. Who determines and measures whether force is harmful and degrading? It is my position that any situation where a person in a position of power uses physical force in order to "teach a lesson" can cause physical and emotional harm. In the 2004 ruling, the judges did clarify that corporal punishment is not reasonable within school settings, unless force is needed to "remove children from classrooms or secure compliance with instructions" (Barnett, 2016, p. 2). This is yet another ambiguous statement that is open to great interpretation. I find it very upsetting that it was only in 2004 that physical force was deemed unacceptable within school settings, and more disconcerting that in 2023 the use of physical force against children is still permissible within home settings, with "guiding" ambiguity. In his speech to support a second reading of Bill S-251, an Act to repeal Section 43, the Hon. Stan Kutcher (2022) asserted that Section 43 is "an anachronism - an historical holdover from laws written in 1892" (p. 2090).

These colonial laws allowed the use of corporal punishment against wives, employees and children. It is no longer acceptable, or legally permissible, for and employer to hit and employee, or a husband to strike a wife, so why then is it still socially excused and legally permittable to subject children to the use of force as a "corrective" measure? In terms of teaching right from wrong, undoubtably in the twenty-first century there are more civil and effective methods.

In terms of teaching respect, I believe in our society when pertaining to children, the terms *respect* and *compliance* are often used interchangeably. The obeying child is perceived as the respectful child. If someone was to use their power to intimidate or hurt me, I may comply to their wishes out of fear, however, I would not have respect for that person. When considering children, and in fact all human beings, there needs to be a shift whereby respect is viewed not as something that is automatically demanded or commanded by someone due to position or age, but as mutually constructed between people by responding to, and being responsible for, each other. Finally, to address the frustration argument, all I can say is, I often get frustrated with people, however, I do not resort to hitting them.

I found this discussion very upsetting. It was not only the discussion I found troubling, but that the debate was given space to be carried out for so long, or even carried out at all. I understand that within the context of a graduate seminar, it is important to create space for discussion, in particular the discussion of different and challenging ideas. I, however, do not believe this should be the case if such discussion risks hurting or further marginalising certain groups within society. Had someone in the group stated that a husband has the right hit his wife to "teach her a lesson" or "to teach her respect," I do not believe that the discussion would have been given space. So why was the debate encouraged when the abuse was aimed at children?

Nodelman (1992) asserts that the desire for power is why adults persistently reconfirm society's restricting assumptions of children and childhood. This 'power' creates space for adults to justify violence against children. hooks (2015) argues, "in a culture of domination everyone is socialised to see violence as an acceptable means of social control" (p. 64). Within Eurocentric society, adults justify excusing acts of violence against children by depending on 'truths' propagated through dominant understandings of children and childhood. Severe punishments (including corporal punishment) are often considered as appropriate for children based on their age and stage of development, and therefore, moral reasoning. As a direct consequence of children's social position, it is often considered excusable, and acceptable to hit children as a form of corrective discipline "for their own good." Such actions within adult-to-adult interactions, however, are viewed as inappropriate and unacceptable, and may even lead to charges of assault. I am not asserting that all adults must unequivocally love children, for you cannot mandate a person to have certain feelings over another. I am, however, troubling the notion that a dislike and intolerance for children, as a specific population within society, is often socially accepted and perpetuated. I am shocked and saddened by the lengths some adults go to assert their position of power over children, and I fundamentally do not understand the continual justification and allowance of physical and emotional violence against children. In my opinion, this truly illustrates that "ours is a culture that does not love children" (hooks, 2015, p. 73).

Social Location

In addition to an examination of my past experiences which have led me to this area of inquiry, it is important that I am transparent of my social location. I am a white woman coming from a European background. Both my parents were born and raised in England. They both grew up with, and subsequently to varying degrees, intentionally and unintentionally perpetuated the

cultural discourse of children being submissive to adults, and as previously motioned, the discourse of “children should be seen and not heard,” and “children should only speak when spoken to”. This was explicitly how both my parents were raised, and to an extent, I was raised with some of these same notions. My graduate studies in Childhood Studies have made me more aware of this guiding discourse and its potential effects, and as a result has influenced my current approach to research. As a mother, I do not wish to uphold these same cultural discourses and am continually trying to be reflexive of how I approach motherhood being aware of the tensions and contradictions between my upbringing and my views upheld by my current education and research.

As previously expressed, I view children as being marginalized in an adult-dominated society. With this in mind, I am very aware and mindful of my position as an adult researcher working alongside child participants. I cannot dismiss the power imbalance that innately exists within these relationships and although I cannot negate this imbalance, I can work to minimize its effects on the research encounter. Through constant reflexivity I remain mindful of my position as an adult researcher, and of children’s marginalized position in society, to help ensure that this project’s findings and analysis best represent the participants’ perceptions of their experiences. I believe my experience as a Registered Early Childhood Educator and experience conducting past research projects with children, alongside my graduate education within the fields of Education and Early Childhood Studies supports me in this approach. Although each research encounter is unique, I do have experience working alongside children in various settings and feel confident in remaining attentive to the needs of the participants and offering them support if needed throughout the research process.

I also come to this research with the understanding that children are experts in their lived realities. I, like all adults, possess the past experiences of being a child. Although these experiences influence how I approach this research, it is important to acknowledge that I do not know, or possess the experiences of, what it is like to currently experience childhood. As I move through this research, I must not conflate my memories of childhood with the current lived realities of children. Childhoods are historically and culturally dynamic. Although I can bring certain theoretical understandings to discussion and analysis, it is the stories and experiences of the participants which are central to the generation of knowledge within this project.

My assertion of children being marginalised in and adult-dominated society, alongside my past experiences, social location, and understanding of the importance of being aware and of challenging dominant societal discourses all influences this research. This is consistent with, and reflective of, my choice of paradigm and theoretical frameworks, and I believe acts not as a bias, but rather adds nuance and additional layers of understanding to all stages of the research process.

Final Thoughts on Positionality

Through these discussions I aim to be transparent to my social location. There are many other stories, similar to the ones mentioned above, which continue to influence my current positionality and have shaped the way I approach and conduct research. Graue and Walsh (1998) state, “researcher perspective situates work in quite particular ways” (p. 74), as it draws from personal experiences and values. When approaching a research project, it is important that I reflect upon my social location, as it will shape the lens through which I approach all stages of the research. This section has allowed me to examine some of my past experiences, which have, and continue to, influence my views of children and childhoods. Reason (1988) refers to the

notion of critical subjectivity, “in which we do not suppress our primary experiences; nor do we allow ourselves to be swept away and overwhelmed by it; rather we raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process” (p. 12). I believe, my past experiences and current values and subjectivity, serve not necessarily as biases, as when properly acknowledged, they hold the potential to add further insight and understanding to my research purpose and intent.

Chapter Three: Review of Literature

Know from whence you came. If you know whence you came, there are absolutely no limitations to where you can go.

(James Baldwin, as cited in Cohen-Almagor, 2015)

Purpose

The purpose of this review is to explore relevant scholarly literature on the topic of children and childhoods as well as approaches to social research with children. This review will examine some dominant historical conceptualizations of children and childhoods and investigate current epistemological and ethical issues and dilemmas related to participatory social research with children. In doing so, I will identify gaps in the available literature in order to provide a clear direction for my research.

A Brief Historical Overview of Conceptualizations of Child and Childhood(s)

Although not without criticism (Pollock, 1983; Shahar, 1992), French historian Aries' (1962) work, which brought forth ideas of children and childhoods for social and historical study, remains influential. He argued that the notion of childhood, as separate from adulthood, emerged from middle class Europe between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in doing so brought awareness to the idea of exploring children as a distinct social group. Building upon this notion, Gillespie (2012) maintains that from this distinction of childhood being a distinct entity from adulthood, four key concepts of childhood emerged: dependence, protection, segregation, and delayed responsibility. Furthermore, Ryan (2008) argues:

> One of modernity's cardinal features is the special importance that it has granted to childhood in the discourses on being human. As a result, the apparatus of the modern state is dedicated to unprecedented levels of service, regulation, protection, and segregation based on the age of individuals and modern ideas about their development, conditioning, agency, and innocence. (p. 553)

These dominant views of children and childhood(s) have, and continue to, influence how children are perceived and valued within modern Eurocentric society.

Children as inferior or innocent. Throughout historical and cultural discussions of children and childhood there appears to be two dominant Eurocentric societal understandings of children that stem from considering children as either inferior or innocent. Jenks (2005) refers to these two traditional conceptualizations as the *Dionysian* and *Apollonian* models of childhood. These two conflicting societal understandings of the child often operate simultaneously, and should not be viewed as literal descriptions of children and how they contrast to adults, as they are "no more than images," however, these images "are immensely powerful; they live on and give force to the different discourses that we have about children; they constitute summaries of the way we have, over time, come to treat and process children 'normally'" (Jenks, 2005, p. 65).

The Dionysian, or inferior, view of the child maintains the notion that children are born innately evil or corrupt. Within this conceptualization, children are viewed as "ignorant and unknowing subjects" (Reimer & Peters, 2011, p. 89) who must rely on adult guidance in order to develop into "the normal, rational, social adult subject" (p. 91). Under this model the child is seen as coming into the world as inherently flawed, or inferior, and in need of training, or correcting, in order to overcome this inherent weakness. Within this model of childhood, the purpose of socialization to "stifle rather than nurture the child's natural instincts" (Smith, 2014, p. 59), and in which "externally-validated values and norms of behaviour are inculcated into the morally suspect child" (p. 61). Building upon this view, children, lacking their own morality require adult intervention. Children are perceived to be void of a moral compass, and therefore incapable of rational autonomy. In other words, children are viewed as not being born adequate for society. They must acquire virtue, and must be molded, or trained, in order to fit in with adult society. Children must learn to regulate their behaviour in order to align with what is pre-established as acceptable. This pervasive discourse views childhood as a period of "ascent from

savagery/childhood to civilization/adulthood" (Reimer & Peters, 2011, p. 92). This understanding of children begins with the establishment of the adult figure, the one the child will become, and in turn, the child is often considered as what he/she is not (mature, competent, adult), which by consequence infers a deficiency or negation of being. Within this understanding, adults seek to (re)produce the moral, mature adult of the future.

This notion of inborn immorality in children leads to the assumption that adults have an inherent sophistication that children do not. It is adults who bestow upon children the gift of reason. The (perceived) unruliness of childhood disrupts the (perceived) civility of adulthood. Although not often explicitly recognized, this construction also assures "the constitution of the condition of adulthood" (Reimer & Peters, 2011, p. 93) for if children are not constructed as being different to adults, the very meaning of being an adult may be threatened (Kincaid, as cited in Reimer & Peters, 2011). Adults rely on the construction of the (incapable) child to reinforce the status of the (capable) adult.

The Apollonian conceptualization of childhood views children as inherently "innocent and untainted by the world which they have recently entered" (Jenks, 2005, P. 65). Within this view, children "reveal humanity's original capabilities for goodness and love, qualities that should ground all social relations and institutions" (Wall, 2010, p. 73). Children are seen as pure and in need of protection from the "difficulties" of the world. Jenks (2005) maintains society may even idolize the image of the Apollonian child as it represents the best of human nature.

Building upon this image of the child, children's capacity to hold difficult knowledge is often ignored or trivialized, and the innocence of the child must be protected by the knowledge and experience of the adult. This notion suggests not only to what adults believe children cannot tolerate, but also what adults cannot tolerate in children. Under adult guidance, or control, the

purity of childhood is protected from the corruption of adulthood. Grumet (2006) maintains, "we direct children's gazes…so that their notice of the world and ultimately the world they see is the one we care to bring to their attention" (p. 218). Within this framework, adults portray a child that is "easier for (adults) to handle: more passive, more docile, more obedient - and thus, more in need of our guidance and more willing to accept the need for it" (Nodelman, 1992, p. 30).

When discussing childhood "innocence," it is imperative to acknowledge that this image of the child is not afforded to all children. The myth of childhood innocence has not only shaped dominant societal views of children and childhoods, but it has also worked to further define who "is entitled to innocence and what it means to "belong" with/in childhood" (Garlen, 2019, p. 56). The construction of childhood innocence emerged from a specific cultural and historical context "producing a particular "childhood" that perpetuates White supremacy" (Garlen, 2019, p. 56). The notion of childhood innocence has become normalized and perpetuated through developmental psychology and social practice and policy perpetuating white middle-class privilege and domination, and subsequently silencing and excluding experiences and realities which do not fit neatly in the confines of the myth.

The notion of childhood innocence has been, and continues to be, employed as a tool of colonization and oppression, and as Rollo (2018) asserts, it must be examined within "settler colonial dynamics of dispossession" (p. 74). Embedded within the myth of childhood innocence is the discourse that this "innocence" is in need of adult protection. Not only is innocence seen as a virtue of childhood, but its essence is viewed of being at risk of corruption. Innocence, a social construct of childhood, is in need of protection, from that which is different, in order to protect the (white) privileges which it upholds. Adult protection is therefore envisioned as needed in order to uphold and guard this perpetuated myth of childhood, often from the threat of social

change or popular culture and media. Faulkner (2011) maintains, “the unpalatable truth is that the value of a child’s innocence depends on their capacity to be protected” (p. 6). In Canada, this notion of childhood innocence in need of protection served as an underlying justification of the residential school system. Indigenous children were forcefully removed from their homes and communities in order to “provide the “appropriate” conditions of childhood” (Garlen, 2019, p. 63). The architects of the residential school system viewed Indigenous children as inferior and in need of assimilation into Eurocentric culture and traditions. In *Volume 4*, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) states that the approach to discipline employed at residential schools “was based in scripture: corporal punishment was a Biblically authorized way of not only keeping order, but also bringing children to the righteous path” (p. 84). The myth of childhood innocence helped to justify the violence and abuse Indigenous children experienced in residential schools.

The racialized construction of childhood innocence has significant influence on how Black children are viewed in society. Goff et al.’s (2014) study confirmed that Black boys are not afforded the privilege of childhood innocence to the same extent as their white peers. This adult perception of Black boys as older and less innocent than their white counterparts “allows adults to view them as more culpable for indiscretions and, consequently, as more threatening” (Blake et al., 2017, p. 119). The notion of childhood innocence offers protection only to certain children (white middle class) while perpetuating harmful racial stereotypes of other children. This leads to serious implications on how Black boys are treated in educational settings, the judicial system, and the wider society. Epstein et al. (2017) provide data highlighting the “adultifcation” of Black girls illustrating that adults view Black girls as less innocent than their white peers, and further, participants of the study held a perception of Black girls as “needing

less protection and nurturing than white girls, … [knowing] more about adult topics and are more knowledgeable about sex than their white peers" (p. 8). The authors further maintain that Black girls are "under greater surveillance of their decorum" (p.6) than their white peers. The adultification of Black girls is linked to harsher discipline in educational and judicial systems and has detrimental effects on how Black girls see themselves, and how they are perceived by others.

Adults thereby impose different expectations of development and childhood onto Black boy and girls. These views influence not only how Black children are perceived by adults, but also how they are treated. Much litterature (Blake et al, 2017; Epstein et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2000; Goff et al, 2014,) confirm that Black boys and girls are disproportionally represented, and receive harsher punishments, in school discipline and expulsion practices. Ferguson (2000) sates that within the context of school, Black boys and girls are "adultified, gendered figures whose futures [are] already inscribed and foreclosed within racial order" (p. 84). It is crucial we examine and challenge the myth of childhood innocence and how it is employed as a means of oppression and exclusion through dominant systems and practices.

Children as the future. The image of the child also offers society a vision of hope for the future. Children represent the future of society, literally through genealogy, and figuratively through hopes and desires. This offers an interesting paradox; adult society oppresses the very thing in which it places its hopes for a happy and productive future. This promise of hope rests on society's utopian tendencies, and the prevailing view that the children will ultimately not only adjust to the future, but in turn make it "better" (in the ways adults deem fit). Views of children which remain predominately future-orientated, risk leading to the construction of the child as a redeemer figure, as "the adorable symbol of society's self-deception, a means of foisting the mission of our own liberation upon those least able to effect it" (Grumet, 1986, p. 89). Children's

value should not be viewed by the unattainable responsibility of “fixing” the future of society. It is therefore critical, when considering children and childhood, to not only begin with the child, but also to shift from orientating children in the future to viewing them in the present. Locating child-orientated discussions of children in the present may work to dislodge entrenched societal notions of childhood being future-orientated establishing children not as a promise of the future, but as a reality of the present.

The universal child. Within, Modern Eurocentric society, child development is often viewed as a universal and homogenous process supported by developmental psychology. Children are seen as distinct from adults, however, dependent on them for protection, supervision, and decision-making. Rose (1993) argues, “childhood is part of a strict developmental sequence at the end of which stands the cohered and rational consciousness of the adult mind” (p. 13). Within the linear construction of child development, *the child* and *the adult* are positioned at opposing ends, and it is through the notion of universal development that the child travels along the straight line of childhood, eventually arriving at adulthood. The movement here is understood to be one-directional (forward) and predominately predictive. This view of child development as a universal and linear process perpetuates an illusion of children being a homogenized group and leads to the discursive construction of the universal child.

The understanding of development as a universal and linear process perpetuates the illusion that all children experience childhood in relatively the same, and predictable, manner. This practice has led to the normalisation of development, and to the creation of predetermined developmental “norms” and stages, which are considered universal to all children. Gilbert (2014), in thinking with Erikson, maintains, “when theories of development meet the imperatives of education, they move too quickly from tools for thinking to tools for measuring and

correcting" (p. 29). Children are regulated, assessed, and evaluated in relation to developmental assumptions perpetuated by dominant normative pedagogical practices. Brantlinger (2007) maintains the "outward gaze serves to maintain privilege by externalizing difference, defining difference as inferiority, and resisting self-examination and critique" (p. 245). This highlights the significance of social processes, which work to normalize, or to other children and their behaviour. The singular story of "the child" perpetuated through developmental psychology, establishes a perception of what is normal, and subsequently what is not, and in doing so, grants a voice to those who align with normative assumptions, and further silences those who do not.

As aforementioned, through the dominant discourse of developmental psychology, children are often seen as inferior, in need of adult guidance in order to develop into socialized and rational beings (Reimer & Peters, 2011). Within this view, children are positioned as unfinished beings that require adult guidance and assistance in order to become active rational members of society. In positioning adulthood as an "accomplishment," Gilbert (2014) cautions, "development theory constructs children and youth as deficient and not yet fully human" (p. 30). This construction prioritizes the needs and experiences of the future adult over that of the present child, and further establishes childhood as a time of socialization where one (a child) learns to become (an adult). The positioning of the child as not (an adult), and emphasis on "becoming" works to negate who the child currently is, and further infers a deficiency and negation of being. As Cobb (2005) maintains, children "do the work of placeholders" (119). This highlights a disappointing reality that, within dominant Eurocentric society, children are tolerated for who they are, in hopes of who they will become. Societal normative assumptions and practices (re)produces children in relation to predetermined notions of children, discursively constructed by adults through reliance on universal developmental psychology.

In thinking with Bourdieu, Brantlinger (2007) asserts, "because social positions are relational and interdependent, the dominant class not only controls Others, but their power depends on Others' subordination" (p. 239). Drawing from this notion, adults' power over children depends on the construction of children as subordinate. Bourdieu (1987) argues the "sense of one's place is at the same time a sense of the place of others" (p. 5). Social processes work to classify, by not only establishing who belongs to a group, but at the same time, by their very existence, establishing who does not belong. Adults' position relies on domination as a defining characteristic of adulthood being inextricably intertwined with subordination being a defining characteristic of childhood. Gilbert (2014) maintains, adults "cannot feel secure in our grownupness and feel that we have arrived at adulthood without the figure of the dependent and helpless child" (p. 31). The discursive construction of the child as not-adult serves to not only reinforce assumptions of childhood, but also of adulthood, for if children are not constructed as being different to adults, the very meaning of being an adult may be threatened. Children, however, are not seen as a threat to adult identity, if their differences function as a reminder of the development, and superiority, of adults (Gilbert, 2014). Adults rely on the construction of the (incapable) child to reinforce the status of the (capable) adult.

The above sections offer insight into how the dominant discourse of developmental psychology has influenced prevailing Eurocentric conceptualizations of children and childhood, and how this discourse has operated to confirm power relations and hierarchical structures within adult child dichotomies. When questioning why adults must "continually confirm our limiting assumptions" of children and childhood, Nodelman (1992) maintains, "the answer is simple: power." (p. 31). For Foucault (1981) power is not a fixed object of possession, but is rather a process that is reinforced by discourse. Language not only works to construct, or define, the

world around us, it also reflects pre-established relations of power. Nodelman (1992) further argues, "knowledge is quite literally power… to know something is to be separate from it, above it, objective about it" (p. 31). Thinking with Foucault's (1981) concept of "will to truth," society's ideological values influence what is considered truth, and in turn, the power associated with such "knowledge." Therefore, by knowing and (re)confirming children's difference from adults, adults can assert that children are inferior to adults, and in doing so, adults can further justify their oppression over children.

Building upon Foucault's (1981) notion of "will to truth," society's reliance on universal development psychology may be viewed as a means to explain the unexplainable, or in other words, to add order to disorder. Child development is not universally predictive but is rather fluid and contextually specific. Stockton (2009) employs the term *growing sideways* to describe development that disrupts the normalized universal linear model. Under this model, development may be viewed as a web, expanding from all directions. What would it mean to reconsider the fixed, predictive, and linear model of child development? Instead of viewing development as a predetermined path beginning with the child and ending with the adult, society could shift to consider it to be a continuous fluid process, adding bumps and curves to the line of development and moving forwards, backwards, and sideways along its course. This view allows for the recognition of the child not as a reimaging of predictability, but an imagining of unpredictability.

Gilbert (2014) questions how can adults attend to the development of children, when such development may disrupt a certain version of the adult? Turning to Arendt (1977) may offer possibilities in considering this question. Thinking with Arendt, it is the responsibility of adults to show children the world. For Arendt conserving and renewing are not dichotomous, but rather intertwined. Humans need to conserve the significance of the past in order to take responsibility

of a common world, however, the newcomer (the child) is essential to renewing that world (Ardent, 1977). Arendt (1977) argues, "the essence of education is natality" (p. 174) that human beings are born into the world as new. Humans are born not as copies of what already exists in the world, but as new, and therefore hold the possibility of change. It is the work of adults to protect natality, by protecting the child from social conventions and processes that solicit them to "fit-in" for the sake of social reproduction. Natality offers the world a possibility away from what Arendt refers to as the "banality of evil" (Arendt, 1964), the notion that passivity in simply upholding the routinized status quo without moral thought can hold great danger. Natality offers the world the possibility of the *new* to exceed the *what is*.

Arendt (1977) does maintain natality is in need of adult care and protection. This calls for an attention to relation. Arendt argues adults place hope on each new generation, but "precisely because we can base our hope on this, we destroy everything if we try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look" (p. 192). The possibility natality and creation in a child may offer, holds the possibility of being destroyed if controlled too tightly, however, it is also crucial that children are attended to, and not be "left to their own devices" (Arendt, 1977, p. 196). In being attentive to relationship, adults could move to fostering uncertainty and to honouring creation by welcoming children without the promise of whom they will, or should, become. Attentive relationship may hold the possibility of considering childhood not as a time of (re)production, but as a time of creation.

Children are regulated, assessed, and evaluated in relation to developmental assumptions perpetuated by dominant normative pedagogical practices. Eurocentric societies perceive the goal of development as producing the most civilized, and within this construction otherness and difference are understood as a "lower developmental level" (Walkerdine, 1993, p. 456). The

singular story of “the child” perpetuated through developmental psychology, establishes a perception of what is normal, and subsequently what is abnormal, and in doing so, grants a voice to those who align with normative assumptions, and silences those who do not. Child development is neither natural nor universal, but contextually specific. Walkerdine (1993) argues postmodernism disrupts the assumptions of developmental psychology, however, cautions that such a shift is “not necessarily a turn away from materiality, nor a turn away from exploitation and oppression” (p. 465), and is not “reducible to relativism” (p. 456), but is concerned with real world power relations. Walkerdine (1993) cautions the privileging of a singular universal story of development has an “oppressive and real effect” (p.465) and calls for the acknowledgment of multiple stories of the child. Considering children as contextually specific and historically dynamic, challenges the discursive construction of a universal child, opens the discussion to the possibilities of multiple children and multiple childhoods encompassing multiple perspectives and histories, and confronts the privileging of one’s story over another’s.

Nodelman (1992) maintains, adults “almost always describe childhood for children” (p. 31). Adults, relying on adult perspectives, write, and tell, the story of childhood. This in relation to the dominance of the singular story works in silencing the multiplicity of stories and shifts power to the one who tells the story, the one who is permitted to define. Within Eurocentric society, notions of children and childhood are majoritively considered and defined from an adult perspective. In addition to admitting the multiple stories of the child, it is crucial to challenge the storytellers. Positioning children as the storytellers will add to conversations of childhood and child development and may work to further diffuse dominant assumptions entrenched in reliance on developmental psychology as a grand metanarrative.

Childhood as a social construction and children as social actors. Scholars working within the sociology of childhood have worked to challenge dominant societal assumptions of children and childhood(s) (James and James, 2004; Jenks, 2005; Qvortrup 1994). Within this framework, views of childhood began to shift from considerations of being a natural universal state, to a social construction. Qvortrup (1994) maintains, “who can possibly claim there to be only one childhood when it is so obvious that children lead their life under a variety of conditions?” (p. 5). This view accentuates external conditions such as social, economic, and political factors, in shaping the lives of children in specific time and spaces.

In acknowledging childhood as a social construction, it is important to note, however, that the sociology of childhood does not consider children as passive in their identity formation. In order to turn from the possible implication of children’s passivity, much work within this framework focuses on notions of children’s agency, or more specifically children’s capacity to interact, influence and affect the surroundings in which they live (Prout & James, 1997). Exploring social constructions of children and childhoods, however, is critical to understanding how notions of children and childhoods “found in the representations and discourses of different societies impact on children’s everyday lives and experiences (James & James, 2012, p. 117). This presents an interesting paradox, as children hold agency, however, in society which often works to limit their agency. Parallels of this notion can be seen in the writings of Marx (1898) who maintains people create their own histories, but under circumstances formed and transferred from the past. Ryan (2008) argues “viewing children as social actors with a part to play in the construction of their own intellect, abilities, and identities requires immersion in (rather than departure from) the landscape of modern childhood with all of its complications and dualisms” (p. 572). Additionally, James (2013) argues that the recent focus on children’s individual agency

has to an extent been overemphasized as children's agency cannot fully eclipse dominant social discourses. The individual narratives of children are inextricably intertwined with central societal notions of children and childhood. At the same time, however, it is also possible for counter-discourses as children may choose to resist the dominant societal discourses. Individual agencies influence societal ideas and views, however, at the same time these agencies are deeply affected dominant societal discourses.

Participatory Research with Children

The relatively recent shift from research *on* children to research *with* children, whereby children are "considered as active participants in the research process, as subjects of research rather than objects" (Horgan, 2017, p. 246), has also led to a shift in research methodology. Over the past couple of decades, child participatory research has rapidly expanded (Horgan, 2017). Framed by the sociology of childhood, research *with* children, opposed to research *on* children, strives for "an acceptance that children's knowledge of their own worlds is owned by them and that they are the experts in knowing and recording their own worlds" (Burke, 2005, p. 31). Participatory research methods are often employed in research with children, as they are generally considered as aiding in empowering children through active engagement in the research process.

At the same time, scholars have troubled and challenged some of the inherent assumptions often imbedded in participatory research methodologies. The following sections aim to highlight some of the current debates and dilemmas pertaining to participatory research with children. Christensen (2004) maintains, "issues of power, voice and representation have been central to discussions of children's participation in social and political life … these issues are also reflected in the growing methodological literature on research with children" (p. 166).

Although participation is an important element in research with children, there is a need to examine and critically reflect upon this process. The following sections will examine some of the debates and dilemmas of power and representation as they pertain to conducting participatory research with children and will look towards how researchers may support a more equitable and fuller participation for children in research.

Power, empowerment, and agency. Power is “implicit in any research” (Horgan, 2017, p. 248), however, due to children’s marginalized position in society, these issues and challenges may be amplified when adult researchers conduct research with child participants. Researchers’ conceptualizations of power influence how they approach all stages of their research projects, and “viewing power as inherent to research emphasises that research is a practice that is part of social life rather than an external contemplation of it” (Christensen, 2004, p. 166). Researchers working within the sociology of childhood, which aims to move past viewing children as objects of study to acknowledging them as competent narrators of their own perceptions and experiences (Dockett & Perry, 2005a), often conceptualize power as something that can be “transferred” from adults to children through the employment of specific research methods. Within this framework, researchers often refer to employing methods which ‘hand power over’ to children. For example, Mayall (2000) maintains that research conversations, rather than formal interviews, “hand over the agenda to children, so that they can control the pace and direction of the conversation” (p. 133).

Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) trouble the notion that participatory research with children often assumes that power is “a commodity to be acquired, exchanged, shared and relinquished at will” (p. 503). Thinking with Foucault, the authors challenge the economic model of power, whereby power is viewed as a fixed object of possession, and rather suggest it be

considered a process, which is reinforced and reconsidered by discourse (Foucault,1981). Christensen (2004) further maintains power is not "nested in categorical positions, such as 'adult' or 'child', but rather in the social representations of these that we make, negotiate, work out and work with in social life" (p. 167). In challenging the economic model of power, Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) also contest the assumption that power can be transferred from one person to another by employing certain predetermined methods, by maintaining the ways "research participants can, and do, act places them beyond the control of the researcher and his or her techniques" (p. 503). The assumption that child participants will act in a predetermined manner, for example the notion that they will unquestionably, and gratefully, receive power "handed" over to them by the use of certain methods, is, in fact, in direct opposition to the expressed goal of participatory research of viewing child participants as social actors in the research process.

The troubling of dominant conceptions of power within participatory research, additionally challenges the notion that children do not have any power unless adults empower them, which may in itself be an adultist assumption. Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) consider issues pertaining to participation, agency, and empowerment. They acknowledge that participation in research with children is widely viewed as favourable, as it is assumed that participatory methods, which children "become actively involved rather than passively responding" (Punch, 2002, p. 337), empowers children to voice their opinions. Gallacher and Gallagher, however, argue that researchers often do not pause to consider the inherent assumptions tethered to this line of thought. They assert a push towards empowerment "assumes that children require to be 'empowered' by adults if they are to act in the world" and further "consider the impetus towards 'empowerment' in 'participatory' childhood research somewhat

ironic" (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008 p. 503). The idea of empowerment assumes that without help and encouragement from adults, child participants are not capable of acting upon their own agency within research situations, and therefore, researchers, guided by this frame of thinking, may, in actuality, "risk perpetuating the very model that they purport to oppose" (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008 p. 503).

Horgan (2017) states that participatory research with children is "a relational process which involves generational and power differentials" (p. 247). Punch (2002) explores the question of whether research methods with children should be different than research methods with adults and further maintains, "perceiving children as competent social actors does not necessarily mean that research should be conducted in the same way as with adults" (p. 338). In other words, when conducting research with children, it is imperative that researchers are cognizant of children's marginalized position in society and establish research methods that recognize the power imbalance between child participant and adult researcher. Much literature on participatory research methods with children considers and explores issues relating to how to acknowledge, or even work to diminish, this innate power imbalance.

Researchers employing participatory research methods with children often aim to conduct research on more equal terms in order to "stretch the limits of the generational order" (Johansson, as cited in Horgan, 2017, p. 251). One such approach is the adoption of the "least adult role" (Mandell, 1991). Although many scholars explore this notion, their views towards this approach are divided. This research approach involves researchers endeavouring to act in a similar manner as children in order to aid in diminishing power imbalances between adult researchers and child participants. By "becoming" more like their research participants, some

researchers believe social differences can be surmounted, and become "inconsequential in interaction" (Mandell as cited in, Raffety, 2015, p.411).

This position, however, draws much criticism, as it appears "simply to wish away the complexity of the differences and similarities between children and adults as they are currently constituted" (Christensen, 2004, p. 173). This technique also assumes a certain level of passivity on the part of the child participants; that they will not notice, nor care or act upon the researcher's disguised social status. This approach is highly problematic as it first assumes a certain level of naivety within the child participant, as they will simply accept and not question the researchers' newly adopted position, and secondly, it perpetuates the notion that "child qualities" are easily discoverable, universal, and reproducible. As Graue and Walsh (1998) so simply and effectively state, "in doing research with children, one never becomes a child. One remains a very definite and readily identifiable 'other'" (p. xiv). Perhaps in approaching research with children, instead of taking on the least adult role, researchers could shift to a position of least intervention whereby researchers work to contain immediate interpretation or control of the encounter and remain open to hearing and valuing what the child is saying (or not saying).

Raffety (2015) argues that participatory research methodologies, which aim at minimizing social difference, such as the aforementioned "least-adult role" are "problematic because they misplace their strategic emphasis on factors seen as external to research (social difference), rather than the internal dynamics of the cultivation of research relationships (social distance)" (Raffety, 2015, p. 413). In approaching, and attending to, the innate power imbalance present between adult researcher and child participant Raffety (2015) argues for a shift from approaches aimed at minimizing social difference, which "presumes control to be located in the researcher and the research design, and tends to reproduce understandings of difference from the

perspective of the researcher rather than the informant" (p. 417) to approaches which acknowledge that child participants' "local understandings of difference are central to the research produced" (p. 415).

Adding further to the discussion of issues of power connected to participatory research with children, Christensen (2004) argues:

> the issue of power is complex and cannot be addressed through only viewing power as a matter of social position—such as 'adult power' over children or vice versa. In the process of research, power moves between different actors and different social positions, it is produced and negotiated in the social interactions of child to adult, child to child and adult to adult in the local settings of the research. (p. 174-175)

This approach considers power as negotiated through the research encounter, and in doing so, emphasizes the importance of relationship in research. This highlights a shift in methodology from "information gathering" to "interaction" (Anderson & Jack, 1998, p. 23), and brings to the forefront notions of reciprocity in research. Considering research as a mutual and dynamic encounter may offer possibilities in reconsidering how power is perceived and constituted in participatory research with children.

Representation and voice. James (2007) asserts all research should be acknowledged as "a process of representation" (p. 268). In regard to representing children and their experiences, the sociology of childhood has been influential in highlighting the importance of bringing children's voices to the forefront. Within participatory research, as with all research which aims to explore the perceptions of others, many dilemmas arise in connection to the "problems and possibilities of representation" (Eldén, 2012, p. 67). As Munro (1998) argues, it is not possible to

"collect a life" (p. 8), however participatory research with children does require researchers to take on what Eldén (2012) refers to as the "voicing of others" (p. 66).

James (2007) argues the often-employed expression of "giving voice to children" "poses a threat to the future of childhood research because it masks a number of important conceptual and epistemological problems" (p. 261). James further maintains participatory research's focus on "giving voice" to children raises issues of authenticity in representation, diversity of experience and participation in research. She argues we need to question how children's voices have been considered in childhood research in order to "identify some of the theoretical and conceptual pitfalls about 'voice'" (James, 2007, p. 262).

Horgan (2017) acknowledges, childhood studies have been effective in "bringing the silenced voices of children into the debate" (p. 246), however, the emphasis of participatory research on bringing forth children's voices may also risk perpetuating the notion that children, without adult support, do not have a "voice," and that children are somehow incapable of speaking out without the aid of an adult facilitator. James (2007) further argues that if children's voices are not apparent and accessible, we need to shift to examine how, in society, children's voices have been represented, for which purposes, and by whom. This brings forth the question of whether presuming children do not have a voice is, in actuality, an adultist assumption, and whether we should shift from research which seeks to *give* a voice to children, to exploring how to *elevate* children's voices by challenging how society seeks out, listens, and acts upon these voices.

As discussed above, participatory research with children, is often concerned with bringing children's voices to the forefront, however, investigations of children's perspectives through the notion of *voice* are often underpinned by the assumption that voice is synonymous

with truth (Spyrou, 2016). Further, Eldén (2012) argues participatory research methods can work to further perpetuate the notion that "it is possible to uncover the 'authentic' voice of the child" (p. 67). This appears somewhat paradoxical, as research framed by the sociology of childhood seeks to establish "a variety of childhoods rather than a single and universal phenomenon" (Prout & James, 1997, p. 8), however, participatory research methods, focused on bringing forth the "authentic" and "true" voice of children, may in fact "risk simplifying and reducing the complexity of children as social actors" (Eldén, 2012, p. 66).

Participatory research's emphasis on highlighting the voice of the child also risks presenting children as a homogenized group. Eldén (2012) argues the notion "there are 'children's voices' out there waiting to be 'captured' by the researcher and the idea of unconscious 'voices' to uncover share an assumption of the child as having a unitary, atomistic and authentic voice" (p. 68). James (2007) builds upon this argument asserting that presenting the voice of the child as "a singular category position" works to "clump children together as members of a category," and "risks glossing over the diversity of children's own lives and experiences" (p. 262). James further maintains the notion of voice may imply universality and uphold the perception that the voice of one child can represent many children, who if given the opportunity, may present an entirely different experience of childhood. The singular 'voice of the child' perpetuated through participatory research, establishes a perception of what is normal, and subsequently what is abnormal, and in doing so, elevates the perceptions and experiences of those who align with normative assumptions, and further suppresses those who do not.

Horgan (2017) calls for research approaches, which acknowledge "the 'multivoicedness' of children" and which, recognize "the fluidity and diversity of children's positions" (p. 250). This demands a methodological shift from researchers seeking to uncover "the voice" of

children, to welcoming the many narratives of children into the field of childhood studies. James and James (2004) advocate for inviting the "messiness" of children's voices into childhood research as "the diversities that distinguish one child from another are as important and as significant as the commonalities they might share" (p.16). Eldén (2012) invites a similar approach which acknowledges children as "being complex subjects" (p. 78) and asserts through the welcoming of the individual and their unique experiences, "children become the social actors that new childhood research strive[s] to represent" (p. 78). Eldén (2012), in recognizing children as "simultaneously competent, agentic, vulnerable and dependent" (p. 77), powerfully concludes that the multivoicedness of children "can challenge what is known" (p. 78).

The notion of voice presents a further dilemma within participatory research methodology, as its emphasis on active engagement does not recognize more quieter forms of participation, and risks dismissing what may be offered by attending to silences. James (2007) maintains, the notion of children's voice "assumes, implicitly, children's active collaboration in the research process" (p. 262). This perpetuates assumptions around participation and implies that because one is not speaking, one is not participating. Often in qualitative data, "what is recorded, transcribed and coded is that which is uttered and heard" (Spyrou, 2016, p. 9). Within research transcripts, silence is often considered as non-data, however, what is not said may be as important as what is said and can offer additional layers of understanding and further nuance to the topic being explored.

Within the research encounter, participatory research often considers silence as a problem to overcome. There is frequently the (mis)conception that silence in a conversational setting implies a failure, or that no "useful" data is being collected. Spyrou (2016) acknowledges that silence is one of voice's "more problematic" features (p. 7), however, he argues that silence is

not "a lack of voice," and the challenge lies in "hear(ing) what 'silent speech' is saying despite its apparent nothingness" (p. 10). This calls for a shift in research methodology, which considers the possibility of attending to silence alongside the uttered in research encounters. Attending to the often-dismissed silences, and the context in which they are produced, may work to bring forth contradictory and ambiguous data by which, "a more nuanced, complicated and productive story may be told" (Mazzei &Jackson, 2012, p. 746).

The aforementioned discussion of dilemmas of power and representation in participatory research with children brings forth the question of "how do we represent without essentializing or ascribing some kind of authenticity beyond the social and discursive" (Eldén, 2012, p. 67). Thinking with a post-structuralist framework, and further drawing upon Foucault's (1981) "will to truth," dominant Eurocentric discourses of children and childhood have become understood as "truths," and work to further uphold dominant societal assumptions. In the past, within the field of childhood studies, this "will to truth" appears to be represented by the desire (implicit and explicit) to neatly, and unequivocally, represent children and their experiences. In challenging this notion, Spyrou (2011) argues for reflective research processes which welcome "the messiness, ambiguity, polyvocality, non-factuality and multi-layered nature of meaning in 'stories'" (p. 162). Eldén (2012) maintains these approaches call for a shift from tying to uncover "authentic" voice and truths to exploring many diverse narratives of children by acknowledging "the complexities *within* children's voices" (p. 68) and recognizing "the changing and different positions from which children speak" (p. 67). This shift in research methodologies to ones which "[elude] and [resist] the grasp of neat categories or consistent themes" (Swaminathan and Mulvihill, 2017, p. 6) could broaden conversations of children and childhoods and to move

beyond the “will to truth” in order to make space for the possibility of disequilibrium and ambiguity, and work to reveal and to unsettle entrenched assumptions.

Looking Forward: Possibilities Located within Relation

The above sections offer insight into how current scholars have taken up issues and dilemmas of power and representation within participatory research with children. These examinations have brought to the forefront the importance of the research encounter in participatory research. Hatch (2002) maintains, “it is a characteristic of qualitative research that studies change as they are being implemented” (p. 9). Likewise, Spyrou (2016) argues that the interview process “is neither one way nor static” (p. 14) and “provides insights into a world that is anything but coherent, singular and definite” (p. 17). Komulainen (2007), building upon the writing of Bakhtin, further asserts “‘voice’ should be seen as a process rather than a location” and “meaning comes into existence when two or more voices come into contact” (p. 23). These notions call for an attentive orientation to the relational aspects of the research process. What is central to the research encounter, is the relationship between the researcher and participant. This highlights a methodological shift in which the research encounter is valued and documented as data itself. Meaning emanates and is negotiated through the relationship between the researcher and participant. Data interpretation should be grounded in the research process itself, as the “self and Other are knottily entangled” (Fine, 1994). This is not to discount the importance of thoughtful research design; however, it may suggest that it is in this openness to receive the unknown that further possibilities may lie.

In being attentive to relationship, researchers could move to fostering ambiguity and to honouring creation in research encounters by welcoming child participants without the promise of how they will, or should, act or respond. Attentive relationship may hold the possibility of

considering participatory research encounters not as a time of (re)production, but of a time of creation. This view allows for the recognition of the child not as a reimaging of predictability, but an imagining of unpredictability. In attending to the Other, Kant calls for "replacing hostility with hospitality" (as cited in Bauman, 2016, p. 74). This calls for a shift in not viewing difference as feature of oppression, but rather as an opportunity to attend, or respond, to another. Speaking on hospitality, Derrida (in Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000) maintains, "let us say yes to who or what turns up, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification" (p. 77). Hospitality may offer a way to reconsider adult-child research relationships. By not projecting preconceived notions onto children, adults can be open to the possibility of receiving the alterity, or Otherness, of children, and in doing so, make space for the unknown. Adult researchers' response to child participants, under the guidance of hospitality, requires the holding of, and attending to ambiguity, and may lead to the possibility of adult-child research relationships that recognize and foster responsibility for, not power over, one another.

Conclusions Gleaned from the Review of Literature

This review of literature uncovers a gap in research which explore ideas of childhoods from the perspectives of children. This highlights the importance for further research on childhood experiences from the perspectives of children themselves, and affirms the relevance and significance of the purpose of study and my research questions of: How do a group of children perceive, and conceive childhood? By welcoming children's own stories and perceptions of childhood into discussions of children and childhoods, this research aims to extend sociological discussions while attending to the present gap in research of explorations of narratives of children and childhoods from the narrative perspective of children themselves.

As I planned my study, I struggled with some ideas on how to approach the research

design, and in doing so I turned to explore literature on the topic. My research is being guided by conversations within the sociology of childhood and influenced by current debates around conducting participatory research with children. My intention is that this research works to de-objectify children in conversations of children and childhood, repositions children as active and valued members of society, and important tellers of their own stories. While this review of literature does not necessarily provide me with definitive answers, it does, offer additional layers of consideration, which help me think through certain debates and dilemmas.

Chapter Four: Methodology

> We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we're here; you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship – we change the world, one story at a time.
>
> (Richard Wagamese, as cited in Poling, 2017)

Methodology

This study builds upon literature that recognizes the multiple stories of children, by welcoming children's perceptions and narratives into discussions of children and childhoods and aims to uncover research methods and frameworks to further support children in representing themselves and their experiences. Eldén (2012) asserts "lived experience needs to be captured in ways that allow 'messiness' and multidimensionality to enter into research practice" (p. 70). As my research intends to explore and acknowledge the multitude of narratives of children, I am conscious that my research methodology should also reflect this. I am not discounting the importance of thoughtful research design; however, I believe it is critical for research methodologies to make space for, and to welcome, the unknown. This reflects an emergent research design where researchers remain open and willing to adapt to new ideas and experiences throughout the entire research process (Pailthrope, 2017). Throughout this project I remain conscious that possibilities in further recognizing and celebrating children's perspectives of their experiences may not lie solely in the planning stages of the research, but also in moments of unpredictability as the study progresses. Celebrating an openness to the unexpected, which, by its nature, fosters negotiation, may aid in establishing more reciprocal and equitable research relationships (Barnikis, MacNevin & Berman, 2019). Each research encounter is a call to a new relationship; guided by past experience, however, open to the unexpected and to the possibility of mutual re-imagination and creation.

Approach

This research study is framed by a social-critical paradigm and takes a qualitative, narrative approach (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Hatch, 2002). A qualitative approach allows for an examination of individuals' experiences and opinions (Hatch, 2002). Opposed to a quantitative

approach which "assumes that clear cause and effect relationships can be established while scrutinizing human behavior" (Basit, 2010, p. 15), a qualitative approach assumes "the social world has no objective existence independent of individuals' views, perceptions and behaviour" (Basit, 2010, p. 16). Shifting from a generalization of perceptions and experience, within a qualitative approach the researcher aims to construct meaning from the perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2014), focusing on "local and specific constructed realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 253), as "different researchers embrace different realities, as do the individuals being studied" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). A qualitative approach to this study supports the multiple opinions and experiences of the child participants to be explored in depth, allowing for a more nuanced study.

This project also employs narrative inquiry as a methodological approach. Narrative inquiry works to explore experiences "expressed in lived and told stories" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5). Humans "lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives" and working within a narrative approach elevates individual ways of knowing and making sense of the world around them. A strength of narrative inquiry is that it honours the storyteller and their individual ways of understanding and seeing the world. For research with children, a narrative approach allows for opportunities for the participants to express and think with their experiences in the world and in doing so, perhaps makes room to challenge dominant societal assumptions which often determine how they are viewed within society.

It is important to acknowledge that narrative inquiry "involves the reconstruction of a person's experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5). A narrative approach views reality as "relational, temporal, and continuous" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 44) and works not to uncover definitive truths, but rather to

explore how the concept of reality is known and experienced. Additionally, narrative inquiry requires an element of relationality as the research must recognise personal involvement in the storytelling process (Clandinin, 2013). Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) assert the focus of narrative inquiry:

> is not only on individuals' experience but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, and writing, and interpreting texts. (p. 42–43)

Narrative inquiry asks researchers and participants to examine their involvement in the storytelling process "in the midst" of their lives which are "shaped by attending to past, present, and future unfolding social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43). This approach works well with this project as when exploring children's experiences of childhood, and I must remain aware that the relationship between myself and the participants, how I listen and interpret their stories, is significant to the research process and data generated. Throughout the research process and my conversations with the participants, through the invitation to listen, I became a part of the stories they told me. How we attended to one another affected not only the experience of collecting data, but also the data collected, and its interpretation.

Sample and Recruitment

It is important to acknowledge that this study employs a small sample size from a specific context, and therefore, in keeping with qualitative research, my results are not intended be generalizable to be representative of all children's experiences, however, ideas and theories

generated by the research aim to open up conversations of children and childhoods, and in doing so, may be transferable to other contexts. In building upon this, it is my hope that these research findings will challenge dominant discourses, support new conversations, and identify possible topics for future research while illuminating children as competent participants in the research process.

To obtain my sample, I employed a network-based sampling and recruitment approach (Geddes, Parker & Scott, 2018; Heckathorn & Cameron, 2017). After receiving approval for this study from the York University Research Ethics Board, I drew upon my own assorted social and professional networks. I contacted various potential participants via an introductory email (see Appendix A). In obtaining my sample, I also asked potential participants to nominate further potential participants. This is known as a snowball approach, where potential participants of a certain population locate further potential participants within the same population (Chromy, 2008). As I am familiar with many of the parents of the potential participants, I did not wish for my existing relationship with the children and their families to influence their decision to partake or not to partake in the study. The introductory email clearly states that participation in the project is completely voluntary and the agreement to participate, or not, would not affect my future relationship with the potential participants and their families. It was left to the families wishing to participate in the research study to contact me to participate. Once I was contacted by the interested families, I sent the consent form (see Appendix B) in which I made it unequivocally clear that participation in this research project is entirely voluntary, and that the child participants may choose to leave the study at any time. This was also made clear on the assent forms (Appendix C) which I employed at the commencement of each meeting, to further gain consent to speak with each participant.

My sample is comprised of five participants who, at the commencement of the data collection, were between the ages of 4 and 12 years old. During the recruitment stage, I focused on the inclusion of younger participants, as research suggests that younger children are often the least represented age group in empirical research studies with children (McNamee & Seymour, 2012). Through a systemic review of studies published in three major journals drawing from the sociology of childhood over the past twenty years, McNamee and Seymour (2012) not only conclude that 10- to 12-year-olds are the most sought out age group in childhood research, but also the younger age group (5- to 7-year-olds) are noticeably less likely to be included in research samples than older children (15- to 18-year-olds). I believe move empirical research studies incorporating younger samples are needed to more fully welcome and celebrate the perceptions and knowledge of children. Three out of the five participants from this study were under the age of 10.

To protect the anonymity of the participants, throughout this project, all names of people have been replaced by pseudonyms. I explained the use of pseudonym to the participants and asked each participant if they would like to choose their own pseudonym, however, they each told me that they would prefer for me to choose the name which would be used. I have also replaced identifying names of landmarks including school and street names in order to further protect the anonymity of the participants.

Setting and Time

The data collection meetings took place in Toronto, Canada and began at the beginning of February of 2020. This time is significant as by the middle of March 2020 the first wave of Covid19 pandemic had become fully established in Ontario with a provincial state of emergency being declared on March 17, 2020. During the data collection stage, the evolving pandemic

influenced when and where I met with the participants. I had intended for all meetings to be in-person and at the homes of the participants. I conducted the first meetings with four out of five of the participants in this manner, however, the pandemic and provincial shut-down mandates greatly altered the timeline and setting of the data collection. Due to the rapidly changing state of the pandemic, I cancelled the first in-person meeting I had scheduled with my final participant in mid-March and put the rest of my data collection on hold. My proposal and approach to data collection focused on in-person meetings, and at the onset of the pandemic, I had no idea how my project was going to move forward amidst a global pandemic which restricted and banned in-person gatherings.

As we moved further into the pandemic, I began to consider moving my in-person meetings online. At the time schools in Ontario had been ordered to close for in-person learning, and instruction had transitions to an online environment, which meant my participants had gained familiarity in meeting with others using an online platform. Additionally, these online platforms were increasingly being employed socially to support and uphold connections and relationships between friends and families at a time where it was not possible to meet in person. At the beginning of June 2020, I contacted each family via email and inquired if they would be comfortable to proceed online with the conversation phase of the data collection. All the guardians and participants agreed to this request, and data collection continued via online meetings through June and July of 2020.

Although conversations are a large component of my data collection, additional stages of my project hinged on the ability for participants to guide me on walking tours of their neighborhoods and the co-collaboration of a book incorporating photographs of the journeys. As the pandemic was ever evolving, I was unsure of whether this would be a possibility, or if I

would have to rethink my project all together. During the summer of 2020, daily case counts began to drop, and on July 31 Ontario permitted the Toronto region to enter Stage 3 of reopening. This ease in restrictions allowed me to revisit the possibility of outdoor walks with my participants. Once again, I contacted the participants' families and inquired if they would be comfortable with their children taking me on outdoor walks of their neighborhoods. They all responded positively and throughout August and September 2020, I was able to conduct the walking tours and photography phase of my data collection.

In the proposal stage, I envisioned meeting in-person with each of the participants for a fourth time to work collaboratively with each of them on a co-constructed research book. Unfortunately, the evolving state of the pandemic prohibited this from moving forward. Schools in Ontario re-opened for in-person learning in September of 2020. This brought many changes to learning environments and daily routines and activities. I believed this was not an appropriate time to concern my participants and their families with my research. I decided I would wait for things to settle down before I continued with my data collection. During the autumn of 2020, however, daily case counts began to rapidly rise, and provincial lockdown measures increased. During this time, I made the decision to shift from the co-construction of a research book, as in-person indoor meetings were no longer a possibility, to a book which I would create drawing upon the data which had been collected.

As previously mentioned, data collection took place in the participants' homes and neighborhoods, outside of school hours. My choice to speak with the participants outside of the school environment was a purposeful one. Although the home and the school environments both present different methodological challenges to the data collection process (Mayall, 2008), I believe that even though school setting are familiar to children, these environments are heavily

controlled by adults with specific social expectations. Within school settings, children are often conditioned to behave a certain way, and further, pedagogical settings may promote the idea of right or wrong answers. Burke (2005) maintains that schools are often environments in which teachers own, control and transfer knowledge to children, and within these environments, children may respond to questions in a manner which they believe is expected, or desired of them. As my project intentionally intends to move away from the idea of discoverable universal "truths," and in relation to my desire for a collaborative back and forth exchange of information, I did not wish to conduct my data collection in a setting which may, by its very nature, uphold the ideas of right and wrong answers.

Conversing with the participants in their homes offered a setting with which they were familiar, and in which they hopefully were comfortable. These settings did, however, present some challenges to the data collection processes. Mayall (2008) discusses the "triangle of conventions and negotiations" (p. 116) when utilizing the home environment as a research site with children. As I was a visitor in the participants and families' homes, my social position did not "have clearly established parameters; it [had] to be negotiated" (Mayall, 2008, p. 116). Within the home environments, the data collection processes needed to be negotiated between myself and the guardian and the child, as well as between the child and the guardian. One challenge this presented was the negotiation of whether the parent would be present during the conversations. For the in-person home meetings, the specifics of where in the home the research was to take place, and who was present during the process, were addressed at the beginning of each home visit. Research illustrates that family presence is an important factor to consider during data collection with children, as the presence of parents can be comforting to children, however, it may also have an influence on what children say (Spratling et al., 2012). For all the

home meetings, the choice of where in the home the conversations took place, and whether the parent remained with the child, was handed to the participants to decide, and all conversations took place in a location without the immediate presence of other family members. This negotiation was more difficult to monitor online, as my view of the location was limited to the computer or phone camera. It is my understanding, however, that these conversations also all took place without the immediate presence of other family members.

Data Collection Tools and Processes

My methodology is influenced by the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2017; Clark & Moss, 2011) which is "a multi-method, polyvocal approach that brings together different perspectives in order to create with children an image of their worlds" (Clark, 2017, p. 17). This approach is focused on "knowledge creation rather than knowledge extraction" (Clark & Moss, 2011 p. 4) and works to confront assumptions about whose knowledge "counts" and draws upon different modes of communication to construct knowledge. Within this methodological approach, researchers working with children draw from a variety of different research methods to support children in "creat(ing) a 'living picture' of their lives" (Clark, 2017, p. 33). The Mosaic approach highlights a listening framework which is multimethod, polyvocal, participatory, and reflective, and brings together data from multiple participants utilizing multiple research tools.

Clark (2017) cautions that the name "mosaic" may imply "a fixed pattern, cemented down," however, the intention is "to convey a bringing together of pieces" opposed to something fixed, which she refers to as "a moving mosaic" (p. 73-74). Thinking alongside Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Clark (2019) incorporates the metaphor of quilting and bricolage to discussions of the Mosaic approach to highlight the approach's intent as a "'fluid' bringing together of perspectives and also paradigms" (p. 239). Influenced by this

further imagining, my research project brings together conversations, walking tours, photography, and the construction of a research book to explore children's unique and fluid narratives. I believe the multimodal quality of the Mosaic approach allows for opportunities for the child participants to "play to their strengths" (Clark, 2017, p. 150), which in turn, hopefully creates a more equitable research experience by providing the participants with various modes of expression.

It is impossible to detach the researcher from the research process itself, rather the research process is "a product of the relationships forged between the researcher and the research participants and will therefore ultimately reflect the decisions made and approaches taken by the researcher as well as the particular responses adopted by the participants to theses" (Connolly, 2017, p. 105). In thinking with this, it is important to acknowledge my position as an adult in co-constructing the conversations with the children, and in framing, analyzing, and interpreting the data, and in doing so explore how I can "faithfully represent children's knowing and understanding" (Dockett & Perry, 2005b, p. 518). I believe relationship and active and intentional listening are key in addressing this, and so underpin all stages of this project. Cook and Hess (2007) assert to the benefits of slowing down and extending the research engagement with child participants, as this allows time "to think about what a child (is) saying, to listen again or differently, and (offers) the potential for new interpretations" (p.42). The data collection phase occurred over the span of eight months, throughout this time, and during all stages of this research project, I remained mindful of my position as an adult researcher, took my time to listen and explore with the participants, and reviewed and revised my ideas and interpretations of data, to help ensure that the findings and analysis best represent the children's perceptions and experiences.

Conversations. Within a qualitative method, interviews and conversations are often employed "to uncover the meaning structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their worlds" (Hatch, 2002, p. 91). I engaged in one-on-one conversations with the participants to collect the data for this research project. My use of the term *conversation*, rather than interview, is intentional as I believe conversation more aptly reflects a co-construction of thought and dialogue. Mayall (2008) refers to engaging children in conversations where "an opening gambit could lead wherever children wished" (p. 112). Conversations create active and dynamic spaces which present "possibilities of freedom and flexibility" (Anderson & Jack, 1998, p. 11) for both researchers and participants. Conversations offer participants freedom to roam, and to guide. Through continual back and forth, a conversational approach may also aid in fostering reciprocity throughout the researcher encounter, as "context, investment in the research project and relationship between researchers and research participants significantly shape the content" (Culhane, 2017, p.12).

To support the conversation phase of the data collection, I developed a conversation guide (see Appendix D), which by employing open-ended questions, provided the participants with broad areas of discussion. This made room for the participants' thoughts and stories to influence the direction of the conversations and allowed the views and experiences of the participants help guide the study. Conversations hold the "potential to encourage children to discuss things that matter to them" (Dockett & Perry, 2005a, p. 5). The first two meetings employed a face-to-face conversational approach (both in-person and online) and focused on several open-ended question from the conversation guide. From these questions, the children guided the conversations by discussing topics that were of specific interest to each of themselves. The participants guided the conversation in many different, and at times unexpected, directions,

and throughout the encounters I followed up on the development of these ideas as they emerged throughout the conversations. Within this data collection approach, my role was "of facilitator and enabler who encourages the research participant to 'speak their mind' on issues" (Roberts-Holmes, 2010, p. 109).

Spratling et al. (2012) maintain "establishing a connection with the child during the interview [is] critical to successful research outcomes" (p. 48). I believe a conversational approach supports the development of relationship and rapport between participant and researcher, as the participant has the freedom to guide the direction of the conversation, and to discuss things that are notable to the participants and their experiences rather than solely what the research deems as important (Spratling et al., 2012). Each research encounter began by asking the participants some introductory questions to help further support rapport and aid in easing any anxiety which they may be feeling. These questions were specific to each individual participant and the meeting itself. For example, at some meetings we would briefly discuss our previous meeting or discuss on what the participant had been doing prior to our meeting. By reflecting of previous meetings, the introductory period of each meeting also provided opportunity for children to revisit and review what was said previously. Providing opportunity for children to revisit and review are key underpinning processes of the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2017). This introductory time, which Cameron (2005) refers to as a period of "free narrative," may also have helped the participants in becoming more comfortable with the research process. It additionally allowed for a further development of relationship and provided insights on how the participants were feeling at each meeting.

Walking tours. Following the introductory conversations with the children, during the third meeting with each participant, I asked each child to take me on a walking tour of their

neighborhoods. It was up to each individual child to direct the tour, and to decide upon the route. Walking tours as a data collection method can "helps us learn to see, imagine, and understand ... from the particular perspectives and social positions of those we journey with" (Moretti, 2017, p. 93). These child-led tours also provided further opportunity for conversations to develop by continuing to build upon previously established topics of conversations, as well as creating opportunities for new explorations. It was my intention that these tours move past an exploration of specific places and routes to an exploration of "the critical connections (the child participants) draw between people, places and stories" (Moretti, 2017, p. 93) as walking through public spaces "entails negotiating one's identity and place in the world" and can be "a way of telling, commenting on, performing, and creating both stories and places" (p. 95). These walking tours provided the child participants with another way of expressing themselves and created further modes of listening and attending to one another throughout the research encounter.

These walking tours supported the fostering of ambiguity within the research process and the development of relationship, as the routes of the journeys and the accompanying discussions were largely unknown to me prior to the events. The participants were told that the meetings would involve taking me on a walk around their neighbourhoods. Prior to the journeys, some of the participants had an idea of where they wanted to take me, while some did not have a route in mind. Throughout all the journeys, however, the routes and conversations shifted as we responded to our surrounding. The improvisational aspect of walking "takes unforeseen connections, detours, and interruptions as a source of insights" (Moretti, 2017, p. 94). Throughout the different walking tours, the participants responded to situations and events along the way. These events, such as a road closure, the passing of a firetruck or a certain tree, which brought forth a specific memory, were impossible to predict prior to the commencement of the

tours, however, had an influence on the direction of both the direction of the tour themselves and the topics which were discussed. I believe these unpredicted interruptions and detours of the walking tours are not simply an unavoidable characteristic, but rather an important strength of the data collection method, as they allow researchers "to gain new experiences and understanding" (Moretti, 2017, p. 102). As we moved through space together, responding to each other in the moment, our understanding of one another and our journey together grew.

Photography and photo elicitation. During each of the child-led walking tours, I suggested that the participants could take photographs to document the tours. I had a camera in which the participants could use, however, due to a combination of familiarity and Covid19 concerns regarding the sharing of equipment, all but one of the participants used their own cameras. The guidelines on how the children should use the cameras throughout the tours was purposefully open-ended, and there were no strict requirements as to how many photographs they should take, or of what content. The decision of what to (and what not to) take a photograph of provided further areas of conversation throughout the walking tours. Schwartz (1989) asserts the "tendency to treat photographs as objective evidence ignores the convention-bound processes of both image making and interpretation… the use of photographic methods must be grounded in the interactive context in which photographs acquire meaning" (p. 120). It is important to acknowledge what the children said and did during the photography creation is as important as the image itself, and neither can be analyzed separately from the other. What the participants took photographs of, and how they approached the act of documenting their walk, not only influenced the direction of the walking tours and the conversations, but also provided rich and nuanced data for interpretation.

My original project design included a fourth in-person meeting with the participants where we were to revisit the photographs that were taken during the walks. My hope was these meeting would employ photo elicitation, "the coupling of words and images, allowing for an interaction between the two" (Burke, 2005, p. 32). During these meetings, I planned on showing the children the images which they captured during their walking tours and asking them to comment on the images as well as to select which ones they wish to include in our co-constructed research book (please see following section). Due to the increased provincial lock down measures due to the Covid19 pandemic, this fifth meeting was not possible, and for the most part, I had to shift my employment and understanding of photography as a data collection tool. Except for one participant who reviewed and commented on his photographs directly following our walk, the participants' reflection on the photographs lay solely with what was said during in the walking tours. This unfortunately also shifted the selection of which photographs to include in the poetry research book (see below) and this paper to myself rather than the participants. I believe, however, it is still important to include the images as I feel they offer additional layers of understanding of the participants. For the most part, within this paper the photographs are coupled alongside what was said by the participants while they were taking the photographs.

Poetry research book. As previously mentioned, due to the Covid19 pandemic, the final envisioned stage of data collection, the co-constructing of a research book with the participants, was not possible due to government mandated pandemic restrictions. The intended goal of the research book was to highlight the project's findings by drawing from the participants' conversations, tours, and photographs. Despite the challenges and uncertainties presented by the Covid19 pandemic, I still wanted to include a research book as part of my project. Moving away

from my initial idea I began to think of ways in which I could still create a book which recognizes and celebrates the thoughts and experience of the participants. I have always been drawn to the rhythms of poetry and how poetic verse seems to allow words more time and space than is often afford in standard prose, and I started wondering if poetry would be an appropriate way to continue to explore the certation of a research book. Building upon these initial thoughts, I began to explore poetry inquiry as a means to present the perceptions and experiences of the participants.

Poetic inquiry has become increasingly employed as a method in qualitative social research (Krahn, 2018; Prendergast, 2009). The use of poetry in research has taken on many different names including, poetic transcription (Richardson, 2001), research poetry (Teman & Lahman, 2012), poetic inquiry (Butler-Kisber, 2004, Prendergast, 2006) and found poetry (Butler-Kisber, 2002, 2005; Prendergast, 2006). For this project, I employed what is most often referred to as “found poetry,” whereby “words are extracted form narrative transcripts based on interviews with research subjects” (Sjollema et al., 2012, p. 206). I carefully and thoroughly combed through each transcript and highlighted sections of texts which stood out as highlighting the participants’ feelings or sense of experience. Although many researchers often draw upon “poetic license” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.87) and re-arrange words or sections of text when creating their poetic verse to increase emphasis, I did not employ this method as I wanted to honour the words of the participants in the manner in which they were stated. For the creation of the poetry, I did not alter the order of any wording and presented the words as they were spoken. Listening back to the recordings I tried to honour intonation and the natural rhythm of the participants’ voices in my arranging of the words into verse. It was important that I represent the

children's thoughts and experiences in their own voices, highlighting not only what was said, but also how it was said.

I believe poetic inquiry aligns well with the aims and goals of this qualitative research project of exploring multiple narratives of childhoods. Building upon the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2017), employing various forms of data analysis and representation adds additional layers of understanding. Bulter-Kisber (2005) maintains "alternative representational forms provide new ways of seeing, understanding, and connecting" (p. 95-96) and poetry in particular "gets at the essence of a narrative, yet permits multiple interpretations" (p. 96). I believe that research poetry's strength is that it can be "an entry point into expressing the inexpressible" (Teman & Lahman, 2012) as it "makes the invisible world visible" (Parini, 2008, p. 181). Poet Jane Hirshfield (1997) asserts, "poetry's work is the clarification and magnification of being . . . each time we enter its word-woven and musical invocation, we give ourselves over to a different mode of knowing'' (p. vii). Poetic form allows for narratives to be considered and contemplated in alternative ways making room for multiple understandings.

The participants' narratives, both what they said and how they said it, are central to this research project, and I wanted to ensure that they were given due weight throughout the data analysis, discussion, and presentation stages. As I was beginning to write my analysis and discussion chapters, I was aware that I was selecting and interweaving short segments from our conversations into my discussion. Although these fragments of our conversations were taken directly from our conversations, I wanted to make space for longer excepts, highlighting the authorship of the participants. Poetry asks the reader to pause and to sit and think with the words, and therefore I believe provides a balance to the short quotations which are cut and pasted throughout the analysis, by allowing the fullness of the narratives space to breath on the page.

Much like our walks complimenting conversations, the combination of shorter selected quotations with the longer poetry reflects both moments of quick discussion and slow reflection.

I believe the production of this book added to the research project on many different levels. I provided each participant with a copy of the book, which serves as a record of taking part in the research project (Clark, 2017). The act of construction also provided me with additional opportunities to review and revisit research data in a new manner. It is my hope that this book may also be used to disseminate the research findings to other children and adults outside of academic arenas.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

When conducting a qualitative analysis, researchers “mainly use inductive rather than deductive reasoning” relying on “generating ideas from the data” rather than using the data “to confirm or negate pre-formed idea” (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 66). Grounded in individual experiences, my study draws upon the perspectives of the child participants in their specific contexts and does not intend to declare any definitive “truths”. By drawing directly upon the words offered by the participants, I aim to explore individual experience, not to confirm or declare universal theories of children and childhood(s).

I utilised an audio-recorder during the conversations and walking tours with the participants, as it allows for active listening (Roberts-Holmes, 2010). By not physically writing down the words of the children during our meetings, I was able to focus on the conversations more completely and follow up on their distinctive nuances and unique directions. For the researcher, audio-recording the research encounter, “preserve(s) a living interchange for present and future use” (Anderson & Jack, 1998, p. 11), as it allows for the conversations to be revisited. Anderson and Jack (1998) allude to researchers “rummage[ing] through interviews as [they] do

an old attic - probing, comparing, checking insights, finding new treasures" (p. 11). Following the research meetings, I transcribed each of the recorded conversations into typed documents. The transcription of the conversations, although time-consuming, I believe provides a fuller level of analysis than solely relying upon written notes (Roberts-Holmes, 2010). My project is grounded in the individual thoughts and experience of the participants, and therefore their exact words were instrumental to my analysis.

Qualitative, narrative analysis was employed to construct meaning generated from the conversations with the participants. Metzer (1992) states:

> Stories move in circles. They don't move in straight lines. So it helps if you listen in circles. There are stories inside stories and stories between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is the getting lost. And when you're lost, you start to look around and to listen. (Metzger, 1992, as cited in Bender, 1995, p. 10)

I found this idea very useful when approaching the data analysis as due to the volume of data collected, I felt at times overwhelmed, however, I was grounded by the desire to want to follow the individual narratives of the participants, allowing their stories to guide the analysis. I began by reading over each transcript multiple times, as well as relistening to the recorded conversations. This allowed me to become increasingly familiar with the data. Within a qualitative approach, researchers "build their patterns, categories and themes from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information" (Creswell, 2014, p. 186). After becoming familiar with my data, I began to identify themes, and continued to review the transcripts, adjusting, and collapsing themes.

Interlacing my reviewed literature, my research question, and my theoretical frameworks with my data, I identified relationships, allowing for discovery of major and minor themes throughout my data. Graue and Walsh (1998) state in qualitative research, a researcher "must draw from everywhere – other theories, one's own and others' insights, and empirical insights" (p. 28). Throughout my analysis, I draw upon not only scholarly literature but also work from literary fiction authors, poets, and other artists. These works are accessible to broad audiences extending far past academic circles. Bank and Banks (1998) maintain that "real life is the material of fiction" (p. 26), and fiction is a way to illustrate human experience and therefore becomes "exploratory, explanatory, hopeful and generative" (Dunlop, 2001, p. 12). This project seeks to broaden conversations about children and childhood, moving away from ideas of universality. Drawing upon multiple voices from different conventions I believe will strengthen the discussions and explorations. Drawing upon my identified themes and the relationship among codes, I created several drafts of my analyzed themes, which I continued to further refine.

While working on the data analysis, it became imperative to consider the created poetry as interconnected to my analysis and discussion. In reflecting on poetic inquiry, Bhattacharya (2013) asserts "while I worked on the poem, the poem worked on me" (p. 621). The act of searching, and composing the poetry allowed me to stay and think longer with the words of my participants thereby adding further layers of contemplation and understanding. Therefore, I have interwoven the poetry through my analysis/discussion chapters. Sinner et al. (2006) state:

> To be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography means to inquire in the world through an ongoing process of art making in any art form and writing not separate or illustrative of each other but interconnected and woven through each other to create additional and/or enhanced meanings. (Sinner et al., p. 1224)

The creation of the poetry increased my understanding of the participants' narratives and became embedded in my thinking and exploration of the data and therefore should be considered as interwoven with my analysis and discussion, not simply as a supplement.

Within the Mosaic approach, the amount of data collected can be viewed both as an advantage and disadvantage (Clark, 2017), and although time consuming, I believe a thorough review and analysis of all data strengthens the overall project. Triangulation, or the process of establishing themes drawing from multiple data sources and perspectives, is often cited as a means to add to the validity of a research study (Creswell, 2014). I also look to Richardson (2000a), who suggests the idea of crystallization (three dimensional in shape) over triangulation (two dimensional in shape) as a means of exploring a world that is multidimensional. Building on the work of Richardson, Ellingson (2009) asserts crystallization as a methodological process, which:

> combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers' vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (p. 4)

This process extends the data analysis, reflects the main tenets of the Mosaic approach, and aligns well with working within a qualitative narrative inquiry approach.

Within qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (2003) assert issues of validity, or trustworthiness, arise around "the conflation between method and interpretation" (p. 274). Reflecting on this, I draw from the rich data of detailed verbatim transcripts, photographs, the walking tours and found poetry, identify any discrepant and contradictory data throughout my

analysis, and allow “other messages to be ‘heard’, messages that were not answers to the questions that were being asked” (Stephenson, 2009, p. 137). Throughout my discussion I explore differing experiences and opinions of the participants, to help ensure that I do not only focus on data that fits well together, as exploring conflicting data not only enhances the credibility of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2014), but also makes room for a more a more detailed and nuanced study.

In working with the generated data, I identified four main areas of discussion and analysis: adult and child constructs; freedoms, restrictions, and resistance; relationships; and been, being and becoming. These main headings were explored in greater detail leading to the creation of more specific subheading (see Table 1). Each of these main areas of discussion, and their subheadings, will be discussed in the following four chapters.

Main Areas of Discussion	Sub-Headings
Adult and Child Constructs	Size
	Age
	Personality and Character Traits
	Assumptions
	Learning to be a Child or an Adult
Freedoms, Restrictions and Resistance	Allowed Rather Than Able
	School
	The Playground
	Media and Technology
	Resistance and Agency
	Age and Freedom
	Responsibility
Relationships	Importance
	Family
	Peers
	Relationships Change
	Relationships and Covid19
Been, Being and Becoming	Time
	Past
	Present
	Future

Table 1: Thematic Data Analysis of Findings

Chapter Five: The Participants

Isn't it odd. We can only see our outsides, but nearly everything happens on the inside.

(*The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*, Charlie Mackesy)

The Participants

In this section I introduce the participants of the study. As my research aims to explore narratives of childhood from the perspectives of children, I draw upon the participants' words to add further complexity to the introductions. Each profile contains the more traditional demographic information that is typically included within descriptions of participants, however, as my analysis and discussion chapters argue, these categories do little to capture the rich lives and experiences of the participants. It is the participants' own words and actions which bring meaning to this project. Using the participants' words and narratives helps add rich details to otherwise flat descriptions. I did struggle with whether I should include this demographic information, as this project aims to broaden discussion beyond these dominant identifiers, however, I do so in hopes that the participants' words work to challenge any previously held assumptions of readers brought forth with this information. This acts as an invitation to the reader to reflect on dominant socio-cultural markers used to identify children, and to contemplate how perhaps some of these initial ideas may be challenged through meeting the participants more fully through their words and narratives.

At the beginning of our first meetings, I asked each participant to tell me about themselves. This question was followed up with what they would want a new child starting in their class to know about them, and subsequently what they would want a knew teacher to know. I also ask them to tell me a little bit about what they enjoy doing, what is important to them, and what they may worry about. I will share some of what was said in these introductory meetings in this section, as well as including a photograph which the participants took during our walks together. These images alongside the participants word serve as another layer of consideration throughout these introductions.

Myles

“These are dying. Those are dying right there… And look there’s seeds! So, when they die even when they are not fed, even when they grow before, they still grow seeds.”

When I begin the data collection, Myles is six years old and in grade one. He lives with his mother, father, and two sisters in a large urban center. During our first meeting, I ask Myles to tell me about himself. He responds:

> Well, what I do is something that might be complicated. I play games that are complicated that kids that might want to learn, but some games I say they have to try sneak up and try to know the rules to try to play.

I ask him how he would introduce himself to others. He replies that he would say, “Hi, what’s your name?” and he would follow this up with, “I am a good kid to play with.” Myles describes different playground games he enjoys playing, and he tells me that a “good” kid to play with is someone who follows the rules of the game and does not cheat. I ask Myles if he was meeting a new kid for the first time, what would he say to them. He replies:

> Do you want to be my friend?... I would say you can come to my house anytime. And I could know their name and I’ll say my name, so we know each other. And we could ask if we both could be friends… I would say my name is Myles and I am a good kid, and you may want to hang out sometime.

Friendship features prominently throughout our conversations together. When I ask Myles what he would want a new teacher to know about himself, he tells me that he would go and speak with a teacher “if no kid wants to be my friend” in hopes that the teacher would help him.

When I ask Myles what he enjoys doing, he replies, “I like quiet and reading books.” He tells me, “What I really wish was that my whole entire room was a library… I would just read any book.” Throughout our conversations, he refers to reading and books multiple times. Myles also includes his family in the many stories he shares with me and in his initial introduction he tells me his family is very important to him.

Eleanor

"What I wanted to do here, because I thought the sun would go through little X things and I wanted to take photos of friends or something with the sun going in through the X things…I always never know when to take photos and do those kinds of things because I want to take photos and I love doing it, but I always find it weird."

When I began the data collection, Eleanor is twelve years old and in grade 7. She lives with her mother, father, brother, and sister in a large urban centre. I ask Eleanor to tell me a little

bit about herself. The question is first met with silence, and then she replies, “Um… I don’t know.” I ask how she would introduce herself, and she continues, “I don’t know, I would just say my name… I am Eleanor. I don’t know how to explain…” She states when meeting a peer for the first time, she would tell them “I have got two siblings.” I ask Eleanor what she would want a new teacher to know about her, she states, “I get stressed a lot, about little things that don’t usually, wouldn’t usually make sense to be stressed about… but that is just how I feel during a lot of the time.” She goes on to explain that she might want her peers to know a little bit about how she often feels stressed, but she “wouldn’t want to tell them a lot about it… because otherwise I would feel like they would judge me a bit.”

Throughout our conversations Eleanor states that she often worries about what others think of her, particularly her peers. She informs me, “I find that my age group you can find certain people that will be really nice, and then there will be people who pretend to be nice only to find out your secrets and then use them against you.” At another point in our conversation, she states, “there are a lot of people that will pressure you sometimes, or make you feel bad about yourself.” Eleanor admits, “I put pressure on myself, on what other people will think even if they are not actually thinking that or saying that…”

During our introductory meeting, Eleanor informs me that “friends and family and keeping them close” is important to her. When I ask her what she enjoys doing, she replies, “I like tennis and swimming… and breaking things I guess, like I find it really satisfying when you get to throw a plate and suddenly it smashes, and it lets your anger out. I find that fun.” She also tells me that drawing and reading make her happy, and to help her relax she often takes a page of graph paper and, “I sit on my sofa, and I just colour in each square with little scribbles to make little shapes on it. That makes me feel better, just colouring in.”

Alex

"Let's cross here and take some pictures of the park. My mom used to not like this because it wasn't very nice, like it was just like a ton of graffiti and everything, but then they renovated it to this which is actually nice."

At the beginning of the data collection, Alex is eleven years old and has just completed grade six. She lives with her mother and father in a large urban centre. When I first ask Alex to

tell me about herself, she states, “I am 11. I really like reading and swimming, skateboarding.” She informs me that she would introduce herself by saying, “Hi, my name is Alex. I am 11 years old.” When I ask what she would want a new child to joining her class to know about her, she replies, “Ahh… That I don’t really care what other people think of me.” Throughout our conversations, Alex tells me several times that she does not care what people think about her. For example, when discussing what she worries about she states, “Ok so I am going to do in general, this isn’t me, I don’t care, but I think, like, clothes,” and she further clarifies, “I just grab whatever is on top and put it on so…”

When I ask Alex what she would like a new teacher to know about her, she replies, “not to call me Alexandra.” She informs be that she does not like the long form of her name and that it has been changed on school registration and attendance forms at schools, however, “people still sometimes [call me Alexandra], I don't know how they know. I think it's on like report cards or something… So, I end up getting that a lot and I really don’t like it.”

Alex tells me that “seeing my friends, (and) animals” are very important to her. She follows this up my stating that calling her friends on the phone right now is important to her as “I can't really see them right now” due to the Covid19 pandemic. Alex states that she enjoys “playing with animals, like cats” and “reading.” This is evident as throughout our conversations as Alex makes many references to her pet cat, and to her enjoyment of reading. She tells me that she reads “pretty much all day and like half the night too.” She concludes by stating that cats, being around people, (and) books” are what makes her happy.

Nikhil

"Actually, we should (take a photo) so we can see where we are." (Nikhil takes photo of the street map). "Now we can figure out where we are… I forgot where I wanted to go… Well, I kind of want to get closer to my house."

At the start of data collection, Nikhil, is 4 years old and in Junior Kindergarten. He lives with his mother, father and sister in a large urban centre. When I first ask Nikhil to tell me a bit

about himself, he pauses, and then says, “Well… I am trying to think what to tell you.” I follow up my asking him how he would introduce himself, and he states:

> Well, I am first going to say my name is Nikhil. My name is Nikhil. So, I am going to tell what colour I really like… My favourite colour is blue. And the rest of my favourite colours are grey, red, and white. So…

He tells me that if a new child started in his class, “I would want them to know about me by telling them what I like which is the subway, the streetcar, and the bus.” Throughout our conversations Nikhil shows a strong interest in, and knowledge of, different modes of transportation. He shares many stories about riding on different modes of transportation as well as describing their distinct features. He explains why he like different kinds of vehicles by stating he likes “how fast they move. It’s kind of fun. And I am interested in how they move.” He shares that his favourite thing to do is “going on transit rides.”

When I ask Nikhil what he would like a new teacher to know about him, he replies, “well, I am nice. I am always nice at our school. And I am pleasant. And I help kids.” He tells me that if he was to see a child fall and “they can’t pull them up and they need a bit of help” that he would help them stand up. He further explains that he worries about “falling down and no one helps me.” Nikhil concludes our first meeting by stating that he also wants people to know that “I am strong… And I am a good artist.”

Amaya

"I've been having so many dreams about bugs… Like, just creepy, creepy dreams and I hate them so much… I never dreamed about bugs before and then all of a sudden, I'm just dreaming about bugs."

At the start of data collection, Amaya is 9 years old and in grade 4. She lives with his mother, father, and brother in a large urban centre. At our first meeting together, when I first ask Amaya to tell me a bit about herself, she states:

> Um okay so, I'm vegetarian. And what I really like doing sometimes, I like playing with hair, like I can't really do any hairstyles on myself like, I can do ponytail, but nothing exciting but I love playing with hair.

She goes on to tell me "I think I wouldn't describe myself as a stereotypical girl because a lot of girls like you probably know, are expected to like pink and like dolls." She continues by stating that she prefers turquoise over pink and although she does like some dolls, she does not like Barbie dolls. She informs me that, "I also kind of like doing Indian things like going to Diwali, it's an Indian celebration." Being Indian is central to Amaya's expression of identity and features heavily throughout the stories she shares with me.

When asked what she would like a new peer starting in her class to know about her, Amaya states, "that I am kind because I don't want to seem mean to anyone, I don't want to seem rude to anyone," she further explains, "I just want everyone to know, I want them to know I am nice so maybe they can play with me." Amaya continues by stating she would want a new teacher to know two things about her, "I was kind, like a friend, but I would also want her to know that I am smart." At the time of our meetings Amaya was about to start at a different school, and her worries of transitioning to a new school feature in many of our conversations.

When I ask Amaya what is important to her, she replies, "I really love my family and that is most important to me." Throughout our time together, she tells me many stories of spending time with her family including her mother, father, brother and two sets of grandparents. She concludes by stating, "I like to be with my mom a lot and my dad because we have a fun time a lot."

Looking Towards the Discussion and Analysis

The aim of these introductions is to offer additional descriptions of the participants which reach beyond the more traditional demographics. By employing their own words, I wish to offer some insight on how the participants think about themselves, and how the wish to be presented to others. In the following chapters, the participants' words and stories they tell will continue to provide additional layers as to who they are and how they are experiencing and navigating the world around them.

Chapter Six: Adult/Child Construct(s)

All summer, whenever a grown-up asked what grade she was in, she felt as if she were fibbing when she answered, "third," because she had not actually started the third grade. Still, she could not say she was in the second grade since she had finished that grade last June. Grown-ups did not understand that summers were free from grades.

(*Ramona Quimby, Age 8*, Beverly Cleary)

Adult/Child Construct(s)

Throughout the conversations with the participants, when asked to describe what makes a child a child and an adult an adult there were several reoccurring themes. Through our discussions, the participants commented on both physical and character/behavioural traits. These will be explored in the following sections.

“I always liked these things… They remind me of electric wires… I’ve always wanted to stop and take a picture of them, but Mummy always wanted to keep going.” (Amaya)

The main thing you think of

when you think of a grownup is

Age.

Height.

And also,

They are smarter.

They know more

because they had more time to learn it.

Size

When describing adults and children, most of the participants first comment on physical characteristics, with many of them commenting on size as a distinguishing characteristic between adults and children. Myles points to the seemingly obviousness of this by stating that adults and children are “a different size, I guess… but everyone knows that one.” He notes that a child is “smaller than a grownup” and similarly Amaya observes that children “are usually less tall.” In contrast, adults are describe as being “bigger” (Myles). It may be inferred that height, as one of the first distinguishing characteristic discussed by the participants, may be due to the visual overtness of the physical characteristic, however, it is interesting to note that size was included more as a descriptor of a child than it was as a distinguishing feature of being an adult.

Growing, particularly in terms of height, is often an indicator of children becoming older. Within our western-centric society growth in terms of height is often intrinsically linked to “growing up.” Drawing upon the work of Foucault, Hockey and James (2003) maintain “systems of monitoring and surveillance characterise every aspect of contemporary life in western societies and the yardstick of ‘normality’ is often drawn up in relation to age-based bodily criteria” (p. 14). From birth, height and weight charts are extensively employed within the medical community. These charts, relying on standardized developmental norms, place children in specific percentiles, which by default signify those who do, and do not, meet pre-established developmental “norms.” From a very early age, children learn to accept being classified by height and weight. These classifications extend beyond medical development, and children are often characterised by height in their day to day lives. Some parents mark yearly height growth on door frames, often comparing siblings to one another. Within the context of school, teachers ask students to line up in ascending or descending height order. School class photographs are

often arranged according to height, with the smaller children in the front rows and the taller children in the back. This familiar scene is highlighted in the collection of stories for children, *Le Petit Nicolas*. Nicolas recalls:

> "Very well," said the photographer, "get into your places like good children. Big boys on the boxes, the middle-sized ones on the ground. And the little ones sitting." So we started getting into our places, and the photographer was telling our teacher how you can get children to do anything if you just exercise a little patience, but our teacher couldn't stop to hear the end of it. She had to come and separate us, because we all wanted to be on the boxes. (Goscinny & Sempe, 2005, p. 7)

Within this story, the children fight to be on top row, the tallest row. Arranged according to height, these yearly photographs serve as a visual representation of growth development, or lack thereof. From organisational practices in schools to developmental growth charts, children have been socialised to value height growth.

There are limited studies which consider children's perceptions of height, however, those which have explored the subject (Blood & Grogan, 2011; Park et al., 2003) indicate that children often wish to be taller and are often worried if they are smaller than their peers. This desire to be taller may reflect the emphasis society places on height growth as an indicator of "normalised" developmental growth. Perceptions of height are intrinsically interwoven with standardised developmental ideals. If development is seen in terms of achieving, or progressing in a predicted forward trajectory, then it is possible that growth in terms of height, a biological occurrence over which we have little control, can be constructed to be regarded as an achievement.

A grownup can't really be a child.

Unless it's like right between

the child and grownup area

but like there’s teens in between that.

So, I guess a teen is

in a way

a child and a grownup.

Age

Although size was often noted, the most prevalent distinguishing attribute that was mentioned throughout the conversations was age. Age featured heavily in the descriptions of both children and adults. Alex states that children are "under the age of 18" and adults are "pretty much anybody over the age of 18." Nikhil notes a child is "a person who is young" whereas adults are "older than kids." This appears to uphold the findings of James and James (2012) who assert that within Eurocentric societies, age is often considered a primary aspect of a person's identity. Building upon this, I would suggest that age is more frequently interwoven with a child's identity than with an adult's identity. When meeting a child for the first time, one of the first questions that is often asked of the child is, "How old are you?" Of all the questions one could ask when meeting someone for the first time I find it fascinating that age is what is chosen so frequently. Lee (2001) asserts "children can be marked out as a social group, distinguished by the visibility of their low chronological age" (p. 1). This highlights how often, within dominant Eurocentric society, we rely and classify based on age, partially with regard to children. Hockey and James (2003) maintain that as chronological age has become more institutionalised, age has become more central to the definition of a child. Age divides childhood into distinct stages, and these divisions in turn uphold certain knowledge/assumptions about children.

Age is a biological characteristic common to all humans, however, the importance placed on age, and how it operates, guides, and informs varies within different societies. Within Eurocentric societies, age is often used as a benchmark to "evaluate" a child's developmental and/or social competences. With regards to children, age is often employed as prescriptive, drawing upon dominant societal assumptions influenced heavily by developmental theory. This

is illustrated through a story Alex shares during one of our conversations. Alex describes a time where she was not allowed to join a co-curricular book club at school because she was not in the "correct" grade. She recalls, "It made no sense, it was for grades 5 and 6… I was just in grade 4." She further comments on her confusion with the situation by stating, "there is all these age limits which I find kind of weird. For things like smoking and drinking, I get it, but for a book club… what's the harm in letting me be there?" When asked why she felt she was excluded from the book club she first confirms she was "too young" and then reflects that the teachers running the club "think kids younger than grade 5 wouldn't be interested in sitting for lunch break." Alex also offers up a solution for the book club, instead basing admittance on age, the organisers "should test your reading level" to determine whether children are able to join the club or not.

James and James (2012) argue that "age can be regarded as one of the ways in which the passage of time across an individual's life-course is socially constructed" (p. 1). Such a large part of children's lives is structured, controlled, and informed by age. Children are educated in age - based groupings, which intend "to equate pragmatically with their interests, achievements and abilities" (Christensen, James & Jenks 2001, p. 210). This system can lead to the establishment and upholding of entrenched norms that reflect a very narrow idea of development. In school, kids are labelled as "falling behind" or "advanced" based on their "achievements" or "short-comings" in relation to the normalised predicted progression of others of the same age. What possibilities may lie in (re)imagining a schooling system in which children progress through based on development of skill and knowledge rather than a passing of a birthday? How can we move to school-based education which allows and supports leaning which occurs not as one directional and linear, strictly led by developmental norms and age classification, but rather occurs as web making room for alternate paths? Adult learning is not based on age, but rather

adults continue to learn and develop by building upon skills and knowledge and interacting with others of all different ages. Ages and grades, however, continue to be entrenched in how adults perceive children and childhood.

As with Alex's experience with the book club, restrictions are often placed on children based on their age. For Foucault time is viewed as a structure which regulates and governs experiences, and therefore children are "captured through time and captured by it" (Christensen et al., 2001, p. 209). Participation by children in certain activities is often regulated and controlled based upon biological age. There are also financial associations to age. For example, transit fares, cinema or museum admission, children's dinning menus are all guided by age, and therefore create, as well as limit, opportunities for some based on the uncontrollable force of getting older. Media content, for example, movies and video games, are deemed appropriate, or not, simply based on age. Adults, relying heavily on dominant developmental psychology narratives, determine which movies are "appropriate," by the issuing of a PG13 rating, for a 13-year-old, but not for a 12-year-old. If we now acknowledge that children do not experience childhood universally, that we develop along our own individual winding path, the arbitrariness of these forms of restrictions is obvious, and yet the institutionalisation of age nevertheless continues largely unquestioned. The intention of this discussion is not to dismiss all restrictions based on age, but rather highlight how prevalent classification based on age is within our society and with these recognitions, perhaps make room for other ways of consideration.

In the conversations with the participants, age did not only feature heavily as a distinguisher between adults and children, but also as a means to separate various "stages" of childhood. Alex points out that she considers herself a "preteen" and that she differentiates human lifespan into "little kid, kid, preteen, teen, adult." Although adulthood is also often

marked by specific age-related categories, for example, young adult, middle aged, elderly, it is interesting to note that the participants did not point to these distinctions. It was the age-based categorisation of childhood which stood out from the conversations. Nikhil illustrates these different categories by stating:

> I know what a baby is, a person that's 1 year old (and a child) can be I guess, 3 and 2, those are the lowest ones and, 4 and 5. I'm 5. And 6, 7 and 8 and 9, those are kids… Then when you're 12, I guess, a teenager, maybe. And then after a teenager like, all those, I don't know how many numbers, but you're a grownup.

Throughout the conversations, the age of 10 was repeatedly highlighted by all the participants as a significant age. Eleanor asserts that a child is "10 and younger" and Amaya confirms that "you're a child, a kid, until you are maybe like 10." When I asked when you stop being a child, Myles responds with "when I pass 10" Within the conversations there was a consensus that the age of 10 marks the end of being considered a child. Nikhil notes that at the age of 10 you are "kind of a kid, kind of a grownup." Amaya highlights the perceived importance of this age by stating:

> I am really excited to be 10… No, I am excited to be 11. That is the most exciting age right now. Next year I will be 10 and that is still like kind of kiddie, but when I am 11, I will be grownup-y.

This statement not only emphasises the age of 10 being a distinguishing age within childhood, but also Amaya's desire to be older and more like an adult. During our conversations, when asked whether they would like to be older or younger than they are now, all but one of the participants stated that they would like to be older. This will be discussed further in the following

chapter, however, it is important to note that Amaya's wanting to be older was echoed in the statements of the other participants.

The significance of the age of 10 as a transitional age was not only explicitly stated in response to describing a child or adult, but also implicitly through the stories that the participants told, especially from the two participants who are older than 10 years old. Alex recalls a trip to a cottage during the summer with another family. She states, "I was the one stuck babysitting two 8-year-old boys the whole time… The good thing is that I am eleven and they're eight, I can pretty much kick them out of my room whenever I want." Eleanor, who is 12 years old, recounts how sometimes adults group her together with younger children. She states:

> Sometimes they [adults] act like I am a child, or younger than I am. Like, 'Oh yeah, do you want to go play with the Lego with my 10-year-old child?' and I'm like, 'Ah, I'll happily talk to your child, and I'll be nice to them, but I don't exactly want to play Lego with a bunch of kids.' I am completely fine talking to those younger than me. It is just sometimes people are like, 'Oh yeah, you're at their age.

These two excerpts from our conversations illustrate how prevalent age is in distinguishing social membership within childhood. In each story, only a couple years separate the participants from those they consider much younger, or of a different social group. Through these stories, and by using language such a "stuck babysitting" and "bunch of kids," both Eleanor and Alex make clear the age-divisions between different perceived stages of childhood. They both make it evident that they belong to a certain social group, and children younger than them do not.

Edgell et al. (2020) maintain that groupings based on such factors as age, gender and class reinforce social boundaries and membership. Social boundaries, which are socially constructed, produce specific in-groups and out-groups. Jenkins (2014) argues that creating

groups of “us” and “them” serves to continue and establish power over others. Alex states that because she is older than the two other boys that she can order them to leave her room whenever she wants. Williams and Coulter (2017) claim that “categories of young people are socially, culturally, politically, and economically constituted within particular moments and spaces” (p. 212). The conversations with the participants, highlight through society’s preoccupation with age, children also echo this reliance on age and lean and enact what these categories infer and how they operate within society. Buckingham (2000) maintains that age and how it is enacted within society “are primary means through which power relationships are enacted, not only between adults and children, but also between children themselves” (p.13). Society classifies people based on age, and in doing so has worked to normalize certain ways we think and feel about age.

I have just noticed this,

adults don’t get as excited as kids

about stuff like birthdays or whatever.

Either one,

they don’t want to know how old they are

Or two,

they just don’t really care.

Like, they have been through so many birthdays.

Honestly, I think it's just like your normal,

I'm getting to be so old,

I don't want to be this old kind of thing.

Personality and Character Traits

Within our conversations, when exploring what makes an adult an adult and a child a child, the participants move beyond discussing the physical characteristics to include personality and behavioural traits. When discussing the differences between adults and children, Amaya notes "their height, their age, but also I feel like, kind of their personality because it changes a lot" and she continued by noting, "when you grow up, you change. If my mom acted how she acted when she was a kid, and everyone acted how they acted as a kid, it would be very unusual." Eleanor also comments on this perceived shift of personality and suggests that it is influenced by societal expectations. She states, "(it is) more of society, they are kind of like, this is what a child should act like, this is what an adult should act like." Eleanor then further illustrates this assertion by stating that if a child was to go out in a tutu and bright leggings no one would comment as they are "just being a kid," however, if an adult was to dress in a similar manner, people would tell them "to act their age" and question "why they aren't acting like they should?" These comments highlight a frequently unquestioned social understanding that there is an acceptable way for a child to act, and in turn an acceptable, and often oppositional, way for an adult to act.

Throughout the conversations, I ask the participants to comment on some of the perceived differences and similarities between adults and children. In doing so, it is interesting to note that the participants comment substantially more often on the differences rather than the similarities. Within these discussions the word *more* features heavily. Children are described as having "more energy" (Eleanor and Alex), "more free time" (Alex), being "more playful" (Amaya). Whereas adults "do more things" (Myles), have "more experiences" (Eleanor), "know more" (Nikhil and Amaya), are "more mature" (Eleanor and Amaya), like "more normal-er"

things (Alex), and have “more authority” and “more responsibilities” (Amaya). Buckingham (2000) maintains that childhood is often defined in opposition to adulthood. This may indicate why the participants offered more accounts of the differences between adults and children rather than the similarities.

Amaya offers further discussion as to the perceived differences between adults and children. She argues that adults’ behaviours and actions are “more magnified,” and she creates a story to illustrate her point. She starts by asking me to imagine that stomping your feet is a “very bad” thing to do, and then explains that if a kid was to stomp their feet they would get in trouble, however, if an adult was to do the same it would be worse as, “the police would think, they know better, they’re going to jail.” She continues by stating, that alternately, imagine clapping your hands was “so good.” If a child was to clap their hands the reaction would be a small gasp and a recognition of, “you’re such a good child,” however, if an adult was to clap their hands, Amaya explains there would be larger and more exaggerated gasps and exclamations that the adult is “the goodest person in the world” and they “are amazing, better than any child.” Amaya concludes by stating:

> So, kids are lucky and unlucky. They're lucky that when they do something bad it’s not as bad as doing it as they are a grownup, but they are unlucky because when they do something good it's not as good as when they do it as a grown up.

This illustration appears to uphold the notion that not only are adults and children often viewed as oppositional to each other, but also adults may be frequently perceived as “more than” and children as “less than.”

Both Eleanor and Amaya note that they feel adults are “more mature” than children. When asked what she means by mature, Eleanor states:

> Like they (adults) will find certain things less funny. Like a kid can, say one thing and find it absolutely hilarious, but an adult will just be like, that's just a word why is that so funny to you? It's kind of that kind of thing.

Maturity is perceived as a quality which further highlights the oppositional relationship between children and adults. Within Eurocentric society, the understanding of maturity is socially constructed and often works to judge children's behaviour against an expected developmental trajectory. The labels of *mature* and *immature* often imply how someone is acting in relation to the societal expectations of their age. James and James (2012) suggest that maturity is often regarded as "the extent to which a child appears to behave or think more as an adult does" (p. 2). When a child is described as "mature for their age," it suggests that the child is acting or behaving in a way which demonstrates more competence then is normally expected of their specific biological age. The notion of mature, and subsequently immature, upholds stages of development and draw attention to any deviation from these normalised stages. Christensen, James, and Jenks (2001) maintain that within the context of school, teachers often view children as mature when they demonstrate that they are capable of following and accepting the rules. This suggests that with regards to children, maturity often conflates with compliance and further upholds linear developmental ideals. Maturity, when used as a descriptor for children, appears to suggest it is more desirable for children to behave more like adults, which in turns not only upholds a notion of children as "less than," but also reinforces the preconceived division between adults and children. Adults are often described of "being of age" which not only further reflects society's reliance on age classifications, but also works to create the sense of adulthood as ageless, and as the "final destination," which positions adults as the norm of *being* and children as the *not-yet*.

The similarities between adults and children featured less frequently in the conversations with the participants. When asked directly to comment on some of the similarities, Eleanor and Amaya both assert that children and adults are "both humans." Although perhaps seemingly obvious, these statements undeniably summarize a quintessential fact that moves beyond societal categories of separation and distinction. In terms of similarities between adults and children, it is interesting to note that what was discussed throughout the conversations, was with relation to adults' capacity to "still" hold some qualities which the participants consider as more often pertaining to children. Eleanor maintains:

> Adults still have, like they can still run around with kids and still play with them. So, they obviously still, they are the same in a way, everyone still has got like, as people say, like an inner child where they're still very playful and they've got that kind of sense of humor and imagination so they can still play with kids.

Nikhil notes that adults "still can be silly a bit, but not more than the kids," and Amaya confirms adults are "still a bit playful."

Throughout the conversations with the participants, it was both explicitly and implicitly stated that they are aware that behaviour changes as children transition into adulthood. Amaya states that when a person is 19 years old, "you're kind of a grown up, like there's only the tiniest bit of child, but there still a tiny… a tiny bit." Through their conversations, the participants note this change often results in adults having less energy (Alex), and being less funny (Eleanor), less imaginative (Eleanor), less playful (Amaya) and less excited (Alex). Despite this, all the participants also note that during adulthood not all these characteristics are lost, and adults are still capable of drawing upon and enacting these qualities. This, in relation to the discussions of maturity, highlights a paradox of children wishing for adults to be a bit more like them at the

same time as adults wishing maturity upon children. Amaya concludes by saying, “No adult has no playfulness inside of them like, even people who are so strict, you can make them laugh, you can make them smile.”

There is stereotypes of the teenager,

Or my age group.

Where you are gloomy or anti-social

And so, lots of people kind of use that against you.

They are like -

Oh, you are like a typical 12-year-old,

You're sitting in your room all the time,

Not doing anything,

When obviously you only do that once or twice,

But that is used against you a lot.

Assumptions

Throughout our conversations, many of the participants comment on assumptions they feel adults often make regarding children and childhood. Several of the participants maintain adults often assume that children do not worry, or that they have very little to worry about. Amaya states, “some adults say that kids have no worries, and they are just carefree all the time, but kids have worries too,” and Alex notes that being a child has “more stress than you would expect” and that adults often assume “kids don't have much to worry about, but… (they do).” I will be discussing some of the specific worries that the participants spoke of in a proceeding section, however, it is important to note that through the conversations, there was a significant sense from the participants that they feel adults often assume that children do not have any worries, or that they do not, or perhaps should not, experience stress. This reflects a romantic view of childhood in which children are viewed as innocent and carefree. The image of the happy, care-free child is a social and cultural construction, which works to exclude those who do not align with its assumptions. Under this construction, the experiences of children that reflect an alternate lived reality, one that includes worry, stress, and unhappiness, are discounted and seen as not “normal.” Taking up this discourse not only fails to recognise and validate lived experiences, but also works to further uphold the divisions between adulthood and childhood, further alienating one from the other.

Many of the participants comment on the adult perception of children as carefree, however, there was another assumption that was prevalent throughout our conversations. When discussing childhood and adulthood in relation to one another, the participants often refer to teenagers, and the teenage years as a transition between childhood and adulthood. Myles notes that he will “grow up to a teenager, and then to a grownup,” and Amaya sates, “a grownup can't

really be a child, unless it's like right between the child and grownup area, but there's teens in between that. So, I guess a teen is, in a way, a child and a grownup." Eleanor maintains, that at 12 years old, she may consider herself a "tween," however, she has "gotten to the age now people start saying, you're a teenager."

Both Eleanor (12 years old) and Alex (11 years old) discuss how many adults currently view them as teenagers and the assumptions that are often associated with this classification. Alex states that teenagers are frequently viewed as "grumpy, (and) tired" and that adults "make that assumption, I get that all the time." She further notes that even if she does not display these character traits, adults often question her as to why. She says, "from adults I get, how come you are not tired (and) grumpy?" Eleanor and Alex are aware of the assumptions that adults often make of teenagers and express their frustration when these expectations do not align with their lived reality, or when they feel judged and/or dismissed based on these preconceived notions. Eleanor further explains some of the effects these assumptions can have. She begins by describing a serotype of teenagers being "gloomy or anti-social" and further states she feels that "people kind of use that against you." She continues by explaining how this makes her feel:

> Annoyed. Yeah, annoyed. Because you think, you don't even know what's happening, or what's going on. Because they are just judging (you) on what they have been told what the average age group is like, but they don't actually know what's going on. Like, something inside will be going worse, but you don't want to tell anyone because you are worried they will think, oh you are just doing it for some reason to bring attention to yourself, or you are sitting in your room because you don't want to talk to people because that is your age group type thing, and it just doesn't feel great.

Eleanor feels that adults often make judgements of her based on her being, or almost being, a teenager. She is aware of the stereotypes and not only expresses how it makes her feel, but she also notes that this awareness has led to her changing her behaviour in certain situations. She further states:

> (You) just try not to think about how they judge you and act like, you have to act like yourself a lot of the time just to prove that you are not like that. And sometimes make sure that you are your happier version in front of them. Sort of change. You kind of want them to think that maybe not all teenagers, maybe not all twelve-year-olds, are that bad, some of them are actually happy most of the time. So even if you are not feeling that great, you kind of have to put on a smile.

Eleanor expresses her awareness of how prevalent the stereotype of teenagers is, and the pressure she feels to demonstrate that it is not a fair or complete representation. She states that she must, even when she is not feeling great, or when things are upsetting her, pretend that things are alright in order to not be dismissed by adults unfairly drawing upon a stereotype. She feels the need to do this not only for herself, but also to demonstrate that "not all twelve-year-olds, are that bad."

If grownup means age

Then you don’t learn how to be a grownup.

But if grownup is meaning like how good you are,

Like how you act,

Then you learn to be a grownup.

You kind of learn how to act as a grownup.

Learning to be a Child or an Adult

The above discussion of findings appears to indicate an awareness of societal expectations of behavior and character traits in children, teenagers, and adults. In our conversations, I asked the participants how one becomes aware of these expectations, or how and where one learns to be a child or an adult. When asked how you learn to be a child Myles states "by growing up, I guess." Alex maintains, "I don't think you really learn about it. I think you just do it naturally," and Amaya echoes this statement by saying "you just kind of know" how to be a child. Similarly, participants felt that adults also "just kind of pick it up." (Alex). Alex mentions that some younger kids look to older kids "because they want to learn how to do something, they want to be more like them." These statements appear to indicate an awareness of learning by experience and by being in the world with others.

Throughout the conversations there was an awareness of *growing up* being not solely about the progression of chronological age but rather, about a shift in behaviour, that these shifts often reflect societal constructions of how certain groups of people should act, and it is through being a part of a particular group that one learns to embody these expectations. Amaya describes this idea succinctly when she states, "if grownup means age, then you don't learn how to be a grownup", however she further argues that if being a grownup means "how you act, then you learn to be a grownup." Through these discussions the participants appear to indicate that growing up and the associated shifts in behavior occur "naturally" through experience.

Concluding Thoughts

Social anthropologist Mary Douglas, asserts, "our minds are running on the old treadmill already. How can we possibly think of ourselves in society except by using the classifications established in our institutions?" (1986, p. 99). Douglas was highly influenced by the work of Émile Durkheim who proposed that not only does social life depend on shared understanding, but in order to survive, society's beliefs and order must not appear as random, but as natural (Spickard, 1990). Building upon this notion, it is more difficult to question and critique that which appears as "natural." Throughout our conversations, the participants all discussed their perceptions of the differences and similarities between adults and children. Their discussions highlight their awareness of social expectations and understanding of how learning to be in the world, as a child or an adult, is understood as a "natural" process. Many of the participants' descriptions of childhood and adulthood are oppositional drawing upon rigid categorisations, particularly with regards to age. If one learns to be, by being in the world, then the rigid age categories which the participants depend upon throughout our discussions may be the result of being in a world which relies highly on defining and classifying based on age. This leads to question what possibilities there may be in the (re)considering of children and childhood if we move to trouble rigid categorisations drawing upon developmental trajectories and move away from placing such considerable importance on age. Shifting from relying on social ideals echoing developmental norms to welcoming the ambiguity of difference by acknowledging individual experience may hold the possibility of (re)considering childhood and adulthood not in opposition to one another, but rather in relation to one another.

Chapter Seven: Freedoms, Restrictions & Resistance

And now,’ cried Max, ‘let the wild rumpus start!

(*Where the Wild Things Are,* Maurice Sendak)

Freedoms, Restrictions, and Resistance

In speaking with the participants, many of the stories they share involve notions of freedoms, restrictions, and resistance. Through the stories they tell, the participants describe not only the restrictions they experience, but also, the ways in which they resist some of these limitations placed on their everyday lives.

"You can misuse the playground in so many ways… you can try deliberately to get yourself into the spider web." (Alex)

They say –

No, you can't…

Like, you can't eat 10 doughnuts

Like, I could actually

But they're just saying –

No.

You're not allowed.

Allowed Rather Than Able

During our conversations, children's perception of agency over their lives came up repeatedly. I ask the participants if, there is anything children can do, that adults cannot do, and conversely if there are things, adults can do, that children cannot? The participants provide many examples of things that adults can do but children cannot, however, they offer fewer examples of things that children can do, that adults cannot. When asked if there are things children can do, that adults cannot, Nikhil responds, "maybe, I don't really know," Myles states, "I think, um, wait a minute… I don't know," and Amaya replies, "maybe, some things, yes… There're some things like… Let me think…" Despite these initial hesitations, the participants do find examples of activities which they believe children can do, that adults cannot. For example, Myles states children can go "on a trampoline because the adults can't go on a trampoline, they're too heavy." Alex maintains that adults "can't do cartwheels, monkey bars (and) like that kind of thing," and Amaya replies that children are better at "twisting and like making the body into weird shapes. Kids can like twist their selves, but grownups probably can, but they're just out of practice." It is interesting to note that the things the participants feel children can do that adults cannot all revolve around physical activities. Through these comments the participants perceive children as more physically active than adults which reflects the participants' notion of children as "more playful" (Eleanor, Amaya) and having "more energy" (Eleanor, Alex) and in turn, their impression that adults play less.

When I ask if there are things that adults can do, that children cannot, Amaya responds, "many, many, many." Nikhil notes that "adults can be on the screen longer than kids… because they're older, and the older you are the more screen time you get." Many of the participants' responses mirror the notion of adults being able to do things that children are not allowed to do.

Alex states that adults can use "the things you use to sharpen knives," Myles notes that adults can "make fires," and Nikhil states that adults "can mow the lawn…with an electric one… electric ones are more dangerous." I note that when asking participants what children can do, that adults cannot, their answers focus on activities which adults were not physically able to do (or do as well). When responding to what adults can do, that children cannot, the participants focus on activities which children are not *allowed* to do because of restrictions placed on them by adults.

When thinking through the question of what children can do that adults cannot, Amaya makes the distinction between being *able* to do something and being *allowed* to do it. She says that adults might say "you can't eat 10 doughnuts, like I could actually, but they're just saying no, you're not allowed." Amaya continues by saying:

> Maybe they (adults) say like you can't have a whole bag of Cheetos because you're a kid, like you don't have as big a stomach, but that's not exactly like, you can't do it, like they're just not letting me. I could do it. Totally. I could do it in like 10 seconds, but they just don't let me, they just don't *let* me. (original emphasis).

In response to my question Amaya distinguishes between having the capacity to do something and being barred from doing so. Through their responses, children confirm Punch's (2002) finding that in an adult-dominated society, many aspects of children's lives are regulated and restricted by adults. They depict how children's everyday lives are experienced through social encounters, not only with their peers, but also with adults "who control institutions that justify and support the type of dependency that children experience" (Matthews, 2007, p. 327). Thus, the theme of adult regulation features in many of my conversations with the participants.

(Blue Slips)

One of my friends got one once for turning in homework late

which didn't make much sense to me but…

You pretty much get them,

and your parents have to sign them.

One kid got ten in a week

which is like amazing

because that is more than there are days in a week.

School

Attending school was central to my conversations with participants. It arose as a feature that is unique to children in relation to their adult counterpoints. The experience of going to school features in stories the participants tell about their lives. A large proportion of children's daily activities occur within the institutions of school. These adult-controlled spaces are often highly regulated environments where children are situated as subordinate to their adult teachers. Throughout our conversations, the participants recount their awareness of the rules and expectations of school, as well as their means for resisting and contesting these expectations.

Rewards and punishments. Foucault (1979) positions schools and other societal institutions as spaces of surveillance governing and conforming the bodies of those subject to them. He states that, within the institution of school, punishments are handed out to children for the "slightest departures from correct behaviour" (p. 178). Gurdal and Sorbring's (2019) study examining children's perception of their agency in different relational contexts found that children perceive they have the least agency with teachers in school settings, and they believe within this context, "their attempts to display agency would be reprimanded" (p.6). Showing a keen understanding of how regimes of discipline operate, Alex discusses a rewards system which is employed at her school. She tells me that her teacher uses "movie minutes" to reward and penalize certain behaviours within the classroom. The teacher keeps track of the earned minutes of those students who exhibit desirable "good" behaviours. Once the class has accumulated a certain amount of good behaving minutes, the class is rewarded with a chance to watch a movie. Alex states that "if we were well behaved or something, he (the teacher) would give us like one or two, but then we also lose them really easily." She states that students can lose them if they are being "too loud in the hallway, don't listen, pretty much anything." Alex's description of the

system shows that she is keenly aware of how it influences her own and her classmates' behavior at school.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979) makes the distinction between discipline and power. He argues that discipline is not synonymous with power, rather discipline is one of the ways power is enacted. Techniques or "disciplines" are used to produce rules that organise and guide behaviour and to minimize resistance. Drawing upon the work of Foucault, Gore (1998) maintains educational settings often draw upon certain "truths" to control student's thinking by employing rules and restricting behaviour. Control of students' diverse ways of being is often through punishments and rewards. Alex's example illustrates how the school environment is organized by normalised notions of being. Consequently, teachers often reward "proper" and orderly behaviours while punishing "unruly" and resistant ones. Drawing upon the work of philosopher Jeremy Bentham, Ahmed (2019) maintains that reward systems illustrate how utilitarianism has become a pedagogical technique whereby "you reward what is deemed useful to society while 'actions to which we ascribe an injurious tendency' are punished" (p. 125-126).

During one of our conversations, Alex discusses another form of punishment employed by her teacher. Alex discloses that her teacher "gives out blue slips way too much." She explains that these "are blue slips of paper that you get… and your parents have to sign them." These slips are handed out by teachers to students who they deem to be behaving in a manner they do not deem appropriate. Alex informs me, "one of my friends got one once for turning in homework late which didn't make much sense to me." The teachers at Alex's school hand out punishments, which need to be acknowledged by the student's family, for what them deem as departures from acceptable behaviour. Alex sees the teachers' blue slip punishments as reporting mechanisms used to get children in trouble with their parents. The blue slips don't make sense to Alex

because she feels late homework does not warrant it. The punishment does not correspond to the offense. The punishment of handing out a blue slip is not directly correlated to handing in homework late. It is not a natural or understandable consequence, but rather instead forces children to the "submission of classroom rules as a result of punishments and rewards, and because of the authority of the teacher" (Millei, 2012, p. 88-89).

Joseph Lancaster is credited with introducing a monitorial model or reward system of education designed for working-class children in early nineteenth century England. Within this system, working-class children were seen as in need of proper discipline to make them fit for English society. Examining Lancaster's pedagogical model, Ahmed (2019) reflects on the notion of rewards and states:

> The more the same paths are used, the fewer paths are used. When children are rewarded, they are directed down a narrower route. Happiness is used as a technique to narrow the routes. The rewards teach us about routes. In Lancaster's model, many of the rewards are about mobility: you go up the hierarchy of the class if you do well; you do not go up, or you go down, if you do not. (p. 121)

Within the context of school, rewards highlight "appropriate paths" to desirable social behaviors, and in doing so, refuse and limit alternatives to this normative mould. School's reliance on rewards and punishments consequently narrows conceptions of how a child can be in aligning their behaviors and thoughts with highly prescriptive ways of acting and thinking.

Expected behaviour. As in the case of the blue slips, many of the rules in school environments, to which children are expected to comply, are explicit. Others, however, are implicitly delivered. Implicit rules are often referred to as the *hidden curriculum* which Skelton (1997) defines as a "set of implicit messages relating to knowledge, values, norms of behaviour

and attitudes that learners experience in and through educational processes" (p. 188). This functions as a form of social control, which Millei and Raby (2010), drawing from Foucault (1979), describe as "a technology of the school to deliver social training and to regulate the student population" (p. 28). Foucault's notion of *governmentality* illustrates how institutions influence the conduct of individuals and "includes the ways social institutions seek to guide, shape, and direct the behavior of others and the ways individuals govern themselves and their actions" (Baez & Talburt, 2008, p. 28). For Foucault the school is a disciplinary institution, which shapes people's conduct and behaviour and seeks "to channel that conduct in particular directions and for particular purposes" (Baez & Talburt, 2008, p. 28). Discourses operate within communities to deliver shared meanings of knowing and acting, and work to uphold normalizing values and behaviors. According to Foucault, educational settings are discursive communities. Throughout my conversations with the participants, they demonstrate an awareness of expected, or preferred, discourses, behaviour, and regulations within their school environments.

Pech (2013) argues that the ways in which educators interact with children sends a message about what is valued and accepted in the classroom. During our conversations, I ask the participants what they would want a teacher who they had never met to know about them. Nikhil notes that he would want the teacher to know, "I am nice. I am always nice at our school. And I am pleasant. And I help kids." Amaya replies that she "would like it if she (the new teacher) knew two things, I was kind, like a friend, but I would also want her to know that I am smart." These statements reveal an awareness of certain behaviours and personality traits which are valued within the school environment. In response to my question, the participants did not respond with individually unique qualities or interests, but rather with character virtues which are often deemed favourable within school settings. *Pleasant*, *kind*, and *nice* are all descriptors

which do not seek to challenge or disrupt. These desirable characteristics conform to the norms of the school and uphold notions of children as docile and passive in their education.

In *The Promise of Happiness*, Ahmed (2010) explores societal ideals of happiness. Ahmed argues that the promise of happiness guides individuals to live a certain way, and to make specific choices, which direct their lives towards the promise of a happy future. Dominant society constructs schooling as a process that holds the promise of children becoming productive and law-abiding citizens of the future. According to Ahmed (2010), the promise of happiness is awarded to those who conduct their lives in a certain way. There is an expectation that one will be happy by taking part in what is deemed the *good life*. School's happy script of childhood, therefore, rests on the compliant child, the child that unquestionably agrees with society's dominant view of children and childhood. Frye maintains that oppression often requires the projection of happiness. She argues, "it is often a requirement upon oppressed people that we smile and be cheerful. If we comply, we signify our docility and our acquiescence in our situation" (as cited in Ahmed, 2010, p. 66). Oppression often requires the subordinate to demonstrate signs of happiness, or risk being viewed as angry or difficult further disrupting society's pursuit of happiness. Society views the compliant child as the "happy child," and within school settings, a child who does not comply with normalized expectations is promptly labeled a "problem child."

Dominant views of childhood often perpetuate an illusion of all children being a homogenized group. Education further supports this illusion as it upholds the notion that all children can go through similar processes (schooling) and result in similar beings (active happy adults). Drawing from Derrida, Todd (2003) warns of a pedagogy, which "seeks to shape, influence, and 'lead' the other in a particular direction without consideration for persons as

distinct subjects of difference" (p.7). Within the institution of school, children are often viewed as one unified group, where the alterity of the individual child is unsought or disregarded. Throughout our conversations, the participants highlight an awareness of socially deemed appropriate behaviour within school settings. Through these examples, the institution of school, further upholds dominant societal notions of the universal child. Eleanor feels that conformity to the rules at her school, constricts her sense of self. She tells me that her school has a no makeup policy and then notes, "which is slightly annoying because that's the main time I feel confident in myself." Eleanor's school's rule which promotes uniformity in turn jeopardises her confidence in herself.

Time. Children understand that their time is highly controlled within the context of school. In school, children move through the day according to a timetable of activities. The timetabling of activities in schools, Foucault states is to control student bodies: "the rhythm impose by signals whistles and orders imposed on everyone temporal norms" (1978, p. 154). For Foucault, the timetable becomes an additional means of discipling and governing bodies. Through the use of a timetable, it is made clear, often with no consultation with students, where students should be at all times, and in which activities they should be participating.

In the children's novel *Schooled*, a child reflects on the school's control of time and asserts:

> They don't have regular time at school, you know. They have *periods*. All of a sudden an alarm goes off and you're supposed to drop what you're doing and rush off to a different room with a different teacher to do something completely different! How can anybody learn like that? (Korman, 2007, p. 16)

This passage highlights how time is highly regulated in school environments and acts in opposition to "regular time." Paradoxically learning is a process that knows no time, and one in which we are continually engaging. When outside the school walls, we do not compartmentalise our knowledge within a schedule of isolated activities. For example, on any given day, it would appear incongruous for an adult to structure their day by stating from 9 am to 10 am, they will only take in information which relate to science, from 10 am to 11 am, they will only absorb information which related to language development, and from 11am to 11:15 they will take a break from learning all together. This is not how learning occurs, compartmentalised and so heavily reliant on the structure of clock time, so why is this the way we turn to when educating children?

When discussing the effect of time regulations on early childhood practices, Rose and Whitty (2010) maintain "the efficient movement of children and educators became the overriding priority… Their clock-bound work created stress and in the worst cases, a kind of frenzy: a running to be on time" (p. 264). Our reliance on timetables transforms the pace and rhythm of our social lives, and within school settings, educators and students are "living in the midst of industrial temporality and its measures" (Jardine, 2008, p. 2). The extreme regulation of time in school settings re-enforces a sense of homogeneity as student move through time and space as one. Deviations from these expectations are usually met with correction through punishment such as the handing out of late slips or detentions. Within the school setting, children have little, or no, control over "how and with whom they spend their time" (Christensen & James, 2001, p. 84). The experience of time is restricted and controlled within these environments.

When discussing the current global pandemic of Covid19 with Eleanor, she notices and offers insights on how the online learning environment challenges her school's strict control of time. She states:

> I could get up and do my work throughout the day, whenever I wanted and then I could sit on the sofa for example and do my work or I could sit at the table it didn't really matter… I do like doing the actual learning whenever I wanted.

Online school during the pandemic allowed Eleanor to take control of not only when she did her schoolwork, but also how and in what position. Many participants raised their altered experiences of school with the Covid19 pandemic. They spoke of negative and positive impacts of the pandemic. Although several participants spoke of how the pandemic has negatively impacted their school experience, some, like Eleanor, highlight how the pandemic has brought positive change for her. Through the online environment she is able to complete her assigned work, however, she appreciates the freedom of choosing when and how to do the work that the online environment allows.

Although the online environment allowed Eleanor to resist the restrictive school timetable, Eleanor describes how the line between home and school spaces have been blurred. She tells me how now that school has shifted to the home environment, her mother "gave us (Eleanor and her siblings) a bit of a timetable where we worked in the mornings." Through online schooling taking place at home, the once more distinct times and spaces of education and leisure appear less clear. She discloses that at the beginning of the lockdown her therapist suggests she go on daily walks so that "I wouldn't be stuck at home all the time… and I was allowed to get away from my family." She enjoyed this walking ritual, she says, until her mother scheduled her to walk at one o'clock each afternoon. She finds the timetabling of her walk

counter to its initial purpose as opening up time for relaxation and escape. Eleanor explains that during morning work time she “got the most frustrated.” If she had a choice, she tells me she would “have probably gone around that time.” Eleanor also says that this scheduling of her walks caused her to “want to have more of a fight with my parents before I left.” She seems to resent that they need to have “a whole thing about it” which could be avoided if she could go for a walk when she wished. With these insights, Eleanor illustrates how the pandemic allowed for less school-based control of her time, but also increased restrictions from her parents. She finds the adult school version of time regulation was quickly replaced by the adult counterpoints at home and Eleanor seems to infer that the schedule is more about controlling her and her freedoms than her wellbeing and relaxation.

I will show you the house,

You can misuse in lots of different ways.

That's the playhouse.

It's low so it's easy to get on top of,

And you can stand on it,

And jump off it.

Oh, the swings are also really easy to misuse.

Jumping off from high,

You can also flip them around

If you push hard enough.

The Playground

As with time, Cole (2009) states, “adults structure public spaces in ways that marginalize children” (p. 23). Playgrounds are spaces which are often planned, designed, constructed with little to no input from children and are often spaces which reflect adult’s view of what they deem as suitable for children (James & James, 2012). The playground is designed to separate children from adults and is often comprised of fabricated structures/apparatus made by adults for children. Within these settings, there are usually explicit and implicit adult expectations on how children should play “appropriately” in the space. These adult-designed spaces are often as Rasmussen (2004) distinguishes, “places for children, (rather than) children’s place” (p. 155). Chancellor (2013) notes that “the over-organised and over-protected lives of children” (p. 64) have led to a decline of free play opportunities for children. Despite the word *play* being literally a part of the word *playground*, it is important to explore the type of play which is supported, or encouraged, in these spaces. To what extent do these adult conceived spaces in actuality support adult-surveillance play and not child-directed free play?

As we set off on our walk, Alex states, “I go to the park sometimes, maybe we should go there.” Alex takes me to a couple of different playgrounds in her neighbourhood. These spaces are central to her experience of her neighbourhood, and she visits these spaces with both family and friends. When showing me around one of the playgrounds, she states:

> This is the park, and you can misuse the playground in so many ways… You can, there is this house, like a playhouse, you can climb on top of that, you can climb like thirty of the trees, you can climb on top of the rock wall, not climb on it, like on top of it…You can, try like deliberately to get yourself into it on the spider web.

Alex takes me to another playground and playhouse and shows me the different ways she "misuses" the structure. She tells me "it's easy to get on top of, and you can stand on it and jump off it." She then points out the swings and tells me that you can jump off them from a high height and "you can also flip them around (the top of the stand) if you push hard enough". Alex's depicts her knowledge of climbing various structures and jumping from high heights as resisting adult intentions. Adults design playhouses to play in, not on top of, however, why does the latter create such a need to prohibit that it is labelled as misuse?

Alex is clearly aware of behavior expectations in the playground and also a "surprising amount of ways to misuse the playground." Alex's use of "misuse" exhibits her resistance towards the expected behaviour while highlighting her understanding of adults governing of children's play. Within the playground setting, even children's play which, is often celebrated as a time where children establish their agency, is controlled by the adult gaze. "Don't run up the slide," "sit properly on the swing," "don't climb too high," and "move in one direction" are phrases surveilling adults utter to "supervise" children at play. Why are there such strict codes of conduct on how adults believe children should act in playground settings? Although these codes are often presented in the guise of safety, the control of children goes beyond this to perpetuate the image of an incompetent child in constant need of adult protection and surveillance.

During our conversation, Alex tells me "younger kids, I am talking about like five-year-olds, still know how to misuse the playground." This indicates a far-reaching resistance of "appropriate" codes of behaviour within the playground setting. The use of the word *misuse* is in relation to what adults deem as appropriate play and works to limit the children's freedom to engage with the playground in ways they deem fit. Rasmussen (2004) asserts adults view children's places "from a different perspective than children do, seeing them as an [*sic*] examples

of disorder, mess, destruction and prohibited behaviour" (p. 162). Through resisting the adult conceived ideas of appropriate play, Alex and the other children who "misuse" the space, transform the playground from a *place for children* to a *children's place*.

Adults can be on the screen

longer than kids.

Because they're older

and the older you are

The more screen time get,

but not for the whole day.

Media and Technology

As on the playground and in school, children also experience adult-imposed restrictions within their home environments. Lee (2001) maintains the distinction between adults and children in school and home environments "depend(s) to a large extend on adults' ability to mediate and to control children's experiences and access to information" (p. 85). Throughout our conversations, the participants often discuss different forms of media and popular culture. Examples of books, video games, television shows and YouTube videos are interweaved throughout our conversations. During our walks, Myles and Nikhil both describe the video games they like to play, Alex and Amaya tell me about the books they enjoy reading, and Nikhil discusses the various YouTube channels he watches. In their telling of these stories arise several examples of how adults control and restrict the participants' access to media content and platforms.

According to research studies, children's use of media and technology troubles adults who express concern about the amount of time children spend with media, and the possible negative effects (McNamee, 2016). The participants discuss both time restrictions and content restrictions imposed on them by parents at home. Nikhil states that "adults can be on the screen longer than kids." He further maintains, "kids can be on the screen, but not as long as grownups" and justifies this by saying, "the older you are the more screen time get." Alex tells me that her parents restrict her access to certain media. She discusses how her parents barring her from watching the *Riverdale* (Goldwater et al., 2017-present) television series, however she is allowed to read books about the series. She explains, "I am not allowed. My parents told me I am not to watch the show, I am just allowed to read the books, which doesn't make sense." These two

statements highlight adult regulation of children's access to content and time spend with media and technology.

Adult debate on "appropriate" or "safe" screen time for children leads to regulations. Children's access to media and technology are subject to these regulations. The participants are aware and discuss some of these restrictions. Alex shares her with me her love of reading. She reads "pretty much all day and like half the night too." She tells me she stays up reading when she is supposed to be sleep "because I have a Kobo so I can." Alex uses her digital e-reader (and its discrete light) to resist her bedtime regulations and to stay up reading past when she is supposed to be asleep. Myles informs me that his parents install passwords to limit his access to the computer and iPad. He states that this extra password is for parents, "if you don't want your kid to go on it (the computer)" and in case "your kid is sneaky trying to go on when it's not weekend." Not only do these comments by the participants highlight their awareness of these media and technology restrictions, they also indicate a strong understanding of possible ways to get around them. Aarsand's (2007) study explores the use of computer and video game use in family settings, and suggests that children use their, at times, greater knowledge of digital media to resist adult control and "to demarcate activities as 'non-adult spaces', where adults are kept outside" (p. 251). Throughout our conversations Myles indicates that he is fully able to navigate and overcome the technological restrictions used to limit his access to the devices. He tells me his family uses extra passwords to control his access, however he informs me, "I know how to already (overcome the extra password)." He then promptly shows me on an iPad he is holding how he gets around his parents' passwords: "just press the middle behind and go up a little, I mean to the side and then click then go to the bottom then click then it will go back on."

Along with times on screens, the digital content children access is of scholarly and parental concern. Children's access of certain media and technology content deemed "inappropriate" by the adult population is a common refrain. Adults fear that exposure to age-inappropriate content leads to a notion of "the death of childhood" (Buckingham, 2000). This idea takes up a Romantic and Eurocentric notion of childhood and not only upholds the notion of children as innocent in need of adult protection, but also positions children as passive in their consumption of media. The panic around content reveals that adults cannot bear children's ability to manage and navigate their own interests. Children do experience difficult situations, and they deserve to have these experiences represented and recognised. Author Kate Messner (2016b) maintains that censoring children from difficult issues in literature, does not make the issues disappear, but rather when we limit access and deem certain narratives inappropriate, "we're telling those children, 'your situation… your family… your *life* is inappropriate.'" (para. 9, emphasis in original). When discussing the ban from some school libraries of her book, *The Seventh Wish*, a children's book which explores the impact drug addiction can have on families, author Messner (2016a) states, "we're not protecting kids when we keep them from stories that shine a light in the darker corners of their lives. We're just leaving them alone in the dark" (para. 14).

The restricting of media and technology, not only functions in terms of protecting but also operates to define, and to separate children from adult populations. Within the home setting, it is often adults who select and buy, or make available, media content, and this content is mostly written, produced, composed, and published by adults. Buckingham (2000) argues that adults often restrict access to domains "which adults define as 'theirs', and which adults believe they are uniquely able to comprehend and to control" (p. 13). A child accessing the internet or social

media, may be conceptualised as needing protection from "harmful" content. At the same time, the image of a child participating in a perceived adult activity puts into question the adult-child divide and works to "dissolve the symbolic barrier between the worlds of children and those of adults" (James & James, 2012, p. 71). By restricting and controlling content and access, adults maintain and promote an "active exclusion of children from what is seen to be the adult world" (Buckingham, 2000, p. 15) thereby further upholding and perpetuating the oppositional division between childhood and adulthood. Adults and children, however, do not occupy separate worlds, they inhabit a common world. Within in a collective world, should children be protected or kept separate from experiences or materials perceived as belonging to the adult world, or rather should they be prepared to meet these situations? Instead of focusing on what may be lost by entangling our worlds, we need to shift to explore what might be gained or (re)imagined through mutually experiencing and narrating the world with one another.

I was told I could do it whenever I needed a break from anyone.

But it ended up being at 1 pm every day.

I had to go for a walk.

And that kind of made it less fun.

And made me want to have more of a fight with my parents before I left.

Like –

No, I really don’t want to go.

And then I would have this whole thing about it.

Resistance and Agency

The preceding sections illustrates some of the restrictions the participants experience both at school and in their home settings, and some of the ways in which they challenge and resist these restrictions. Within these sections resistance is understood as actions which test boundaries, and work to challenge authority and the confines of subornation (Norquay, 1999). In his writing, Foucault highlights the pervasive nature of power and how one is never outside of power relations. His work, however, also points to the possibility of resistance and change (Moss, 2019). An awareness of how discourse operates within society leads not only to revealing power structures, but also makes room for other possibilities; "a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1981, p. 51). hooks (2014) speaking to resisting from the margins as "a site ones stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" (p. 150). Resistance offers hope, as the refusal of something admits the possibility of something new.

With regards to children, resistance is often framed by adults as non-compliance, as something that needs to be address and "fixed." For many, the phrase *the terrible twos* elicits an image of a defiant, not an agentic, toddler. Within an adult-centric society, children are given little freedom to challenge or resist, and when they do, it is often regarded as a disruption. This is evident from the beginning of infancy. Maracle (2015) maintains that the infant's cry is the first voice of the human, and in fact, the first cry is, by its very existence, an assertion life. Within the Aboriginal Stó:lō people, Maracle (2015) states that adults acknowledge crying as language, and respect infants' "capacity to create language of the original voices creation gave us - crying" (p. 5). This understanding, however, is in contrast to dominant Eurocentric society, which, although

still viewing the first cry of a newborn as a signifier of life, swiftly shifts to perceiving crying in an unfavourable and disruptive manner.

"Without words," Mishra Tarc (2015) maintains that infants are "incredibly capable of intracommunication that belies empirical determinations of human thought and language" (p. 30-31). Similarly, The Beng people of Western Africa view "infants as people with their own sense of desire and their own memories" (Gottlieb, 2004, p.13). The Beng view crying as a sign that babies are actively requesting something, and even ask crying infants directly what is upsetting them, "imputing to them motives and wishes that Westerners would likely think could not be present in such small people" (Gottlieb, 2004, p.13). Within this culture, infants are perceived as agentic in expressing their wants and are given the opportunity to express these desires. This is in sharp contrast to dominant Eurocentric society, where crying infants are often shushed to silence. Within our adult-centric society, a crying baby is often viewed as unfavourable, and the agency of an infant, when displayed through crying, is viewed as disruptive to pre-established norms and ideals.

Within Eurocentric school and home settings, compliance and respect are often viewed as interchangeable. The obedient child is viewed as the respectful child. Within these setting many practices, such as the school rules and punishments discussed above, are employed to encourage compliance and to limit resistance. Ahmed (2019) maintains "consequences are made unhappier in an effort to redirect subjects toward ends that are determined as beneficial by those who govern. Remember, deviation is hard. Deviation is made hard." (p. 127). Adults not only celebrate the compliant child, but also through dominant societal practices, children are socialised to not only accept notions of compliance, but to strive for them. Foucault argues that we are so imbedded in dominant discourse that "we govern ourselves through dominant

discourse, acting upon ourselves rather than being directly acted upon" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2004, p. 19). Through the pervasiveness of dominant discourse, we in turn govern ourselves to align with dominant societal ideals.

The adult celebration of child compliance rather than resistance is presented to children through the promotion, and restriction, of certain media. Nodelman (1992) argues, "we write books for children to provide them with values and with images of themselves *we* approve of or feel comfortable with" (p. 30, emphasis in original). There are a multitude of books written for children highlighting a preconceived notion of what is appropriate behaviour for children and how children can alter their current state of being, to better algin with what adult society expects of them. This construction rests on the notion that not only are children able to be turned around, but they can be turned around in the *correct* direction (Ahmed, 2010). Under this conceptualisation the purpose of these books is to take the "blank slate" of the child and turn them into moral adult of the future, all under the assumption that the child is "improperly aligned" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 54) in the first place.

Bookstores and libraries' shelves are filled with books characterizing acceptable social mores such as, "proper" manners, how to behave at school, and how to treat family members and peers in different social situations. It is not that these books in themselves are harmful, but what is dangerous is the perpetuation of a "single story" (Adichie, 2009) or a single way of being. Through these books a certain image of a child is celebrated, the compliant child. Fewer books aimed at children audiences celebrate resistance from children, and those that do often face criticism from adult audiences. Maurice Sendak's (1984) *Where the Wild Things Are* was banned from many school libraries across the United States for its portrayal of an unruly boy who defies his mother, Shel Silverstein's (1981) collection of poetry, *A Light in the Attic*, was also banned

by schools for encouraging disobedience in children, and Louise Fitzhugh's (1964) *Harriet the Spy* was banned for among other things, promoting children talking back to adults. These bans uphold notions of children as passive and in need of adult moral correction. The banning of books featuring diverse representations of children's behaviours limits children's imaginaries. As important as children having opportunities to make decisions and actively influence their surroundings, is children's belief that they have the power to make such changes. Punch (2002) maintains that because children are subordinated to the adult community, they are used to adults positioning them as inferior. Their subordinate status is internalised. By not presenting children with images of children who challenge and resist social ideals, we risk children not believing that they can create change. Through the (re)telling of a single story, compliance becomes the promoted narrative of childhood and child development becomes located on a linear timeline, which does not afford alternate paths or detours.

Within the field of childhood studies, the elevation of children's agency has become a focus, and often Article12 of the UNCRC (1989) is used to advance the idea that children have the right to voice their opinions and to have these views heard and given due weight. Although framed as upholding children's participation and agency, the wording of Article 12 is ambiguous and offers room for interpretation. The Article states that a child who is "capable" has the right to form and express their views and that these views should be given due weight "in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (The United Nations, 1989, art. 12). These qualifying statements are problematic as they are left to adult interpretation. If maturity and age are socially constructed, shaped and defined by cultural norms, then the extent to which a child is seen as *capable* to form and voice their opinion and views is influenced heavily by societal notions of

children and childhood. Further, the promotion of a child's agency is often only celebrated when adults deem it appropriate.

As a society, Prout (as interviewed in Smith & Greene, 2014) cautions adults must do more than simply acknowledge the agency of children, as the adult community must move to "unpacking how that agency comes into existence" (p. 173). We need to move to consider when children voice their views and opinions, under what circumstances do adults frame this as agency or resistance. Are certain actions by children perceived as demonstrating agency when they align with adult values and desires? Are children's actions that challenge these values framed as resistance or defiance? Hanson (2016) argues that children's agency is evaluated against "a normative standpoint about what is 'right' or 'wrong' for children to do or not do" (p. 471). When children act in a manner which challenges adult ideals of childhood behaviour the pendulum shifts from agency to defiance. We need to further examine how adults respond to children who challenge compliance. This disruption holds within it a possibility for a shift in adult-child relationships from one of power and control to one of which offers new possibilities found in relation.

I am trusted with more things obviously than a child.

Like, I am allowed to stay home on my own,

which obviously I wasn’t allowed to do

when I was younger,

But I can’t -

I still have got a parent saying-

you can’t do that

because I am still a child in lots of people’s minds.

Age and Freedom

When asked if they would like to be younger or older than they currently are, most of the participants say that they wish they were older. Alex notes that “most kids want to be younger once they get to like 15… but older before 15,” and Amaya further confirms this notion by stating, “well, I know when you're older you always want to be younger, when you’re younger you always want to be older.” When I ask the participants why they want to be older they allude to the correlation between being older and the freedom to do what they wish. When I ask Nikhil why he thinks adults can do more things, he tells me, “because you’re older, that’s all I know about that.” Many of the participants both explicitly and implicitly make connections between getting older and having more freedom. Myles confirms he would like to be older so that “I can make my own choices,” and Amaya argues that younger children want to be older so that they “get to do whatever (they) want.” These statements indicate not only that the participants currently experience adult-imposed restrictions, but also that they believe that as they get older, they will be given, or allowed, more freedoms.

Both Eleanor and Alex discuss how they are now able to do things that were once prohibited. Eleanor tells me about how once she started secondary school, she was allowed to do more things. She notes:

> I got to secondary school and suddenly, even though I was the exactly the same age as I was before my parents decided that I got a lot more freedom suddenly… Grade 5 I wasn’t allowed to go very far without an adult or my sister, but then suddenly in secondary school (my parents said), ‘Oh yeah, you can go downtown. It’s fine it is only half an hour away, as long as you got another person with you, or you can go by yourself, it doesn’t matter.’ They kind of switched.

Alex also discussed the relation between the increase in age and increase in freedom. She tells me that this school year she will be allowed to walk home from school with friends, which she was not allowed to do the year before. Alex and her parents have agreed to this arrangement for a while, however, she clarifies that “it will always be a least two of us.” She further notes, “I am not going to be allowed to walk home by myself until I am like fifteen.” This statement illustrated the connection between age and perceived responsibility or “maturity.” Alex’s parents have pre-established ideas of when Alex will be allowed to participate in certain activities based upon age. For them, as with many parents, age acts as a guide towards a progression along a continuum of increased freedoms. Eleanor also confirms the adult constructed idea of graduated freedom based upon age. She states that now she is older, she is “trusted with more things.” For example, she tells me she is allowed to stay home by herself, something she was not allowed to do when she was younger. Despite these emerging freedoms Eleanor, however, also notes that there are still things she is not allowed to do because, “I am still a child in lots of people’s minds.” These comments from Alex and Eleanor highlight their understanding that an increase in age is so closely tethered to an increase in freedoms. By passing though certain age stages, these participants are now allowed to participate in activities which were once restricted. The acquisition of a certain age appears to be a determining characteristic in the allowance or restriction, by adults, of certain activities within childhood.

When you are older you actually have to care for yourself

Like you can't just-

Oh, my mom will take care of it for me.

If you have a terrible accident, she will be like-

Okay.

But like you need to care for yourself.

You need to get money to go to college.

You need to go to university.

You need to get a job.

Responsibility

Throughout our conversations the participants repeatedly make connections between not only age and freedom but also age and responsibility. Responsibility can be viewed as being held accountable for one's actions and decisions. With regards to children and childhood, responsibility is often viewed as "a social commodity" or a "gift" adults bestow upon children, conflating responsibility with adult assumptions of age, maturity, and competence (James & James, 2012, p.102). As previously discussed, both Eleanor and Alex describe how, now that they are older, they are trusted with more, and are allowed to do things that they were once restricted from doing.

Responsibility features heavily as a descriptor of adulthood throughout my conversations with the participants. Alex notes that "responsibilities is definitely one" of the differences between children and adults. Myles notes that adults have the responsibility of having "to do work" and Alex states that adults have to "pay taxes." Amaya maintains "when you are older, you actually have real responsibilities," and "when you are older you actually have to care for yourself… you need to get money to go to college, you need to go to university, you need to get a job." The participants not only note that adults appear to hold more responsibilities they also comment on the value of adult responsibilities versus child responsibilities. Eleanor asserts:

> If you are an adult and you don't do your work then that's bad because that's kind of how you get paid, that's how you're living. But as a child if you don't do your work, you're kind of like, oh just do it next time or detention… the consequences aren't as bad.

The participants feel that the responsibilities of adults are more significant and the consequences of failure to meet the expectations of these responsibilities are more severe for adults than for children. This highlights the previously discussed comments of Amaya when she describes the

actions of adults as "more magnified." When comparing responsibilities of children at school and those of adults, Amaya further argues that "homework is a responsibility, but when you are older, you actually have real responsibilities that you really have to get done." Drawing upon our conversations, not only do the participants feel that adults are able to do more things, but also that with this increased freedom comes more responsibility.

Although responsibility is often presented to children as "a gift" from adults (James & James, 2012), throughout our conversations the participants highlight that they do not always desire increased responsibilities. Although most of the participants state that they would like greater freedoms that come with age, there is also a recognition that they do not wish for too much responsibility. During our conversation, Eleanor wrestles her perceived conflict between freedom and responsibility. She states:

> I would probably want to be 18 (years old) or something… Because my age is kind of annoying sometimes because it is fun, because you don't have to pay for anything, but like you have got restrictions from your parents. But once you reach 18, you are the legal age to be basically an adult so you can do all the things adults (do), but everyone is kind of like, "Oh you are 18, you can make mistakes, you are just having fun because you are younger." Those are like the two things that are mixed. That age is kind of a mixture of both.

Eleanor pinpoints 18 years as being a desirable age, viewing it as a transition between childhood and adulthood where you are allowed greater freedoms but with less responsibilities than older adults. This statement illustrates Eleanor's desire for increased freedom, but with less of the aforementioned responsibilities of older adulthood.

Some of the comments from the participants regarding responsibility and adulthood appears to point to the notion of increased responsibility without care. Amaya notes that "when you are older you actually have to care for yourself, like you can't just (say), oh my mom will take care of it for me." Amaya appears to hold the idea that as you get older not only do your responsibilities increase, but you must face challenges without support others, or with less support than when you were a child. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the participants acknowledge and appreciate the support that adults offer them throughout different situations. Amaya's comments highlight a perceived Eurocentric notion that this support is located within childhood and dissipates as you reach adulthood. This highlights the potential in shifting from conceiving support and provision of care as a feature of childhood to fostering responsibility and care for one another throughout our lifespans.

Concluding Thoughts

Talking up a Foucauldian perspective, power is relational, and one can never be outside power relations. We maintain power over others as others maintain power over us, and "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Power is in constant (re)negotiation in child and adult relations and resistance is inherent to this state of negotiation. As Esser (2016) argues agency is the result of relationship and therefore should be understood as a result of interdependence, not of independence. Agency should not be imagined as solely an expression of independence and further autonomy should not be understood as contrary to dependence. This works to disrupt the notion of dependence as a defining characteristic of childhood as well as independence as central to adulthood. It is within interaction with others that the opportunity for agency arises. It is also within these same relationships that agency may be supressed. By thinking differently about power and agency in child and adult relationships, I am not advocating for autonomy, or even "equal" reciprocity, but rather I am interested in looking for ways to expand the conversation and to (re)view and (re)write the ways in which we consider how adults and children attend to one another within mutual negotiated systems of power. What possibilities may arise from relationships which foster interdependence over (in)dependence?

Chapter Eight: Relationships

> Grandmother walked up over the bare granite and thought about birds in general. It seemed to her no other creature had the same dramatic capacity to underline and perfect events -- the shifts in the seasons and the weather, the changes that run through people themselves.
>
> (*The Summer Book,* Tove Jansson)

Relationships

The relationships the participants have with their families and peers feature heavily throughout our conversations. Through the stories they share with me, they offer reflection on the importance of relationships as well as some of the challenges they present.

“I am going to send that one to my mom… Because that one, I need to remember that one.”

(Myles)

(What is Important)

My family.

Because if they die I would kind of cry.

Really loud.

Two blocks of houses will hear.

The Importance of Relationships

James (2013) asserts, "children's lives are lived in interaction with others" (p. 17). The participants' relationships with others are of great significance and feature throughout our conversations. When I ask the participants, what is important to them, relationships with family and friends feature heavily in their responses. Myles tells me that "my family" is really important to him, and his family is central to many of the stories he shares with me. When we are on our walk, Myles takes a photograph of some flowers and tells me that he wants to send a copy of the picture to his mother. He really likes the photograph, and he wants his mother to have a copy, highlighting the importance of their relationship. During one of our conversations, Eleanor asserts that "friends and family and keeping them close" are important to her. Amaya states, "I really love my family, and that is most important to me." She further highlights this importance by telling me, "if one of my family was going to risk their life for me, I wouldn't let them because I really love them. I wouldn't want anything to happen to them." These statements illustrate the importance the participants place on the relationships with their family and friends.

Although *happiness* is a somewhat contentious term, often reflecting social norms and expectations (Ahmed, 2010), many studies indicate that young peoples' perceptions of happiness are associated with positive family and peer relationships (Chaplin, 2009; O'Higgins et al., 2010; Sutton, 2020). When I ask Alex what makes her happy, she responds, "being with friends (and) having friends." Sutton (2020) explores notions of happiness from children's perspectives and found when discussing things which are important to their happiness, the participants often mention family and friends. The participants from this study appear to echo these findings as their relationships with family and friends dominate discussions on what is important to them and what makes them happy. Sutton (2020) further asserts her findings indicated "happiness with

these relationships was contingent” (p. 29). Throughout our conversations, although the participants all highlight the importance of relationships with their family and peers, they also discuss challenges they experience within these relationships. For example, they discuss tensions arising from the restriction of rules from parents, and the changing status of friendship amongst peers.

I really love my family,

and that is most important to me.

If one of my family was like going to risk their life for me,

I wouldn’t let them because I really love them.

I wouldn’t want anything to happen to them.

Family

The concept of family is important to childhood studies as it is the site and space in which most children are born and raised, and the "categorical umbrella under which, for so many purposes, children are subsumed" (James & James, 2002, p. 54). Building upon the notion of childhood as a social construction, it is therefore important to further explore children's experiences and perceptions of being members of a family. The term *family* and what it encompasses, however, is not a universal nor static entity (Rigg & Pryor, 2007). There is much cultural and social variability in what is considered by the term *family*. In their 2007 study, which explored children's perceptions of family, Rigg and Pryor found that the majority of child participants, when defining family, referred to affective factors such as love, care, and support. These aspects featured more prominently as essential features of families than did structural or biological aspects. These findings, and those from other studies (Anyan & Pryor, 2002; Brannen et al., 2000; Pryor & Emery, 2004) highlight children having a fluid understanding of the notion of family and further, these perceptions hold "the potential to open up adult understanding of family forms" (Mason & Tipper, 2008, p. 441).

This shift of understanding reflects a shift in sociologists moving from viewing family as a fixed social category to thinking in terms of "doing family life" instead of "being in a family" (James & James, 2012, p. 53) and by family being considered "by 'doing kinship' in interactions and relationship over time" (Mason & Tipper, 2008, p. 450). Mason & Tipper assert that kinship should not simply be understood as a given, but rather "kinship is moulded and shaped through people's own family negotiations and practices as well as through shifting public understandings and legal definitions of what constitutes relatedness" (Mason &Tipper, 2008, p. 441). Throughout our conversations, through the stories they tell, the participants refer to family in

terms of affective factors such as family members providing love and support, and in terms of genealogical kin for example, sharing stories of parents, grandparents, and siblings.

In their study which explores children's perceptions of family, Rigg and Pryor (2007) found that the child participants were unanimous in their assertion of the importance of family and the importance they place on being loved and supported. These findings are echoed in this study as throughout our conversations the participants make many references to the importance of family, and in particular, with regards to support. When discussing the difference between children and adults, Myles makes connections to his family and states that adults, "do more things, they like do everything for you… make your food, wash the laundry, choose your clothes, and do, wash, your hair." He tells me that his parents also help him with his math schoolwork "if I don't understand." On our walk together Amaya describes a nightmare she had and how she woke up "and then I like yelled for Mummy and I went to sleep in her room." Through our conversations there was a strong sense of care provided to the participants from their families and the awareness of, and the importance they place on, this notion. This appears to reflect findings from Christensen's (2002) study which found that it was important to the child participants to feel their parents would be there for them when they needed them.

Some of their participants reflect on their adult family members' increased experiences as a source of the support. Eleanor informs me:

> They (adults) have gone through like those very stressful parts of obviously school, and they've gone past the stressful parts, and they can kind of help you with, they can kind of help other people with how they feel. So obviously, with kids if they need help, they'll tend to go to an adult. Then obviously the adult can kind of help because they've had that life experience that they can talk about and kind of help with the child's (experience).

Amaya asserts that adults "know about being kind and helpful," and when a child doesn't know what to say in a certain situation an adult can help by knowing what to say. Eleanor and Amaya reflect on how their parents can offer support by drawing upon past experiences which are similar to what Eleanor and Amaya may be currently going through. These statements illustrate how the participants acknowledge and value the support which their family member provide.

Christensen's (2002) study reveals that the majority of the child participants recognised they enjoy spending time with their family, and the children highlighted "the enactment and significance of ongoing and lasting relationships situated in everyday time" (p. 83). Over specially dedicated "quality time," children from the study valued being with their families and engaging in everyday activities together such as eating meals, watching television, visiting relatives, and playing board games. The participants in this study echo these findings as many of the stories they tell, highlight their enjoyment of spending time with their families by engaging in everyday activities. Amaya tells me, "I like to be with my mom a lot and my dad because we have a fun time a lot… I really like hanging out with my family" Through our conversations she tells me about baking with her mother, having dinners with her father and enjoying bike rides and walks with her mother, father and brother. Alex describes spending time with her family by going swimming and going on bike rides. Myles tells me he enjoys playing video games with his father. On our walk together we stop by a tree, and he tells me how he and his mother always stop at this tree on the way to school and look for a woodpecker. He tells me they would stop, "and we would wait and see and find him before we'd go." These stories illustrate the enjoyment the participants experience spending time with their family, and similar to Christensen's (2002) study, highlight the children's value of spending time together in the routines and experiences of everyday life.

Throughout our conversations, the participants refer to enjoying spending time with a variety of family members. Many of the participants mention spending time with their grandparents. During our video call, Myles shows me a book and states “Granny reads to me sometimes. She is going to read it to me today.” On our walks together Nikhil and Amaya tell me many stories about visiting their grandparents. Amaya tells me about how her Grandparents live in India and how she values the time she gets to see them. She tells me about the excitement of seeing them and says, “they can't just visit us every day… like it's really exciting… we hardly see them and so it was just really nice.” She also describes a shirt that is very special to her. She tells me, “It’s just a normal flippy sequin flippy shirt, but I just love it so much because it is from India and my Indian grandparents got it for me.” Through the stories they share, many of the participants highlight how they value spending time with their grandparents.

Four of the five participants have siblings, and these relationships also feature throughout our conversations. Nikhil and Amaya tell me about how they enjoy bike riding with their siblings. During one of our conversations Amaya describes not only her interests, but also those of her brother’s. She states her brother is into “trains and stuff,” and tells me about a time when she, her parents and her brother all went to model train display because of her brother’s interest in trains and transportation. Relationships with siblings also feature not only in terms of enjoying activities together but also in terms of support. Eleanor tells me that she is starting a new school, and how she wishes her sister was not at the same school. She states, “I probably should want to see my sister at school, but I kind of don’t.” At first, this seems to point to a disconnect between the siblings, however, Eleanor informs me that if her sister was at a different school, “it kind of makes it easier to talk to her afterwards, because she doesn’t know my friends.” Eleanor indicates to how she depends upon her sister for advice navigating social relationships, and by

not being at the same school and knowing the same peer group, she feels that her sister will be more supportive as her sister will only know her peers through what Eleanor tells her.

It is important to note that although these studies acknowledge that supportive relationships are important to children and young people, that not all children experience positive relationships with members of their family. Further, Sutton's (2020) study revealed that although relationships were important to her young participants, "happiness with these relationships was contingent" (Sutton, 2020, p. 29). Relationships are fluid and change and alter with time and experiences, and when exploring children's relationships with their family it is important to consider wider contextual factors. Through our conversations, the participants' highlight the shifting dynamics of family relationships. Eleanor acknowledges that family is important to her, however, she also recognises that these relationships can also cause her to feel frustrated and angry. Through the stories she tells, she acknowledges both how her relationships with her parents provide her support and care, for example by providing advice in certain situations, and she also acknowledges the frustrations she feels with certain restrictions and rules which lead to conflict and unhappiness. Relationships are complex and dynamic, and it is imperative not to oversimplify or essentialize relationships when speaking to children's life experiences.

It’s that thing where my sister with her friend

like they’re now best friends

and she can text fifty times

and then go to her house and drag her out of bed.

They have got that kind of friendship.

But I don’t know if I have that with any of my friends.

I don’t know if I am close enough with them to like

obviously not drag them.

I am not close enough to go to their houses

and knock on their door

and be like ‘we are going.’

But I also feel like I am not close enough with them

to constantly text.

Hopefully I will find one of those friends.

Peers

Literature points to the importance of peer relationships to children (Devine 2002; Kernan & Singer, 2010) and friendship development is a site of negotiation, reinvention, and reproduction (Corsaro, 2018). Throughout our conversations the participants often refer to their relationships with peers, and as with relationships with their families, they often speak of their enjoyment of spending time with friends. Myles and Alex tell me about having sleepovers with friends, Alex and Amaya describe going on walks and going to the park with friends, and Eleanor and Amaya assert that they enjoy being with friends at school. These stories illustrate the importance of friendship to the participants.

When exploring children's friendships and relationships with peers, it is important to acknowledge the complexity and fluidity of these relationships. There is a tendency for adults to oversimplify children's relationships with one another. Friendship amongst children has traditionally been studied from a developmental psychological approach. For example, in their study, Bigelow and La Gaipa (1980) assert that children's friendships develop in relation to age. The authors suggest that more "developed" or "complex" (mirroring those of adults) friendships occur as children "mature" in age. Other developmental theorists have debated when the ability to make friends occurs suggesting that *friendship* is not even a concept afforded to young children. In her 2000 study, Kern (2000) asserts that her sample include children who are between three-and-a-half (42 months) and four (48 months) years old as "this is when children begin to form friendships" (p. 313). These views are highly influenced by a developmentalist approach to child development. Piaget viewed young children as "egocentric and their friendships as unstable and, therefore, seemingly unworthy of study" (Barron, 2011, p. 658). A developmental psychological approach to studying friendship upholds an assumption that

children "must acquire or internalize adult conceptions of friendship before they can really have complex friendship relations" (Corsaro, 2003, p. 67). The notions brough forth by this approach conflates childhood with fleeting simplistic relationships and adulthood with complex meaningful relationships. Not only does this ignore the fact that differing types of relationship are a part of both adults' and children's lives, but also it operates to further uphold a view of children as "lesser than." This highlights the importance of exploring ideas of friendship and peer relations from the perspective of children themselves. The participants in my study discuss a variety of peer relationships and offer reflection on these relationships and the impact they have on their daily lives. Throughout our conversations, the participants appear to illustrate what Ahn (2011) argues, that "children play significant roles as active creators and interpreters of their own social relations and friendships" (p. 296).

In discussing children's friendships one adult assumption that often emanates is, particularly with young children, friendship is often a result of happenstance. Children are often viewed as making friendships easily and that these relationships simply occur due to such factors as who they sit next to at school or who appears at the playground (Bigelow & La Gaipa, 1980). This suggests a level of passivity on the part of children's construction and development of friendship and conversely positions adult relationships as more thoughtful and intentional. During our walk, Alex tells me that there are many children in her neighbourhood. She states, "My mom wants me to be friends with these two twin girls up the street, and I am just like if I want to make friends with them, I will make friends with them, I just don't really know them." This statement highlights both the adult desire for children to simply "make friends," and illustrates the child's awareness of the complexity of friendship which moves beyond convivence. Alex is aware that her mother wants her to be friends with these two girls as they

live in the neighbourhood, however, Alex is hesitant as she acknowledges that making and maintaining friendships goes beyond the convenience of location.

Children's friendship processes with one another are contextually situated in their everyday lives and arises through social interaction (Corsaro, 2003). Building upon this, when exploring children's friendships, it is important to consider notions of making and being friends from their perspectives. Throughout the study, the participants reflect on the qualities of a "good" friend as well as their desire for friendship within their lives. Myles tells me that a good friend is someone who plays fairly. He uses the example of playing tag and tells me that "some kids are not that good to play with because tag games, it is not really good because sometimes they fight over who is 'it'." Other participants tell me they align a "good" friend with being there for one another and providing support. Throughout our conversations the participants acknowledge that they depend on friends for emotional support. Both Eleanor and Amaya tell me that they going to a new school next year. Amaya maintains she is nervous about going to a new school and hopes that she will make friends. Eleanor also looks to the possibility of friendship to help her transition to her new school and states, "hopefully I will have someone who knows where they are going that I can make a friend with, and they can kind of help me around." Both Eleanor and Amaya discuss their worries about starting at a new school, and how they hope to make new friends to help them navigate the transition. Dockett and Perry (1999) argue making friends at school is of great importance to young children, and in a following study, they further explore how friendship can be a potential source of support for children in the transition to school (Dockett & Perry, 2013). The participants in this study appear to confirm these findings as they often refer to the importance of friendship in their daily lives.

Not only did the participants acknowledge that they depend on friends for support, but further building upon Eleanor's and Amaya's desire for friendship to navigate the transition to a new school, many of the participants recognised how they in turn wish to offer their friendship to help and support others. When I asked Myles what he would want a new student starting in his class to know about him, he states, "That I am a good kid to play with… I would say my name is Myles and I am a good kid, and you may want to hang out sometime." Nikhil tells me he would want his teacher to know that "I help kids" and he further states that he would help a child if he saw them fall down as "sometimes they can't pull them up and they need a bit of help." These statements illustrate the recognition of the importance of friendship to the participants in not only receiving support, but also in providing support to others. These results indicate that not only do children look to adults for support, but they also depend upon and value one another for support in navigating daily life.

On our walk together, Eleanor discusses the importance of friends to her life outside school. She asserts that her close friends are "very supportive about everything." She tells me about when she dyed her hair, her friends offered support, she states:

> They came along with me, and kind of dyed my hair with me and even if they weren't helping, they kind of sat in the bathroom and were like yeah, we are just going sit here for the hour and kind of be fine, and it was nice.

Alex depends on the support of her friends as she navigates her social life. She further explains how this year, in particular, she experienced many changes and has become more confident in expressing who she is, and she states that this support from her close friends:

> was very helpful because obviously then when I, during the school year, when I came out and I was like I am bi(sexual), and everyone was like great… And no one cares and it's great because then you feel a bit more happy being yourself.

Alex highlights the importance of friendship in providing support and that this support allows her to be more comfortable with expressing to others who she is as a person. She confirms that with in her group of friends, "we all basically do the same thing… like everyone else would be so supportive of everyone else." Although Eleanor does acknowledge some challenges with peer relationships, she makes the distinction between friends and peers, and how support for one another is a defining characteristic of friendship.

The participants not only acknowledge the value they place on friendship, but also their desire for friendship. As previously mentioned, Eleanor and Amaya hope for the support of friendship to help navigate their new school settings. As the opening poem to this section reveals, Eleanor further confirms a desire for friendship and reflects upon her sister's close friendship with a peer as something she wishes for in her life. When reflecting on connecting with peers during the Covid19 pandemic, Eleanor tells me that it would be easier to get together with peers if she was in-school (rather than online learning). She expresses her lack of confidence in the closeness of some of her friendship and states that she wishes:

> I was close enough to kind of text more than once 'are you free' that kind of thing because I don't want to bug them because then I feel like I am being annoying and we are not really close enough for that, I guess.

Eleanor continues to tell me that her sister has a friend who she can "text fifty times and then go to her house and drag her out of bed." She further reflects, "They have got that kind of friendship, but I don't know if I have that with any of my friends," and concludes, "hopefully I

will find one of those friends." Although Eleanor confirms the importance of friendship in her life, and how she does have friends who are supportive, she further reflects on these friendships and acknowledges they are not as close as the friendship she sees her sister has with her friend. Eleanor's desire for this closeness not only underscores the importance she places on friendship in her life, but also highlights her ability to reflect of the different types of relationships in her life.

In confronting and challenging adult-based tendency to oversimplify and romanticise children's relationships, it is important to acknowledge the children's friendships can also be a source of unhappiness and worry for children (Sutton, 2020). Not all peer relationships that children experience are positive and supportive, and many can cause conflict and distress. In relation to children, especially young children, the notions of peer relationships and friendships are often conflated. In school settings teachers often use the term *friends* to refer to all classroom members regardless of the complexity of relationship which exist. Within a classroom context, exclamations such as, "friends, it is time to tidy up," "we are all friends here," and "we must listen to our friends" discursively upholds a notion that children's peer relationships are indistinguishable from friendships. Under the guise of creating a classroom which fosters respect and empathy, these utterances in fact fail to recognise the complexity of children's peer relationships. I am not advocating for children to not treat one another with respect, however, respectful relationships and friendships are not synonymous. Another danger of this approach is that it inaccurately presents children with an unrealistic image of a world in which "everyone gets along." This further upholds a romanticized notion of children in need of adult protection from the difficulties of the world. This approach favours avoidance instead of supporting children in acknowledging and navigating challenges and disputes.

Throughout our conversations, the participants share with me many examples of the complexity of the different peer relationships they encounter. Children, as with adults, are "embedded in fluctuating webs of meaning and meaning-making processes" (Gulbrandsen, 2012, p. 6), and shifting dynamics within peer groupings often cause feeling of insecurity and anxiety. Several of the participants speak to the insecurities they feel with regards to friendship and peer relations particularly with regards to wanting to fit in to certain peer groupings and fearing judgement and rejection.

Eleanor explains that she would want her teacher to know that she gets "stressed a lot, about little things that don't usually, wouldn't usually make sense to be stress about." She says she would want her teacher to know this so that maybe they could help or "push (her) a little bit." She, however, states that she is more hesitant to share this insight with her peers. She tells me, "I wouldn't want to tell them a lot about it… because otherwise I would feel like they would judge me a bit." Although Eleanor asserts that she depends upon her friends for support, she also tells me that within her peer group "there are a lot of people that will pressure you sometimes, or make you feel bad about yourself." She explains that at times she feels a sense of unsureness and anxiety with some of her peers. She states, "I find that my age group you can find certain people that will be really nice and then there will be people who pretend to be nice only to find out your secrets and then use them against you." Amaya tells me about a similar experience with some of her peer group. She tells me about one girl in her class and states, "she can be nice, like if you are her friend, she is really nice to you, but if you are not really a good friend she can be like kind of snobby." She tells me about an experience when this particular girl was mean to her and said things to her in a "really mean tone," however, during our conversation, Amaya immediately follows up with, "but she can also be really nice." Amaya highlights her uncertainty

with this peer relationship and further asserts that, "there's some other girls I know like that." Although the participants illustrate how they depend on some peer relationships for enjoyment and support, they also acknowledge that some relationships can be a course of uncertainty and anxiety.

Throughout our conversations, several of the participants tell me about fearing judgment from their peers and the pressure they sometimes feel to fit in to certain social groupings. Eleanor maintains her concern with how peers view her has increased as she has gotten older. She states:

> I started caring more about what other people think about me and I know lots of my friends think that as well. Like how you dress, or the way you act. You are always worried someone is going to be judging what you do.

Alex also confirms that her peers are starting to worry more about what others think of each other. She states, "in school there's starting to be the whole popularity thing." When I ask her to expand on this, she explains that her peers are starting to pay attention to "fashion" and being "fashionable." Although she maintains that she is, "just going to wear sweatpants and a sweater everyday" because that is what she likes, Alex tells me that some of her peers are being to worry and care about how they dress and look. When I ask Alex if kids in her class wear certain things to impress people, she asserts that fashion has become increasing more important to some of her peers and states that some people in her class "just wear stuff that's way too… like they don't need to wear that to school." The pressure to fit in has caused some of her peers to worry about what they wear and there is a fashion hierarchy within certain peer groups. Eleanor also comments on the pressure within her peer group to fit in, particularly with regards to fashion and attire. She states:

> When you get to my age it is more of, you find your style and then if you wear for example a t-shirt and leggings, you're basic and people make fun of you for that and it's just you kind of have to find you style quickly otherwise it's kind of more difficult, I guess.

Eleanor explains the pressure she feels to fit in at school, as within her peer group, fashion and finding your style has become important, and failing to do so risks exclusion and being labelled as "basic." This appears to uphold literature which maintains children "are knowledgeable about symbolic and status meanings associated with consumer goods" (p.18) and the value they place on materialistic goods are "likely to be intimately connected with their peer experiences" (Banerjee & Dittmar, 2008, p. 17). Throughout our conversations, the participants highlight their awareness of belonging to, and subsequently being excluded from, social group based on materialistic qualities such as clothing.

Children's friendships are often studied in comparison to adult-child relationships and as a result children's peer relationships are often viewed as being more egalitarian (Asher, Guerry & McDonald, 2014). Throughout this study the participants describe many challenges and difficulties they experience within their peer groups. This highlights the importance of exploring children's peer relationships in their own right, and of recognizing the power imbalances which exist and are in a constant state of negotiation. Friendships operate not only as a form of social inclusion and exclusion, by the formation and establishment of "in-groups," but also function, as both a term and a concept, in the negotiation of power and authority (Ahn, 2020). Gulbrandsen (2012) asserts that within school communities, children who are not a part of the "in crowd" "often positioned themselves in relation to the in-crowd either by actively dissociating themselves from or by explicitly adopting their views" (p. 13-14). Alex acknowledges that "the

whole popularity thing" has influence how her peers act, however, she repeatedly states, "I just don't pay attention to that and do what I want." Conversely, Eleanor acknowledges the pressure she feels to fit in to certain peer groupings, and how she feels "self-conscious" as "a lot of people are judgemental." Eleanor's and Alex's understanding of the social pressures to fit-in algin with Ahn's (2020) assertion that dynamics of alliance formation and exclusion are central to children's construct of friendship. These examples re-affirm children as reflective and knowledgeable in their understanding of the social relationships within their lives.

It's weird because you still kind of want to play sometimes

But there are many times where you kind of want to sit there

or like you don't want play.

Because most of your friends have now moved out of that point

where they're like, oh we don't play anymore

Because we're older than those kids,

Since you're kind of,

I still want to play,

But you're kind of…

I have my own, I have (my brother) obviously,

because that's how I can always keep playing with someone.

Relationships Change

Literature illustrates that children are aware of the effect the passing of time has on their relationships with their peers and their families (Christensen, 2002; Sutton, 2020) and that their social relationships are in a constant state of renegotiation (Barron, 2011). Throughout our conversations, the participants provide many examples of how they reflect on the changing nature of their relationships with both family and peers.

Eleanor reflects on the recent shift in her relationship with her younger brother. She discusses how over the past year, as her relationships with her peers have changed, so has her relationship with her brother. She states, “a year ago, I was like very into playing with Lego with my brother then I suddenly started growing out of it because I decided it was something I didn’t feel happy playing with anymore.” She goes on to further explain this shift and states:

> You still kind of want to play sometimes, but there are many times where you kind of want to sit there, or like you don't want play because most of your friends have now moved out of that point where they're like, oh we don't play anymore because we're older than those kids.

Eleanor is aware that her change in interests and her current relationship with her peers has influenced her relationship with her younger brother. She does assert that this shift is not absolute, and she still, at times, wants to play with her brother in the same manner they have in the past. She acknowledges that her relationship with her younger brother is “how I can always keep playing with someone.” Eleanor explains that there is at times a tension between what she feels she should be doing with her peers at her age, and wanting to still play, and although her relationship with her brother has changed, it stills offers her the opportunity to play. It is evident

that Eleanor is aware of and reflects on the changing nature of her relationships with both her peers and her family.

Throughout our conversations both Alex and Amaya reflect on how their relationships with their friends are in constant states of renegotiation. On our walk together, Alex takes me past the house of a friend from her former school. She shows me the house and comments, that although she used to see her friend at the park "all the time", they "don't really talk much anymore." She tells me about a time when she met up with this girl, who is a year older, to get advice about transitioning to middle school and the girl was not helpful and seemed "too cool." Amaya also reflects on how relationships she has with peers change over time. She explains how as she gets older, she believes, "my friends will start acting different, like not completely, but they are going to grow up." She discusses how she is going to a different school next year and that she will no longer be at the same school as her friend, Vivien, and she believes this change will affect their relationship with each other. Amaya tells me that as she won't see her friend at school, "she is probably going to be a lot different when we're 11 and 12 and so on, because like when you grow up, you change." Amaya is aware that her change in school could influence her relationship with her friend.

Throughout our conversations Amaya mentions another peer, Hiro, several times, and her description of her relationship with this girl shifts throughout our meetings. On our second meeting, Amaya tells me Hiro is her "old best friend" and that she is "not very nice anymore," however, at our next meeting, Amaya alters her description of Hiro and asserts, "I have a friend, Hiro, and sometimes we go on walks together." She goes on to describe how they enjoy going on walks together with their families. At one point during this conversation, however, Amaya does tell me that Vivien is her "best friend right now," a designation which used to belong to Hiro.

Throughout our various meetings, Amaya illustrates how her relationship with her peer, Hiro, is in constant renegotiation and how her understanding of this relationship is also in constant flux. These statements on the fluidity of relationship highlight not only the complexity of children's relationship with their peers and families, but also how children are knowledgeable and contemplative of these relationships.

You can't go to school.

You can't play with your friends.

But you can, but you have to…

but you can't…

And you can't touch the same things…

Yeah, because you can't

because of the virus.

I know one thing,

that if you are close friends, you can be closer.

Yeah, because…

I don't know really.

Relationships and the Covid19 Pandemic

For this study, I began the data collection prior to the first wave of the Covid19 pandemic in Ontario. During our first meetings (which occurred prior to the onset of the pandemic, apart from Alex whose initial meeting was during the first wave), the Covid19 pandemic was not central to the everyday experience of the participants. Although they might have been aware of the virus, it was at a time where, due to the extremely low local case rates, it was not thought to be the threat to which it eventually developed. The Covid19 pandemic, however, rapidly evolved, and its influence was highly apparent throughout the rest of the research project, in terms of both methods (which is discussed in other chapters) and the content of our conversation. The participants explicitly reflect on how the Covid19 pandemic, and the subsequent lockdown protocols, have had an influence with their relationships with their families and their peers.

When discussing the effects of the Covid19 pandemic on peer relationships, the participants highlight both positive and negative influences. Alex reflects on her relationship with her friends, and how she “really can’t see them right now,” and how they currently interact online through various online meeting apps. When she tells me about activities she enjoys doing with her friends and family such as going to indoor rock climbing and trampoline facilities, she notes, “I really miss doing that.” Alex expresses disappointment over the loss of the in-person activities she used to be able to do with her friends and family. As stated in the introductory poem to this section, on reflecting on how things have changed due to the spread of the virus, Myles tells me that, “you can’t play with your friends” and that “because of the virus” he and his friends “can’t touch the same things.” Eleanor notes that with online school, she was not able to see her friends as much and she states, “I wanted to go back to school so I could interact with people because that is the main reason I like school.” Amaya reflects on how the pandemic has

altered not only her ability to see friends in person, but also how she and her friends interact with one another. She tells me with one of her friends, Vivien, when they were at school in-person, they would walk “around the schoolyard every recess in continuous laps just talking.” She further asserts that now they have to speak online, “it's just not the same because we don't have a big schoolyard to walk around,” and that this change has influenced their relationship. Amaya explains, “it’s just really different actually because like we don't talk as much.” These statements highlight that many of the participants identify several negative effects the pandemic has had on their social relationships particularly with not being able to physically see and interreact with friends.

On our walk together, a couple of weeks before the return to school, Amaya reflects on how things are going to be different when she returns to in-person schooling. She states:

> We are all going to have like, desks far apart from each other. The teacher’s going to have to wear masks. I’m going to have to wear masks. I feel kind of like, our mouths are going to get so hot because like the mask makes it just sweaty and it’s so not nice. It's just, I just wish coronavirus wasn’t a thing. Everyone does.

Amaya builds upon her unsureness of returning to in-person school, as she reflects on her concern with starting at a new school. She tells me how the pandemic has increased her anxieties around starting at a new school. She tells me she would not be as nervous returning to in-person school with the pandemic if she was returning to her new school, but she tells me:

> At (her new school), I'm worried that like no one is going to want to make new friends or something because like, they’re going to be worried about Coronavirus or something, so they are just going to stick with their old friends.

Amaya recognises that making friends at a new school is difficult, and she is concerned that with the heightened worry of the Covid19 pandemic, no one at her new school is going to make the effort to welcome her to the new school, as they will be so preoccupied with all the new modifications at school.

Nikhil discusses that although he is able to interact with some of his friends online, there are some friends who do not go online, and he has not been able to connect with them throughout the pandemic. He tells me that with online school one of his friends "doesn't go on" the online meetings, so he has not been able to see his friend. He further tells me that his friend is in Senior Kindergarten this year and Nikhil "won't see him next year," as he is in Junior Kindergarten so next year he and his friend will be in different areas of the school. He tells me, "I might see him in the hallway, but… next year he will be in a different class." The relatively quick transition from in-class to online learning due to the pandemic did not allow for Nikhil to say goodbye to his friend and has left him with a feeling of a loss friendship without a sense of closure.

Throughout our conversations the pandemic featured as a source of worry for many of the participants. On our walk, Amaya informs me that she is concerned for the safety of her grandparents. She states, "I feel like super nervous like maybe my grandma and grandpa are going to catch it," and further explains, "they live in a community where a lot of elders live, so not a lot of people can like, get some groceries and stuff." Amaya is aware that older people are at a greater risk from the Covid19 virus, and states:

> I don't really think like some of my friends are going to get super sick. I know it can still affect us, especially if you already have like some sort of sickness, but like all my friends are pretty like healthy and stuff. So… but I do kind of worry like about my grandma and grandpa catching it and getting super sick.

Amaya is worried about the health of her grandparents. They do not live in the same city as her, and she worries that as they live in a community with mainly older people that there is no one to help them and they must go out to get their own groceries and supplies. These statements not only illustrate Amaya's understanding of the Coronavirus pandemic, but also highlights how the pandemic has increased her concern over the safety of her family members.

Although the participants make several references to how the pandemic has negatively impacted their relationship with peers and families, throughout our conversations, there are also examples of how the pandemic has positively influenced social relationships. Eleanor tells me the pandemic lockdown has "put my stress levels down a lot." She further explains that the transition to online school has, "helped me mentally definitely because I am not worrying about at school: who the fight that is happening [is with], and can I be friends with this person yet?" She says that instead of having to interreact with a large group of peers all at once at school, she has enjoyed being able to interact with smaller groupings and choosing when those meetings occur. She informs me, "I text one person and if they are allowed, they can come and then it is just sitting down and talking about random things." At school Eleanor often worries about what her peers think of her, and the pandemic has allowed her not only to step away from larger peer groups but also has allowed her to feel more confident in herself. She states:

> So, during quarantine obviously I have changed a little bit every single time, like I started making earrings, so I started wearing them, started wearing flannel, started wearing things I originally felt self-conscious in. I was just trying to, I don't know… Like for example, I wouldn't have decided to wear this outfit in the middle of the school year, because I think like, people would judge you for it and because of quarantine I was like,

> no one is going to see me and if they do it's because I took a photo and sent it, or we decided to meet up once so it's not really an issue as much.

With the current lockdown measures, Eleanor feels more confident in expressing herself as she does not feel she will be judged as much by her peers at school.

Concluding Thoughts

Family and friends are often viewed by adults as distinct and separate categories (Allan, 2005). Traditionally children have been studied within a family context embedding children within the notion of family. This limits the ways in which children's relationships are understood and often leads to an oversimplification and essentialization of children's social relationships. Children, like adults, experience and understand relationships in complex and varied ways, and these relationships permeate many aspects of their daily lives. Shifting from adult-centered notions, to exploring children's relationships with their family and their peers from their own perspectives may work to challenge dominant assumptions that often positions adult relationships as more complex and superior to those of children. This may also support adults in moving past an oppositional understanding of children and adult relationships. Children belong in our world beyond the family and hold complex relationships not only with family members, but also those outside the family. Relationship provides opportunity to be in the world together and offers children and adults the possibility to attend to the world not apart from, but rather, in connection with one another.

Chapter Nine: Been, Being, and Becoming

I can't go back to yesterday because I was a different person then.

(*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll)

Been, Being, and Becoming

Throughout our conversations, the participants spoke not only of the present time, but of their memories and their hopes and fears for their futures. On our walks together it was evident how their memories of the past interweaved with their perceptions of the present and their imaginations of the future.

“One day, someday, once I used to get down those little apples.” (Myles)

One time me and my dad, he's from India,

Well, we went to Mumbai, his like home,

Where he was born and stuff and…

One thing I really liked…

We stayed at my dad's home.

Like he lived in.

That he grew up in.

And his mom and dad they still lived there.

So, I like slept in the room he slept in when he was a kid.

Time

Time is a significant element of life, however, it can be conceptualised in varied ways, and these differing notions of time are fundamental to how we view childhood, adulthood, and human development. Eurocentric-Western society is greatly influenced by chronological time. This understanding of time, influenced by our dependence on clocks and calendars, presents time as processional and linear and further works to support developmentalist notions of children progressing along a defined timeline towards adulthood. Development is “an uncomplicated link between past, present and future” (O’Dell et al., 2017, p. 151), and within these conceptualisations, time upholds age as a dominant marker of identity.

In thinking with the idea of time, it is significant to acknowledge that children are not assured adulthood, however, all adults possess the past experience of childhood. This brings forth an interesting paradox of childhood as a universal human experience, however, the experience of childhood is far from universal. Adults often look back to their childhoods to try to explain and explore the current situation of children. Baxter (2016) maintains, “all adult humans have a non-adult past that they can recall, manipulate and imagine, and use to inform their understandings and practices towards other generations of children” (p. 234). Building upon this idea, nostalgia effects how adults view childhood and children’s development along time. Cross (2015) describes nostalgia as adult desires to recreate their childhood, or to uphold a universal ideal of childhood drawing upon the past. Nostalgia is an adult longing for a childhood remembered, and greatly influences how current childhoods are conceptualized. Kitson and McHugh (2015) describe nostalgia as an “enchantment with distance that cannot be bridged” (p. 487). In this definition, I find the word *distance* is key as nostalgia can stretch the division (distance) between adults and children by offering a representation of childhood base of hopes

and desires, not current situations. As Baxter (2016) maintains nostalgia in thinking of childhood, “inform(s) the types of spaces and places and objects and experiences that are provided or denied to children based on emotional connections to a personal past” (p. 234).

Nostalgia is closely tethered to ideas of memory, however the distinction between the two is important. In discussing nostalgia, Hofstadter (1948) maintains, “if the future seems dark, the past by contrast looks rosier than ever; but it is used far less to locate and guide the present than to give reassurance” (p. v). Memories, however, as Kuhn (2000) asserts are “the traces of the past that remain in the present” (p. 186), are “always discursive, always already textual” (p. 189) and “may also transform the ways individuals and communities live in and relate to the present and the future” (p. 186-187). In other words, memories work alongside the present (and even look to the future) whereas nostalgia rejects the present in hopes of recreating an imagined past. Nostalgia looks backwards whereas, I would argue, working with memories holds the potential to look all around.

In thinking of childhoods, it is important to bring children’s memories into the conversation. In doing so, however, it is necessary to make the distinction between adult memories of childhood and children’s memories of experience. All humans hold memories, however, within social science research, children’s memories are often overlooked. Oral life history is a methodological tool that traditionally has been employed by historians to generate data about peoples lived experiences (Haynes, 2010). When exploring ideas of children and childhoods it is important to work with, not overlook, children’s histories, and to recognise that children have pasts and draw upon their memories. Oral history allows for the exploration of memory, perception, and lived experience. Through the telling of stories, oral history holds the “potential of opening up new areas of inquiry or exposing the voices of those marginalized”

(Haynes, 2010, p. 221), and further, “once the life histories of people of all kinds can be used as its raw material, a new dimension is given to history” (Thompson & Bornat, 2017, p. 5). A life history approach also offers promise in this area of inquiry. Life history methodologies, as with oral history, aim to explore the lived experiences of individuals. Although closely aligned in some areas, life history more often focuses on the life story of an individual in order to gain greater understanding of the surrounding context and community, whereas oral history more often explores first-hand experiences of a specific event or period (Janesick, 2013). Both the approaches to qualitative research offer great potential to explore and gain better understandings of the lived experiences of children through memory work.

Further to nostalgia and memory, how we conceptualize time influences how we think about childhood(s). Rosen (2017) maintains that time is often experienced differently contingent on “our subjective and contextual experience, as well as social positions,” and she employs the term *temporality* to help explore the social nature of time, “specifically the ways in which people mobilize and experience different – and often contradictory – dimensions of time” (p. 375). Adult assumptions of time, conceivably influenced by nostalgia, offers differing perspectives of how time is realised in childhood versus adulthood. In the novel, *The 1,000-year-old Boy*, the main character, a boy who does not age, offers an unique perspective as he longs to experience a different realisation of time, one that is often associated with adulthood. He states:

> I long to grow up, to be a man. I long to be in a hurry to do something, before time runs out. I long for the feeling that life is precious, that I have to cram as much as I can into every sun-drenched day and every frost-filled night; to know that childhood is special because it does not last forever. (Welford, 2018, p. 224)

In thinking of childhood and adulthood, adults speak of time in very different ways. There is often an adult-assumption that time operates differently in adulthood and childhood. For adults time is “fleeting”, there is never “enough time,” “time escapes’ and even “runs out” requiring a need to “catchup,” however, adults conceive time within childhood as “endless,” requiring “time to be filled.” These views uphold developmental notions of the linear time of childhood and uphold the romantic notion that in childhood time stretches on for eternity. The child, however, is not any more guaranteed the promise of more time than adults.

Adults’ fears and reservations are often contained by their manipulation of time. Time offers a way to regulate and give a sense of order to a messy and unpredictable world. The Covid19 pandemic disrupted, and continues to disrupt, many aspects of day-to-day life. Lockdowns and restrictive protocols greatly influence how time is experienced through the pandemic, and adult fears are often expressed through the notion of time. Parents speak of their worry that their children have “lost” a time of their childhood. When speaking to the effects the pandemic has had on children’s schooling, adults often present these through time. Media and politicians report of the “loss of time,” how children are “behind in school,” and how they need “time to catch-up.” Subsequently, the resulting solution of “providing” time to catch-up on schooling, is an over-simplified response to all that has been affected in children’s schooling by the pandemic. Returning to Foucault’s (1981) ideas of the will to truth, this manipulation of time, through the presentation of a solution, operates to provide an image of order in response to the immense chaos and unknowingness of the pandemic. Children are “behind,” and through the linear use of time, need to “catch-up.” Time, however, is not linear, and the effects of the pandemic cannot be measured linearly. Children have not “lost” a time of their childhood. They experienced, and continue to experience, the pandemic. The effects of the pandemic on their

school experience reach so much further than being “behind” academically. Time is not linear or distinct, and so neither are the ways in which we have, do, and will, experience the pandemic, and indeed our lifespans. More so than ever, we need to work with, and not against the uncertainty of time, to hold ambiguity and shift to complicate notions and understandings of time.

I just don’t like moving.

Like again

and again

and again.

Every two years.

After we moved like three times,

I have to live in one place

for like seven years

before it actually is home.

Past

Much childhood studies scholarship focuses on the tensions between *being* and becoming. Although the shift of focusing on the being of children is fundamental in challenging the developmentalist notion of children's worth lying in their promise of being future-adults, what seems to be missing from these conversations is a recognition of the *been,* or the past lived experiences of children. James (2013) maintains "children's personal lives are biographical, lived in historical time and encompassing changing social and material environments" (p. 17). With this assertion comes the importance of recognising children as those who carry their own individual histories. All beings have histories and when working with children it is important to recognise this reality and give it due weight. Children have pasts (both experienced and inherited) and hold memories which influence how they orientate themselves to their present (and to their futures).

As Alex leads me on a walk around her neighbourhood, she takes me to both her old school and her old house. When we pass the street on which she used to live, she says, "I used to live on that street there so I could take some pictures there." As we walk up the street towards her old house, we pass a school and she explains, "this is where I went for like the first 4 weeks of kindergarten." After we pass the school, Alex points to a house "There's our old house… the green one." After we look at the house, she tells me, "I just don't like moving like again and again and again every two years… It also, after we moved like three times, I have to live in one place for like seven years before it actually is home." Throughout our meetings, Alex comments on her apprehension regarding changes in her life. She asserts that adults usually want to be younger than they are because as you get older you experience larger changes in your life, and she feels "people don't really want to do that." Alex has moved several times throughout her life,

and she finds the experience unsettling. She informs me she is happy at her current home and hopes to stay there, although she states, "I have moved 5 times so when my parents tell me I am not moving again I don't believe them" as her parents "said that in three of the other houses."

Alex's and my walk together took place at the end of the summer as she was getting ready to return to school with the new Covid19 protocols in place. It is possible that the uncertainty around her return to school led Alex to reflect on other large changes, and times of uncertainty, she has experienced in her life. Throughout our walk together Alex takes me to specific locations from her past and reflects on how she felt moving homes and schools perhaps as a means to think through her current uncertainty of returning to school amid the Covid19 pandemic.

During one of our meetings, Myles takes me on a walk around his neighbourhood. During this walk he points to many specific landmarks and tells me of their significance to his past experiences. At one point on our walk, we stop at a tree and Myles tells me that one time he and his mother saw a woodpecker on the tree, and since then, each day when he goes to school he and his mother would stop at the tree and "we would wait and see and find him before we'd go" on to school. Further along on our walk a butterfly flies past us and Myles exclaims, "A butterfly! That's the butterfly I keep on seeing each morning. It is always white." We stop at another tree, and Myles points to an apple high up and says, "I found one! There…Oh man, we can't reach that one. Too far." He then tells me tell me how used pick the little apples off the tree when he walked by it.

As with Alex, Myles and my walk together occurred after the first wave of the Covid19 pandemic. It was at a time when many things were changing and new information about the virus and its prevalence and transmission was constantly coming out which effected restrictions on

daily life and activities. Throughout our conversations it is evident that Myles is aware of the pandemic and is trying to make sense of it. Near the end of our walk, we go past a pizza restaurant with an open window/counter. Myles tells me "I know why they broke the window. The window at the very front… That's how they sell the pizza because the virus." He explains that the window is so that customers "don't have to go inside because the virus" to pick up their pizzas, however, "the workers have to go inside, even if they are not from the same family, they have to because that's their point, they have to make pizza." He follows up with some of his confusion about the virus by stating:

> You can't go to school. You can't play with your friends. But you can, but you have to, but you can't, and you can't touch the same things… Yeah, because you can't because of the virus… I know one thing, that if you are close friends, you can be closer… Yeah because, I don't know really. Hey, I know this. This is the tree where there used to be thousands of berries on the ground and there were thousands of berries on this tree.

Myles interrupts his own discussion of the pandemic to point out a tree where he remembers stepping on the berries as the fell on the ground. He tells me, "There were thousands of berries squelched down on the ground, and there was a stinky smell." Myles interrupts his uncertainty of the Covid19 pandemic to tell me about a memory from before the pandemic, a time of greater certainty. It is possible, that during our walk together, Myles to draws upon memories of past routines and events as way to work through the uncertainty of his current situation. It appears the comfort of past routines may offer Myles an interruption to the uncertainties of the current pandemic.

On our walk Amaya also appears to draw upon memories to work through her unsureness of the Covid19 pandemic. Amaya admits to being worried about the pandemic. She tells me she

is “super nervous” about the possibility that her grandparents may get sick, and she explains how things are different in her daily life and how “school is going to change” when she returns in a couple of weeks. Interweaved in our discussions about the pandemic Amaya discusses a trip to India she took with her father a few years ago. She states that India has “some viruses and stuff” and that she had get malaria shots before she went. She states:

> We went to like this beach in India, but I wasn't allowed to have a lot of the food because like my immune system, some of the things like they have more germs than in Canada. Like they didn't get Indian people sick because like their bodies are used to like fighting off the germs, but me like I didn't really, I wasn't really used to, my body was like used to like clean things. Sanitise… So, like not even coronavirus, but like when you're on plane still wash your hands. It’s like, I was used to everything, like my immune system was, like used to clean food and like, but in India like there might have been some germs and stuff that my immune system wasn't used to. Maybe just foods that it wasn't used to.

Amaya appears to be reflecting on her trip India and making connections between her past experience of protecting herself from viruses/parasites and the current situation with the Covid19 pandemic.

One of the resulting factors of the Covid19 pandemic was the restrictions placed on in-person meetings and gathering. Several of the participants discuss how the pandemic has influenced their social interactions with friends and peers. On our walk, Myles tells me many stories about his friend, Stanley, and how he had sleepovers and fireworks with his friend. He tells me that is hopes that in the future Stanley can come over and they “can have humongous fireworks at night and that would be his sleepover.” Myles is aware things have changes due to the pandemic and tells me that currently “you can’t play with your friends.” Myles appears to

draw upon memories of spending time with his friend to look to the future possibilities of being together again in the same manner. Myles's memories give him hope of returning to a period when he can spend time and have sleepovers with his friend.

On our walk, as we pass by a bush with berries, Amaya tells me that her friend has a similar bush at her house and they "used to pretend that we had to pick all the berries off, and we even like try to jump and get all the berries. It was really fun." At another point during the walk, Amaya points to a fern plant and states:

> Oh! See those fern plants? Before, in our backyard, we, I feel kind of guilty, but before we had so many fern plants, like big ones and me and Hiro (friend), when she came over, we played this game where we had to get all the leaves off it like, like this and then we threw them up like confetti.

Like Myles, Amaya appears to be drawing upon memories of being with friends to perhaps offer comfort at a time when in person connections with friends have been limited due to the Covid19 pandemic.

Memories of past personal experiences and events aid in the formation of one's life story. Human beings often recall their personal past experiences in order to foster and preserve identity and continuity (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). Our pasts influence who we are and how we experience the present and, in turn, how we look to the future. From our conversations, the participants draw upon past experiences to attend to their fears and uncertainties regarding their current situations. Throughout our walks together, as we wound our way through the streets of their neighbourhoods, I was struck by how much of that they said drew upon their memories of past experiences. It is evident that their memories of past experiences and events are central to how they experience the world. Within the fields of childhood studies and education, I believe

that due to dominant adult conceptualisations of time, often conflating duration time with worth, the significance children's memories and life histories is often not recognised or given due weight. By exploring children's memories and how children recall and attend to their memories, rather than adult memories of childhood, we may work to further broaden discussion of children and childhoods shifting childhood memories from the adult-centered discourse of childhood nostalgia.

I always find photos like an awkward thing for me

Taking photos or just being in photos

I am not sure why.

Because I am always the person

who doesn't like the way they look.

So I would rather do a weird face or something on purpose

So that way I purposely look that way

Instead of accidently looking that way.

Present

On our walk Myles takes many (121) photographs, the majority of which are of nature including trees, plants, flowers, and insects. As we walk together, he becomes very animated when pointing out the different vegetation. It is not only the types of vegetation that captures his interest, but also their state of life. As he examines the plants and takes photographs, he makes several comments on the state of growth and death of the vegetation. We walk by a strawberry plant and Myles points to a little white flower and sates, “Maybe they’re tiny is growing… Oh yeah, they’re strawberries.” He then points to a red strawberry and notes, “Ooh nice and juicy!” and then notices a little white strawberry as states, “but that one is mostly growing.” As we pass by one garden, he points to a plant and says, “Oh no, that’s dead” and at another group of plants he notes, “these are dying, those are dying right there… And look there’s seeds! So, when they die even when they are not fed, even when they grow before, um, they still grow seeds.” Myles finds some more plants that appear to be dying and states, “Ooh these are kind of… dead… they are kind of like dead and alive.” He contemplates the presence of both living and dying parts of the plant further and states, the plants are “medium… they’re kind of turning dead.” On our walk Myles appears very interested in state of life of the plants that we pass.

In an earlier conversation, Myles tells me that he sometimes worries that his family members will die. He states, “I am worried about witches killing my family, and me.” Within the context of the Covid19 pandemic, local daily case counts, and death rates are published daily, and the health effect of the virus are discussed widely with the community. It is possible that Myles’s focus on the state of life of the plants we walk by, reflects his worry for his family’s health and safety amid a global pandemic. He is drawing upon the present experience of looking at plants to work through some of his uncertainties and fears of the current pandemic state

alongside his understandings of life and death. He is aware that people get sick and die from the pandemic, and he is also aware of changes to his current life which have been made to help keep himself and his family safe and healthy. It is possible that exploring the life cycle of the plants we pass by is Myles's way of exploring his own worries and concerns regarding the notion of sickness and death brough forth by the pandemic.

Nikhil is very interested in transportation and as we walk together, he points out different vehicles and provides me with information on the different modes of transportation. Nikhil becomes very excited as we pass an electric car parked on the side of the road. He states, "electric cars are better for the earth… because smoke pollutes and electric cars don't make smoke, so they don't pollute." We then pass an area of construction and Nikhil tells me about the different vehicles and how they operate. He appears a little frustrated when he cannot remember all the names of the vehicles and states, "Yeah, I forget construction vehicle names. I forget a lot." A little further on our walk he tells me, "trains are so interesting," however, "I don't know fully about how they really work, yet." Nikhil follows this statement up by stating:

> I mean I still don't know how they couple together… Yeah, but I know those things, those things that couple them together, I know what they are called. Couplings… There's two couplings on each cart… Yeah, and so it would be four couplings, but four couplings on a two train, on a two-cart train, but including all the couplings no matter what, it is four.

Our discussion of trains turns to a conversation on math and following up on his knowledge of two plus two equals four, he asserts, "I've known that for so long. I've known that for like, from the beginning of 2019… I knew that since like the first time I've done math." He continues to tell me different math equations, "three plus three is six. I know what four plus four is, eight.

I know that one plus one is two, and three plus one is four… and I know that one plus two is three." He concludes with, "I know a lot of math." We walk a little further and then Nikhil states "It is really I think, fun… Even though I can't do very much math." I reassure him he has just told me a lot of math, and Nikhil asserts, "Well, it's not so, so, so much. It just like the most I can do… I got told some and then I forgot… I don't have a very good math memory. I can't remember very much math."

During our walk around Nikhil's neighbourhood, he appears very eager to share knowledge with me, however, he also becomes frustrated when he forgets some information, and acknowledges that there is still a lot he does not know. When we meet for our walk together, Nikhil is about to return to school (in-person) after the summer break and concluding the previous school year on-line. Throughout our walk together, Nikhil appears to be focusing on ideas of knowing and not knowing and may be sharing information and talking through what he does and does not know, as a means to work through some of his current insecurities of starting a new school year.

During the first part of our walk Eleanor appears not to be interested in taking photographs along our journey. She has not taken any photographs when we approach a little alley which is lined on one side by chain link fence. She informs me how she has always wanted to take photographs of her friends at this location as the sunlight casts shadows through the chain-link fence. She states:

> I always never know when to take photos and do those kinds of things because I want to take photos and I love doing it, but I always find it weird… I kind of always want to do stuff like that but I think then it looks stupid, so I don't do it.

I suggest she could try it out today. Eleanor holds up her cellphone, takes a picture, looks at it on her screen, and says, "It looks weird to me." She then states:

> I always find photos like an awkward thing for me… Taking photos or just being in photos. I am not sure why. Because I am always the person who doesn't like the way they look so I would rather do a weird face or something on purpose so that way I purposely look that way instead of accidently looking that way, I guess.

Eleanor flips through some photos on her phone and shows me a photograph of her and her friend, and says, "You can see I am doing a weird face whereas my friend is smiling, because I would rather look like that on purpose then look, try and smile and look good." Throughout our conversation Eleanor admits to being self-critical and self-conscious of what her peers think of her. I find this is connection with her hesitation with photography very interesting. Photographs capture a moment; a moment to be remembered and documented. The image of the event remains long after the moment occurs and can serve of a record of the present to be observed in the future. In today's society, with many people having cell phones with a camera on their bodies at all times, photography moves beyond record-making. Rose (2013) argues that photographs work to "construct particular accounts of the social world" (p. 145). Eleanor acknowledges she often feels self-conscious, and her hesitation toward being recorded by a photograph, or wanting to control it in a certain way, highlights these insecurities. She is worried of how she will look in photographs, in relation to her peers, so she chooses to make a silly pose, so that she controls the outcome of the photograph, rather than the image be captured "naturally" which hold the potential for her insecurities be captured. Through the avoidance, or manipulation of photography, a record of the past for future viewing, Eleanor creates opportunity to control her anxiety of the present.

It is evident that the walking tour allowed greater time to explore what the participants wished to discuss. Being in the moment together and responding to one another appeared to support an exploration of self as the participants guided not only our walking route but also the conversation. Throughout our conversation Amaya made many references to her Indian background. As she led me through her neighbourhood, she tells me many stories about a trip she took to India, her grandparents who still live in India, her favourite Indian foods, and the Hindi words and phrases she knows. As we walk together, Amaya tells me that she does not like taking French at school. She states:

> I just don't like French… I also just… I feel like if I am going to learn something, like another language, I want to learn like, I really want to learn Hindi. And I know it's good to learn French so we can so I can speak with other people who speak French in Canada, but I really want to learn Hindi as well. Because then I can talk to my Dāda and Dādi (grandparents) in Hindi.

She follows this up by telling me the many words she knows in Hindi. Some of these words included Indian foods and Amaya states, "I know a lot of Indian food because once I became vegetarian like, my dad started cooking more Indian food because a lot of Indian food is vegetarian." She tells me how much she likes Indian food and tells me about different dishes. In discussing her Indian identity, she offers stories which not only illustrate her pride of being Indian, but also highlight her awareness of difference. She informs me of how she has many "Indian dresses" and that she enjoys wearing them as "they are really fancy, some of them are nicer than like… like, normal dresses, most of them are." Her use of the word *normal* in reference to Western-style dresses highlights her awareness of difference and how living where she does, she feels her Indian identity is often not considered the "norm" in relation to dominant

Eurocentric Western culture and values. Being Indian is central to Amaya's sense identity, and through our walk together she draws upon stories to further explore her identity as well as to make sense of and explore notions of difference.

On reflection, I am struck by how each walking tour is completely unique from the other, both in terms of form and content. Some participants knew where they wanted to go and followed a distinct route, while others began walking with no particular destination in mind. Where we journeyed together and how we responded to each other encouraged specific stories to be told. Throughout our walks together we responded to one another, guided by our surroundings. As we walked together, Alex discussed her love of reading and mentioned she had just read a book about Alexander Hamilton which led her to discuss her interest in the musical *Hamilton.* When I let her know that I had seen the show and was familiar with the music and lyrics, this opened a further avenue of discussion as she wanted to know more about my reaction to the musical. We shared information on different versions of the songs we had heard, and different books we had read on the topic. On my walk with Nikhil, our journey led him to ask me questions. We passed a construction site, and her asked me what I knew about the different vehicles. As we passed a large hole in the middle road, he asked me what I thought was happening and together we imagined what could be occurring. It was not only the conversations that were influence by our mutual interaction, but also the routes themselves. Amaya noticed a house we had past previously at the beginning of our walk, and then noticed it again a little later on. Realising that we had walked the same loop several times, led us to stop, and evaluate together which route to take next in order to avoid travelling along the same loop once more.

The act of walking together created an encounter which we both experienced together, responding to one another and our environment in the moment. This highlights the value of

walking and talking as a research method which is both relational and situated. As I reflect on our walks, I am left wondering about all the untold stories waiting on untrodden paths. Yet, I am grateful for all the stories which were told and appreciate our time together as a distinctive co-constructed moment which, although may be revisited through memory, can never be repeated. These journeys together, situated in the present moment, work to highlight the embodied nature of our social lives.

I kind of worry about my future self

and if I’ll be okay,

if I will get a good job.

But I don’t worry that much

because I know that

I am probably going to be okay.

Future

The future of an individual child is no more assured than that of an adult, however, the promise of children as a future generation is much more salient. This rests upon the notion of futurity which James and James (2012) define as "the recognition, in the present, of the child's potential for being different in the future and the predication of present actions on the basis of this recognition" (p. 57). This upholds the developmentalist notion of the child as a not-yet adult, and that one day the child will stop *becoming* and arrive at adult *being*. The idea of futurity is also key to our understanding of generation, as children are thought of as the future, not only in terms of the literal survival of humans, but also, they are a "form of social capital that represents 'the future' itself" as they "represent the investment of the present generation in their collective future" (James & James, 2012, p. 64).

Scholarship within the sociology of childhood has challenged the dominant conceptualisation of *becoming* (adults) and argues for children to be instead understood as *beings* (Qvortrup, 2004). This movement was fundamental in challenging dominant assumptions of universality and recognising children not as a promise of the future, but as social actors in the present. Uprichard (2007), however, troubles this dichotomy of children *becoming* versus *being* and argues that we should "consider these discourses, together and not necessarily as conflicting discourses" (p. 303). Building upon the work of Lee (2001), Uprichard (2007) maintains that children and adults are always both in the process of *being* and *becoming*, and therefore conceptualising children as both *being* and *becoming* does not limit children's agency but further acknowledges that agency resides both in the present and the future as children look to and imagine their futures. I believe that we should not dismiss ideas around children future(s), however, it is important to do so, not in terms of universal futurity, but in a manner which

recognises individual futures as dynamic and contextually specific. The participants in this study spoke of their futures in a variety of different ways, illustrating how, like their pasts, notions of their futures are interwoven with their being in the present.

When I ask Myles what he enjoys doing, he replies, “I like quiet and reading books,” and that he wishes his “whole entire room was a library.” In another meeting, he tells me that he would like to be older than he is now “so, I can be a librarian… Yeah, that’s what I want to be when I grow up.” Throughout our conversations, he makes several references to books and reading. When we meet online, he shows me a book, and tells me, “I read to my family and, Granny reads to me sometimes. She is going to read it to me today.” Myles tells me how his grandmother often reads to him using an online platform. As he shows me the book, he is very animated as he flips through the book’s pages describing the story. On one page he states, “He just exploded his whole house by setting up a fire on the carpet, when he just remembered the dynamite,” and then on another page he says, “And then ba-ba-bam! But then he just loses them by diving into some elephant poop!” Through our online conversation, Myles shows me his book and reads to me as he would with his grandmother. Myles appears to find reading as source of not only enjoyment, but also calm and comfort as he makes several comments about enjoying the quiet of reading as well as describing reading as an activity he shares with his family. The pandemic has changed how many social interactions occur. Not only was our conversation happening over an online platform, but so too were his interactions with his grandmother. In a time of increased uncertainty Myles appears to gain comfort from the act of reading. He is aware of this and wants to incorporate that into his future life in his desire to be a librarian.

When I ask Amaya if there is anything she worries about she replies, “I worry about people thinking that I am not smart. But I also sometimes worry about like, big events.” She tells

me that her father explained the stock market to her and states “So, I was kind of worrying, I don’t know why, but I was just worrying about if I made a really bad decision with stocks or something and then I had a big money drop.” She follows up by maintaining that she sometimes worries about “my future-self and if I’ll be okay, if I will get a good job.” Often children’s worries are trivialised and not held as significant by adults. Adults often ask children about their futures in terms of what they want to be when they “grow up.” This question is often presented in terms of “anything is possible,” and upholds a certain blind positivity, which fails to acknowledge children’s worries and uncertainties about their futures. When thinking of her future-self, Amaya tells me:

> I really want to be a singer when I grow up, but I don’t think I am going to be a singer. I think I can be a singer, just I don’t think it is going to work, like, like, I don’t think I am going to try singing… I really want to be a singer, but I have this feeling that I won’t be one. But I keep imagining in the future, me being a world class singer or like a really fancy singer and that kind of makes me be like, don’t stop singing every recess Amaya.

Amaya’s words hold anxiety and uncertainty alongside hope for her future self. She both acknowledges her desire to “be a singer” and her worry and “feeling that (she) won’t be one,” however, she encourages herself to not give up, and to continue to practice “at every recess.” As Uprichard (2017) notes imaging what a child *becomes* is a notable part of childhood, and if we dismiss the *becoming* of children, we may risk exploring how this influences the experiences of *being* a child.

Both Amaya and Eleanor are starting a new school for the next school year. Through their conversations they both allude to worries they have for their future-selves negotiating this time of transition and change. Amaya tells me that she is worried that “no one is going to want to

make new friends." She tells me that she thinks her new school is going to be "really different" for example she wonders "if they have lockers" and "if they have the schedule paper thing." Eleanor is also concerned about "start(ing) a whole new school again, and hav(ing) to make friends." She tells me she will know some people at her new school as she went to school with them when she was younger, however, she has not seen them for years. She states:

> I haven't talked to them since I moved so I don't really know their personalities, I guess, because everyone has changed since primary school, obviously… I know a lot of them are still friends with each other because they have been in the same classes, but I will find it a bit awkward because I don't exactly want to step back and make the same friends because I know them not because I want to be friends with them.

Throughout our walk together, Eleanor is thinking of her future-self and of transitioning to another school. She is worried about making friends at her new school. Although she does know of some peers who will be at her new school, she is aware that people change over time, and the memories she holds of who they were may not reflect who they currently are. She insightfully remarks that for her, friendship needs to be rooted in the present state of being, not in memories of the past.

Throughout our walks together, both Eleanor and Amaya are thinking of their future selves and their concerns of transitioning to new schools. The future selves that they are worried about are not located in a distant future, but one which will occur in the following weeks or months. All too often notions of children's futures are tied to adulthood, however, it is important to disrupt the notion of the future of children residing in adulthood and shift to recognise and acknowledge children express hopes and concerns for their futures which are not solely located in the realm of adulthood.

As human beings, we cannot separate ourselves from our futures, and in this sense, we are all becoming. In thinking of children, as with adults, it is important to conceive of becoming not in terms of a pre-determined future, but in terms of creation. Individual futures are not universal, but contextually specific and fluid, and it is critical we broaden the ways in which we consider the notion of future in connection to children and childhoods. The participants explored ideas of their futures in direct connection to their past and present experiences. In thinking with childhood, and human life spans, it is important not to dismiss the future, as ideas of futures are tethered to notions of imagination and creation. The recognition of futures leads to an exploration of alternatives, as through thinking of the future, possibilities are imagined, considered, and created.

Concluding Thoughts

Experience is not solely established in the present, its effects can reverberate far into the future and thus, memories of experience effect our present and in turn, how we look to our futures. How we conceive of time greatly influences how we consider childhood, adulthood, and human development. Treacher (2000) maintains, “where time is understood to be linear, then the differences between adulthood and childhood come to the fore. If, on the other hand, the relationship between the past and present is understood to be more permeable, then so too is the relationship between childhood and adulthood” (p. 138). The participants from this study illustrate how children, like adults, draw upon their pasts, presents and futures to create a sense of self and to help make sense of the world around them. These notions of time are not linear or separate phenomena, but rather are dynamic and interwoven through experience. Life spans are entangled states of been, being and becoming; of pasts, presents and futures. Notions of today are intertwined with ideas of yesterday and visons of tomorrow. By disrupting ideas of chorological

time, we may work to further challenge dominant assumptions of linear development and shift from an oppositional view of childhood and adulthood to a more relational and interconnected understanding of being.

Chapter Ten: Strengths, Limitations and Reflections

A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral.

(*The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint-Exupery)

Strengths, Limitations and Reflections

It is critical for a qualitative researcher to practice reflectivity throughout all stages of the research project (Guba,1981). Reflectivity is a process through which researchers can "make the politics of research transparent" (Mortari, 2015, p.2) in terms of what has been done, as well as look towards future possibilities. It is important that researchers acknowledge both the strengths and the limitations of their project in order to "place themselves and their practices under scrutiny, acknowledging the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process" (McGraw et al., 2000, p. 68).

Strengths: Attending to Rigor and Trustworthiness

In discussing qualitative research, Seale (2002) states, "Quality is elusive, hard to specify, but we often feel we know it when we see it. In this respect research is like art rather than science" (Seale, 2002 p.102). There is much scholarship addressing the concern of evaluating "quality" in qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; S. J. Tracy 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Seale, 2002). Through the sections that follow I will consider the "quality" of this research project with regards to, rigour (S. J. Tracy, 2010) and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Rigour refers to the robustness of the study, and whether the findings are "significantly authentic" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 205). A rigorous study employs appropriate methodology in obtaining rich data to support research claims and is there detail and transparency around data collection and analysis processes (S. J. Tracy, 2010). Rigour supports the trustworthiness of a study, and it is important to consider both, "the story told by the research participant and the validity of the analysis, or the story told by the researcher" (Riessman, 2008, p. 184). There is much literature on how to address the trustworthiness of qualitative studies (Guba, 1981, Lincoln & Guba, 1985; S. J. Tracy, 2010; Morse, 2015). Guba (1981) suggests examining the validity of

these stories through four dynamics of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Although there is literature (Garratt & Hodkinson, 1998; Smith, 1984; Sparkes & Smith, 2009) that challenges the rigidity of a set of rules to evaluate the quality of qualitative data, I find these aspects of trustworthiness useful, and in exploring these tenents in relation to in my study, I do so, not as a defined checklist to confirm quality, but rather as a way to extend the process of reflexivity and engage further in conversations with my reader with regards to transparency within my study.

Credibility. Within a qualitative approach to research, study findings should endeavour to represent the participants' perspectives and life experiences in a justifiable and thorough manner. Credibility speaks to the plausibility of, and confidence in, the research findings, and further "how well the research represents the actual phenomenon" (Morse, 2015, p. 1213). Credibility attends to the "fit" between participants' views and experiences and the researcher's representation of them (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Researchers can employ different strategies throughout their study to help establish and support credibility such as, prolonged engagement at a site, peer debriefing and triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Prolonged engagement at a site can support the participants in becoming more familiar and comfortable with the researcher, as well as data collection which is collected over an extended period of time may develop a more in-depth understanding of what is being studied and lead more rich and nuanced findings. The data collection for this study took place over the span of 8 months during which I met with each participant multiple times. I believed this approach not only increased the comfort level between myself and the participants, but each meeting also allowed for me to revisit and re-check topics which were discussed at previous meetings. This

served as a type of member-checking (Creswell, 2014) and allowed for a more in-depth discussion of topics as they were reviewed and revisited.

Guba (1981) proposes peer debriefing to help further establish credibility in order for researchers to "to test their growing insights and to expose themselves to searching questions" (p. 85). Throughout this research process, I met with my supervisor and another member of my dissertation committee to discuss the project at various stages. Through private discussions, to help maintain the anonymity of my participants, I discussed the raw data and my interpretations and analysis of the data. I am very grateful for these opportunities and found this process invaluable, as it allowed me to test whether the findings and analysis will resonate well with others, as well as "involving an interpretation beyond the researcher" (Creswell, 2014, p. 202).

Triangulation, or the process of establishing themes drawing from multiple data sources and perspectives, can add to the validity of a research study (Creswell, 2014). This research project employs a variety of data sources and perspectives, which aid in confirming the data and interpretations. S. J. Tracy (2010) maintains drawing from multiple theoretical frameworks, types of data and methods of analysis "allow different facets of problems to be explored, increases scope, deepens understanding, and encourages consistent (re)interpretation" (p. 843). The term *triangulation* is not straightforward, and within research methodology holds different meanings which are influenced by the epistemological beliefs of the researcher (Hammersley 2008). S. J. Tracy (2010) cautions that notion of triangulation emerged from realist paradigms that endeavoured to limit or remove subjective bias within research studies. Within this understanding, the process of triangulation upholds the notion of a singular and discoverable reality, which in working within a social-critical paradigm, does not align with the intentions of this study of exploring the multiple and unique narratives of the participants.

In keeping with drawing from a variety of data sources and perspectives to further support the credibility of my research, I turn to the process of crystallization which additionally is motivated by post-structural and performative assumptions (Ellingson, 2009). This approach resonates with me as crystallization is not a process which upholds the notion of a singular truth, rather, supports "a more complex, in-depth, but still thoroughly partial, understanding of the issue" (S. J. Tracy, 2010, p. 844). Throughout this study, conversations, walking tours and photography were employed to gain insight into children's perceptions and experiences. A variety of theoretical frameworks including the sociology of childhood, critical studies, and post-structuralism were employed to help interpret the data as well as drawing up a variety of text forms and authors to help expand and extend discussions.

Transferability. The generalizability of findings is a feature of quantitative research and is not the intent of qualitative research. In critiquing generalisation, Hart (1996) maintains researchers should "be bold, ambitious, and look beyond the blandness of the general to the sharpness of the particular" (p. 30). Transferability recognises the particularity of findings, however, it explores how "findings can be extrapolated beyond the immediate confines of the site, both theoretically and practically" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 528). Transferability explores how ideas and theories generated by the research may be conveyable to other contexts.

A small sample size is not so much a limitation of qualitative research as it is a characteristic, however, it is important to acknowledge that this research study employs a small sample size from a specific context. Some ideas and theories generated, particularly regarding childhood studies and education, however, may be transferable to other contexts and may hold to the possibility to develop and extend conversations and debates on how children and childhoods are conceived in the fields of childhood studies and education.

To help encourage the possibility of transferability of my findings, I drew up on the use of "thick descriptions" throughout the study (Creswell, 2014). Within qualitative research the reader "should be able, on the basis of a thick description and the provision of a vicarious experiential account, to determine if and how these experiences can be used to understand a new setting" (Hellström, 2008, p. 324). Employing detailed accounts and incorporating direct quotations from the participants this study aims to provide "thick descriptions" which support the reader in determining the extent to which findings may be transferable within the wider scope of childhood and educational studies.

Dependability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that "good" qualitative research is dependable. Whereas *credibility* aligns with ideas of validity, *dependability* relates to notions of reliability. Researchers, in order to realize dependability within their studies, must ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and well documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Readers can better judge the dependability of the research when they are able to clearly trace and examine the research processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout this study I have aimed to be transparent and have provided detailed coverage of my frameworks, methodology, and analysis to help illustrate that appropriate research practices have been established and followed. I aimed to present all information clearly and did not hide or gloss over any challenges or changes within the research process. I was transparent as to the alterations in methods due to the Covid19 pandemic, and how these changes affected my data collection and discussion.

King (2004) argues that direct quotations from participants are an essential component of the final research report. Providing detailed accounts and incorporating direct quotations from the participants supports the dependability of the study by offering descriptions "detailed enough for interpretation of the meaning and context to be vivid and visible" (Whittemore, Chase &

Mandle, 2001, p. 532). Throughout the analysis and discussion, I provide many direct quotations from the participants. I believe this, in conjunction with the research poetry, moves my analysis and discussion beyond mere descriptions to further convince the reader of the dependability and merit of the study's findings.

Confirmability. Guba and Lincoln (1989) maintain confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all realized. Confirmability requires the researcher to clearly demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been made (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Guba (1981) argues that it is critical for a researcher to be reflexive throughout all stages of the research. Reflexivity allows researchers to explore and make apparent their positionality and role in the research process as well as the research relationships and encounters. Reflexivity should be central to the research process, as encourages researchers to reflect not only on their social location and assumptions, but also on their methodology, choice of data collection tools and the research encounters themselves. This importance is further reflected by working within a social-critical paradigm as within this paradigm it is understood that "what can be known is inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a *particular* investigator and a *particular* object or group" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). In attending to reflexivity, Richardson (2000b) maintains it is important to ask, "is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view?" (p. 254). I have been transparent throughout this process of my ontological and epistemological assumptions and social location. I have reflected on how these may influence my research design and interpretation of the data. Throughout the project I remained continually attentive to, and contemplative of, my relationship with the participants and the research encounters. This reflexivity adds a further level of transparency and aims to establish a trustworthy research study.

Limitations: Pointing to Possibilities

In wishing to be reflexive throughout all stages of this project, it is important to consider some of the limitations of this project. The results of this study should be considered in the light of some limitations, which offer the opportunity to be attended to in future research and publications.

The first limitation of this study is, despite my initial intentions, the participants were not involved in the creating, in terms of word selection and structure, the poems that were employed throughout the analysis/discussion and the research book. Although I did not alter any of the wording from the conversations for the poems, I was the one who selected which sections of the conversations to draw upon for the poems. Originally, as stated earlier on, I intended to co-create a research book with the participants, however, due to the rapidly changing situation with the Covid19 pandemic alongside the time restraints of the project, that was not possible. Working within critical childhood studies and employing methodology aimed at elevating children's perceptions, I acknowledge the value that co-creating a research book/poems with my participants would have offered this project. Although I was thoughtful and intentional throughout the creation of the poems, co-construction could have offered this project additional insights. As the poetry book may be used to convey findings to groups beyond academic circles, I am also interested in future projects to move to explore how participants can be more fully represented in the dissemination processes. Looking towards potential future research, I would like to include child participants in conversations of how they would want the information generated form the study to be shared, and with which audiences.

Another limitation of this process was the amount of data in conjunction with the written length and time restraints of this project. The conversations provided me with over 380 minutes

of recorded content. This, in combination with the photographs and field notes, presented a significant amount of raw data. Due to the scope of this project, it was not possible to include all the data in my discussion. I had to choose what to include based upon what was most relevant to my research questions and the intent of the project, however, there are additional areas which I would like to further expand upon and explore in more depth through additional analysis opportunities.

Reflections on Data Collection

Mruck and Breur (as cited in Swaminathan and Mulvihill, 2017) caution against research which "resemble photographs that apparently need neither camera nor photographer to exist" (p. 98). Researchers, participants, methods, and findings are not dependent *from* one another, but rather dependent *on* one another, shifting data collection processes from "information gathering" to "interaction" (Anderson & Jack, 1998, p. 23), and brings to the forefront notions of reciprocity and relationality in research. Throughout the data collecting stage I was aware of the development of relationship between myself and the participants and wanted to support moments of mutual exchange and collaboration throughout the process. Throughout our conversations, I actively listened to what the participants told me, and then responded by asking follow-up questions, formed in the moment, to further explore topics together. The open-endedness of conversations and walks helped to further supported the research as a collaborative process which valued process over product. I was not overly concerned with receiving specific answers to premeditated questions. There was a conversation guide, but it was the participants' stories and our interactions with one another which ultimately guided the direction of the research encounters.

Upon reflection, the walking tours further supported and extended this approach. They were the longest in duration of all the data collection meetings. On average the first two conversations with the participants lasted just over sixteen minutes whereas the walking tours were on average were close to an hour each in duration. This increased time supported the development of relationship as well as making room, and time, for spontaneity and ambiguity. As illustrated in a previous chapter, these walks supported opportunities for mutual discussion of topics which were often in response to our surroundings whether by the passing through a specific place, or through a memory which was generated by the space we were in.

The walking tours created a very different research dynamic compared to the previous research meetings. The conversations which occurred while we were walking alongside each other held their own sense of pace and cadence. Words were guided and interrupted by our surroundings. The waiting for a traffic light to change, the passing of a firetruck with its sirens blazing, or the walking past a park filled with memories all directly impacted the conversations both in terms of rhythm and content. The walking tours expanded the more traditional question and response style conversation as we were guided by our surrounding and our mutual interaction within them. As MacRae and Arculus (2020) state, "not knowing what will happen next forces us to reside in the present moment and the present moment unfolds into a deep space of connection and encounter." I felt the conversations in this setting to be more natural, spontaneous, and mutual. Setting out I, nor the participants, fully knew where the walks would take us, both figuratively and metaphorically. This unsureness did not weaken the data collected, but rather led to findings that were rich, unexpected, and nuanced. Building upon the photograph metaphor, a photographer is often surprised by a photograph which does not align with their preconceived intention both in terms of form and content. Researchers should consider research

in a similar manner to how these photographers may approach taking a picture, being open not only to receiving an image they do not believe they desire, but also being open to an image they have yet to imagine.

The walking tours held their own sense of unknowingness, however, the entire data collection process was greatly affected by a significant force of unpredictability, the Covid19 pandemic. When in my proposal I wrote of the importance of embracing the unexpected in research, I was not aware of the extent to which this approach would be tested. A few weeks into my commencement of data collection the Covid19 pandemic rapidly expanded in Ontario. Within this setting, I paused data collection as the sheer unpredictability of the day to day was overwhelming. Worry and anxiety took hold as health and safety protocols and restrictions influenced every aspect of daily living. A couple of months into the pandemic, when daily uncertainty began to feel less all-consuming, I approached the participants and their families about the possibility of recommencing the data collection. I made it unequivocally clear that continued participation was completely voluntary and there was no pressure to commence right away. I was surprised that all families wished to continue. The government health and safety mandates in place meant that I could no longer meet in person to have the conversations with the participants. My data collection methods needed to shift to meet the current context in which we were living, and so the conversations moved to an online platform. Ahmed (2019) maintains that "research can be 'hapfull'; we can be redirected by what happens along the way" (p. 12). Not only was the data collection needing to be responsive and flexible it was done so in the context of a global pandemic where day to day routines and practices of society at large were consistently being challenged and adjusted. These responses did not hinder the data that was collected, rather they lead to unexpected, but welcomed explorations. Never would I have

imaged conducting research during a global pandemic, however, the experience generated novel and important discussions and explorations on, how children are navigating the pandemic within its midst as well as explorations in research methodology.

When looking back at the data collection and analysis and I am struck by the value of a story, and further, the value of many stories. Winter (1988) maintains “we do not ‘store’ experience as data, like a computer; we ‘story’ it” (p. 235). Throughout our meetings, the participants shared with me many stories of their lived experiences. These narratives are varied, specific and unique. The goal of this project was to open and expand conversations about children and childhoods by drawing upon children’s own perceptions and narratives. The variety of the stories shared highlights the multiplicity of human experience. This is important as many dominant Eurocentric discourses of children and childhoods are informed by singular and universal narratives upheld by developmental psychology. Hearing and receiving the multiplicity of stories challenges this and works to uphold additional possibilities. Ahmed (2019), in commenting on the “well-used path” metaphor, offers, “it is not only that the more a path is traveled upon the clearer it becomes. A path can also become clearer by more traveling upon it” (p. 120). By listening and hearing multiple narratives of varied lived experiences we can move to creating and validating many other pathways as possibilities beyond the rigid path of the status quo.

In reflecting on the research process, it is important to acknowledge I did have a pre-existing relationship with the children of this study. I knew them to varying degree through relationship with their families. None of the children were people with whom I had daily contact or with whom I would describe as being very familiar. Some of the participant I had only met in the past year, and some I have known for a long time, but had not seen for years. It is important

to know, however, I did hold some knowledge of my participants, and they in turn had knowledge of me. It is important that I remain reflective and aware of the effects these pre-existing relationships may have on all stages of this study.

During recruitment I did not want my relationship with the children and their families to influence the decision to participate in the study. When I first sent out my recruitment email, I made sure that it was explicitly stated that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. I also left it up to potential participants to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study. By not continually following up with potential participants, I hoped this helped to ensure that those who decided to participate did so because they were interested in the project regardless of any pre-existing relationship, I may have had with them.

Throughout the entire data collection process, it was important that I not only had consent from the participants' families, but that I also gained continual assent from the children themselves. In a past study (Barnikis, 2015; Barnikis, et al., 2019) I was surprised when I began data collection with one child participant who was unaware that he was participating in a study. It became clear that his family had not explained the study to him prior to my arrival or asked him if he wanted to participate in the study. Drawing from this experience, in the introductory email, and follow-up response emails, I asked that potential participants were informed of the study and willing to participate.

At the start of each data collection meeting, the participants had a choice to participate, or not to, by the use an assent form. Dockett and Perry (2011) highlight the importance of gaining children's assent to participate in addition to guardians' consent. The use of an assent form further allowed for me to establish the voluntary nature of participation in the study as prior to each meeting I checked in with each participant as to whether they wished to participate in the

session, and further stressed that they did not have to discuss anything they did not wish to, and they could skip any question they did not want to answer. Although I gained assent at the beginning of each data collection meeting, assent should be attended to throughout the entire meeting (Cocks, 2007, Docket & Perry, 2011). It is critical that researchers remain aware of any clues, that participants may give to indicate that they no longer which to participate in the data collection. These may include verbal clues such as a participant saying they not to wish to continue, or the visual clues indicating a shift in behaviour which may also indicate the participant is no longer interested in continuing, such as looking away or fidgeting. Throughout the data collection process, I remained aware of these clues, and throughout the conversations with the children, at various points, I asked if they wanted to continue to participate, and respected their requests to end the data collection when it was indicated. At the end of our first meeting, Alex began to get a bit restless and was slowing down in terms of her conversation, I asked if there was anything further, she wanted to discuss, and she replied, "no, not really" indicating she was done with the session, and so I immediately thanked Alex and ended the meeting. I believe this awareness of, and attending to, visual and verbal cues further helped to minimize the possible effects my pre-established relationship with the participants could have had on the voluntary nature of their participation.

Although I need to remain aware of possible challenges my pre-existing relationship with the participants presented, I believe these relationships also proved beneficial during the data collection stage. Much literature regarding conducting social research with children highlights the importance of building rapport with children prior to gathering data (Irwin & Johnson, 2005; Punch, 2002). I believe my prior relationship with the children did increase the comfort level of the children, as prior to data collection they were familiar with me (to varying degrees). When I

spoke with Alex she made several references to my son, whom she had been in childcare with several years ago. On our walk she took me past a house where someone else who was also in that class currently lives. She also spoke of memories from the childcare. This allusion to our previous relationship I believe established a level of comfort throughout the data collection which would have been difficult to achieve if I was unknown to her. At the end of our walk together Myles turned to me and said, "I think I would do this again." I believe this further illustrates the importance of rapport as not only did Myles find participation enjoyable, but he would also like to repeat the experience. I also believe my rapport with the children, and their families, also may have helped when navigating the uncertainty of conducting research throughout the pandemic. Although again, continuing to participate in the study during the pandemic was stressed as entirely voluntary, I believe there was a level of trust, both between myself and the participants and their families, which provided a level of comfort in navigating the changes in data collection. Feeling comfortable, both as the guardian and the participant, with going on walks of a neighbourhood takes one level of comfort, however, doing so in a global pandemic, I believe takes an additional level. The familiarity I had with the participants prior to the data collection, and the rapport I further built during our conversations aided in establishing and supporting this level of comfort and trust.

The above discussions have highlighted some ethical considerations that should be at the forefront when conduction qualitative social research. S. J. Tracy (2010) argues the importance of attending to procedural, situational, exiting, and relational ethics. In attending to procedural ethics, I believe I have been transparent at all stages of this project. I gained approval from the Institutional Review Board, and through the consent and assent form I made the intent, risks and benefits of the research clear to the participants and their families and stressed the voluntary

nature of participation. I worked to ensure data and privacy was protected throughout the project by using a password protected computer and replacing of all names with pseudonyms. Situational ethics is concerned with “the unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments that come up in the field” (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). Throughout this project I remained reflective at all stage. I consistently reflected on methods and adjusted them when needed. I took care to make sure the participants wished to continue in the new pandemic environment and attended to the specific challenges and changes this situation presented. Exiting ethics are considerations, which “continue beyond the data collection phase to how researchers leave the scene and share the results” (S. J. Tracy, 2010, p. 847). I have expressed my concern that my findings and discussions are representative of my participants’ lived experiences. My intention in using poetry, is that this approach to poetry allows more space for the participants words and perceptions to be elevated and honoured. I understand there is a possibility that these results may be “misread, misappropriated or misused” (S. J. Tracy, 2010, p. 848), however, I hope this will be minimized by my drawing extensively upon the words of the participants. The poetry book also provides the participants with a record of participation and hopefully illustrates the importance of their contributions to the project.

Relational ethics “recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work” (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). Throughout this entire research process, I have placed my relationship with the participants at the core of this research. It is my hope that this project honours and, in some ways, elevates the narratives and lived experiences of the children who trusted me with their stories.

Chapter Eleven: Contributions and Recommendations

And the more they asked, the more they wondered.

And the more they wondered, the more they hoped.

And the more they hoped, the more the clouds of sorrow lifted, drifted, and burned away in the heat of a brightening sky.

(*The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, Kelly Barnhill)

Contributions and Recommendations

This research study generates knowledge on not only narratives and perceptions of children and childhoods, but also on qualitative social research methods. Abbott (2004) maintains that research is "heuristically significant" when it expands curiosity and works to inspire further discoveries. By speaking and walking with children one-on-one, this project presents narratives that are often not considered, or actively sought out, in discussions of children and childhood. This research brings forth themes, that may not only add knowledge and extend discussion within the fields of education and childhood studies, but also identifies areas for future research.

Contributions

When considering the possible contributions of this study, I ask if my study extends knowledge and make contributions to the fields of childhood studies and education by highlighting or extending discussions, and does it encourage readers to view the topic of inquiry from other vantage points? In exploring the notion of contribution, K. Tracy (1995) asks will the research "bring clarity to confusion, make visible what is hidden or inappropriately ignored, and generate a sense of insight and deepened understanding" (K. Tracy, 1995, p. 209)? Further, does the research "offer new and unique understandings that emerge from the data analysis - conceptualizations that help explain social life in unique ways and may be transferred to other contexts" (S. J. Tracy, 2010. p. 846)? The two key research objectives of this project were to contribute to sociological discussions of children and childhood, and to listen and hear children's voices and stories through the research process. As I review the project, and its analysis and discussion, I believe this project was successful in attending to these objectives.

This study offers contributions to discussions of the conceptualizations of children and childhoods. The participants in this study expressed their views and perceptions and demonstrated analytical awareness as they reflected on their sense of self, others, and the world around them. Throughout our meetings, the participants continually positioned themselves as capable and competent informants in the research process. This study not only highlights the ways in which the child participants shared their perceptions, but also the content of which they spoke, as they discussed and reflected on a myriad of differing experiences and perspectives. This exploration of narratives of experience from children's perspectives works to recognize and highlight the multiplicity of childhoods decentering the monolithic developmentalist view of childhood. Troubling the singular story of childhood challenges privileging one experience or narrative over another. Acknowledging that the experience of childhood is not universally predictive, but is fluid and contextually specific, this study demonstrates the critical importance of including stories of children from their narrative perspective in discussions of children and childhoods.

I believe this study expands knowledge and extends conversation of adulthood and childhood not as separate ideas, but rather as entities in relation to one another. Throughout my analysis and discussion, I not only highlight and explore how adulthood and childhood have been considered through dominant discourses as oppositional but work to explore the possibilities which may exist by moving to view these two ideas as in relation to one another. I do not believe it is possible to avoid these societal distinctions, however, I do believe much can be gained by shifting to a more relational and interconnectedness consideration of being with one another.

An unexpected contribution of this research is an exploration of the Covid19 pandemic from the perspective of the child participants. Steering away from adult-constructed dominant

narratives highlighted in the news and media of the effect of Covid19 on children being centered as a loss, in terms of development and schooling, this research adds additional information on how children are thinking of and are experiencing the pandemic. These perspectives are rich and varied and further highlight that the opinions of children of the world around them should be actively sought-out and acted upon.

This study offers methodological contributions to discussions of qualitative social research. Guided by the Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2011), this study aimed to create research methods and frameworks to support children in representing themselves and their experiences. Reflections and recommendation of the methodology of this project will be explored more fully in following sections, however, I believe this project provides examples of how research can work to de-objectify children in conversations of children and childhood, and to reposition children as active and valued members of society and important tellers of their own stories.

Recommendations for Pedological Practice

A relational approach. This project takes a relational approach to research, and I believe this approach could be extended to teaching and education. Pedological practice is relational, and contextually specific, as education develops from the relationship between student and teacher. Learning occurs in interaction with others, and both student and educator are affected by the pedological encounter. Curriculum and practice resting upon dominant developmental ideals may work to create a false sense of knowing within the classroom. Not all children develop along the same trajectory. The journey of development is continual, unpredictable, and contextually specific. Educators must shift from meeting the student they think is standing before them, drawing upon perceived notions, to attending to the student who is actually there. In doing

so, I believe an educator's greatest responsibility is to be open to receiving and welcoming the student they have yet to imagine.

A classroom is a community of learners and should be a space which embraces respect and relationship over compliance and discipline. Often, however, classrooms reflect what hooks (2015) describes as a "culture of domination" where adults "exert autocratic rule over children" (p.73). Educational spaces which uphold control and unquestioning compliance do its members a disservice by advancing inequitable power dynamics and maintaining the status quo, however environments which foster responsibility and respect promote notions of strength and possibilities. Educators need to create and support learning environments which shift from cultivating power *over* one another to those which foster responsibility *for* one another. They must establish spaces with centre caring and trustful relationships. Learning does not occur independently, rather the classroom is a space filled with interdependent learners who provide one another with mutual opportunities for learning and teaching. Teachers, as with their students, are in continual processes of learning and development. Educational environments hold the possibility of spaces which view children and educators not as (in)dependent of each other but interdependent on one another.

Embracing difficulties and ambiguity. Moving from a developmentalist approach, educators should work to embrace the unevenness of development and approach education from the side of its discomforts. Education is often viewed in a predominately positive light in which children acquire the necessary information to "develop" along a predictive trajectory to eventually become a "productive" member of society. By presenting education in this manner, the messiness, unevenness and discomfort of schooling and learning is often omitted. Learning, however, may be viewed as a disruption, as one transforms what is known. Biesta (2012)

maintains the project of education is to interrupt and disrupt the student. Often absent from more traditional conceptualizations of schooling are understandings of this disruption. Disequilibrium can lead to growth. By only documenting a certain view of learning, that which is happy and successful, certain practices and assumptions become normalized, which risks the privileging of certain understandings, and the silencing of others. Within pedological settings, what possibilities may exist if educators provide opportunities for frustration as well as growth? Kuhn (1995), in exploring ways in which to consider photographs, states if you rely on a magnifying glass to achieve closer look "you will only see patches of light and dark, an unreadable mesh of grains. The image yields nothing to that sort of scrutiny: it simply disappears" (p. 12). Has the developmentalist story of education obscured our view of the experience of school? How can we pull back to include a greater scope of school experience? How could the recognition of the discomforts and ambiguity of learning trouble society's dominant discourse of schooling? Could challenging this idealisation provide a clearer picture of school experiences, which resists a single orientation, and further works to confront dominant assumptions of children and education?

Teacher education and professional development. Fullan (2001) maintains, "educational change depends on what teachers do and think - it's as simple and as complex as that" (p. 115). Pedagogical change, on one hand, is dependent on the particular practices and perceptions of teachers, however, on the other hand, educators, like all humans, are "embedded in cultural, historical, institutional, and social context" (Thornberg, 2010, p. 930). There are a multitude of institutional and societal constraints which affect the ease in which teachers may be able to challenge and alter curriculum and its implementation, such as a lack of resources, funding and supports. Pre-service education and continued professional development, however, I

believe can be fundamental in supporting educational change, and challenging the dominant cycle of how society views children and child development in relation to education.

Within the field of education, development is frequently regarded as a universal and linear process positioning adulthood as the final destination, and inherently constructing children as deficient and not yet complete. As adult-child relationships are central to teaching and learning, it is imperative that educators reflect on their own conceptualizations of children and childhoods and how these perceptions influence their classroom practices and approaches to education. By confronting inconsistencies between universal developmental theory and individual experience of daily living, educators can work to acknowledge and embrace other possibilities. Educators can, and I believe, must be agents of change, and teacher training and professional development which incorporates critical pedagogy studies and critical childhood studies may aid in supporting educators in becoming key agents of change. Teacher education drawing upon critical theory can work to broaden, develop, and extend knowledge and understandings. Gonzalez (2000), in discussing qualitative research, maintains, "things get bigger, not smaller and tighter, as we understand them" (p. 629). Educators should be assisted by a professional network to support them in discovering, extending, and sharing of ideas and theories. By unpacking prevalent pedological practices through critical pedagogy studies and challenging dominant adult-child constructions through a lens of critical childhood studies, educators can become key agents of encouraging systemic change rather than further upholding dominant assumptions of education, children, and child development.

Drawing upon critical pedagogy and critical childhood studies offers educators theoretical frameworks to unpack and deconstruct dominant pedological practices, however, the insights gained from these frameworks are not fully beneficial unless practices and curriculums

are (re)constructed to reflect these newly gained knowledges and understandings. Educators and administrators need to work together to (re)create recommendations for (re)constructed practices and curriculum. These constructions, by their very nature, will continue to unpack and to challenge dominant practices and structures, making room for more equitable understanding of children and childhoods within educational settings.

Methodological Recommendations

Social qualitative research upholds a “desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 16). Within research environments, caring and ethical relationships involve both dialogue and listening. It is critical that social research with children acknowledges their lived histories by actively listening and hearing children’s perceptions and experiences.

The methodological shift from research *on* children to research *with* children acknowledges children as capable informants, however, much research focuses primarily on seeking out children’s perceptions of a specific topic, fewer studies explore children’s narrative accounts, and fewer still acknowledge and seek out children’s memories of lived experience. Research which draws upon life history narratives “is about gaining insights into the broader human condition by coming to know and understand the experiences of other humans” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 11). Narratives and reflections of memory are fundamental to this approach to research. Children hold memories of their lived experience. Very young children not only verbally reflect upon their personal past experiences essentially as soon as they are able to talk (Fivush, 2011), they also demonstrate interest in sharing these experiences with others (Eisenberg, 1985; Hudson, 1990). Life history methodology, however, is not often employed in

research studies with children. This, I believe, is due in part with Eurocentric society's rigid conceptualisation of calendar time and the positioning of adults as more "experienced" and "knowledgeable" based upon their lived time. My current study highlights how children reflect upon their past experiences to not only make sense of themselves and the world around them, but also to look towards their futures. Researchers working with children should expand, actively seek out, include, and give due weight to children's memories. Silin (2006) maintains welcoming spaces are those where children "come to feel safe, to know that they will be heard, and to recognize that they can legitimately hold on to parts of the past even as they move into the future" (p. 3). Researchers should actively work to create these spaces and shift to explore and engage with the histories of children in the present.

Future Research

The Covid19 virus has spread across most of the world and was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation on the 11th of March 2020. The data collection phase of this research study coincided with the onset of the Covid19 pandemic in Ontario, and as such, led to unexpected findings. The participants drew upon multiple ways of expression to convey their opinions, perceptions, and experiences of the pandemic. This study highlights the child participants' vast understanding and knowledge of Covid19 and some of the effects of the pandemic on their day to day lives.

It is impossible to predict the full impact of the pandemic on children, however, it is impossible to ignore that there will be an impact. Currently much of the effects of the Covid19 pandemic on children are conveyed through media coverage and social media posts from the perspectives of adults and do not seek out the lived experiences and perceptions of children themselves. Some of the prevailing media accounts label children as "super spreaders" and "least

affected" by the virus (in terms of medical seriousness). The dominant adult-acknowledged effects of the pandemic on children focuses on a loss of childhood, deficit in schooling and the need for educational catch-up. I am not discounting the merit of exploring these effects, however, the impact of the pandemic on children extends beyond these dominant narratives to many other aspects of their lives. We need to shift our discussions of the effects of the pandemic on children from adults' perspectives to actively seeking out children's opinions and experiences of the pandemic. This call highlights the need for qualitative nuanced studies which explore the effects of the Covid19 pandemic from the perspective of children themselves, adding additional layers of understanding of the pandemic and its effects. This research will expand discussions of the pandemic while serving as a record of history as it is unfolding from a multitude of perspectives. This potential research may also serve to inform policy and practice to help ensure the experiences and views of children are considered when decisions and polices are made that directly affect their lives.

Jardine (2012), within the context of classrooms asks, "what makes some experiences worthy of rest and repose, worthy of returning, worthy of tarrying and remembering, of taking time, of whiling away your lives in their presence?" (p. 173). Vygotsky (2004) offers an exploration through the metaphor of a fold in a piece of paper. He explains experience is similar to creating a fold in a piece of paper, the more we are exposed to that experience, the deeper the crease becomes "allow(ing) it to change and retain the traces of that change" (p. 8). Experiences of the Covid19 pandemic are sure to create "deep folds" in the memories of children. As adults alive today have not experienced a global pandemic on such a large scale in their own childhoods, children who are experiencing the pandemic will hold collective memories that adults will not. How might adults consider and respond to a generation collectively experiencing

something and holding memories of childhood that are so far removed from their own experiences of childhood? How might adults recognise and attend to the multitude of “creases” in current childhoods that never existed before?

Dominate adult-led discussions of the effect of the Covid19 pandemic on children appears to centre adults’ fears for children. By the pandemic creating experiences unfamiliar to their experience of childhood, adults fear for their children’s “lost childhood.” Adults drawing upon their fears of the unknowness of the pandemic and nostalgia of their own past childhood, fear for the childhoods currently being experienced by their children. Research informed by children’s experiences holds the potential to decentre this fear. While I am not discounting the importance of exploring the negative effects of the pandemic, this current research also uncovered some more positive impacts the pandemic has had on the participants’ learning and development. These impacts deserve to be acknowledged and explored alongside the less favourable effects in order to generate a more nuanced understanding of the pandemic and its impacts on children. Through the stories the participants share, this current study highlights children’s knowledge and understanding of the Covid19 pandemic from different perspectives highlighting both favourable and less favourable impacts. The participants draw upon a myriad of differing experiences of the pandemic such as confusion as to certain restrictions and policies, worries of the safety of family members, sadness of missing friends and social engagements, increased flexibility with schoolwork, the of lessening of social pressures and spending more time with family. These impacts are not universal, but rather specific and dynamic. As a society, in order to better support each other as we move through this uncertain time, more research must be conducted to make visible children’ experiences of the pandemic from their perspectives.

Chapter Twelve: Conclusion

I don’t understand it any more than you do, but one thing I’ve learned is that you don’t have to understand things for them to be.

(*A Wrinkle in Time,* Madeleine L’Engle)

Final Thoughts: Possibilities in a Heap of Spaghetti

Within the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, leaning is viewed as a shared construction of meaning. Malaguzzi (as cited in Dahlberg & Moss, 2005) employs the metaphor of knowledge as a "tangle of spaghetti" (p. 117). This metaphor echoes the Deleuze and Guattari (1987) image of a rhizome. Within these conceptualisations, learning and understanding are seen as a tangled web with no distinct beginning or end. It is within this construction of knowledge that many possibilities may lie.

Guiding this research is a desire to find ways to better represent and honour the multitude of narratives and experiences of children without (re)producing their social marginalization through dominant research methods and theoretical frameworks that merge knowledge with power. Emerging research with children must be grounded in actively constructed and attentive reciprocal research relationships and "cannot be based in presupposed ideas or stereotypes about children or childhood" (Christensen & Prout, 2002, p. 484). Conversations around children and childhoods must be continually expanded and reviewed to include multiple perspectives and experiences, including those of children themselves.

As Freire (2005) states, "only through communication can human life hold meaning" (p. 77). Telling stories from various positions and experiences offers the potential for greater understanding and explorations. Sharing narratives as a means of knowing has often been silenced in research due in part to the guiding governance of the "positivistic dream of control, prediction, objectivity, and generalizability" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012, p. 14). Instead, we must view listening within research "as an on-going conversation" (Clark and Moss, 2011, p.12), making room for those stories which "give shape and expression to what would otherwise be

untold about 'our lives'" (Greene, 1991, p. x). Rather than considering differing theories and frameworks as predominately oppositional, perhaps we can look how they may operate alongside one another. As Denzin (2008) urges, we need to "find new strategic and tactical ways to work with one another… we must expand the size of our tent, indeed we need a bigger tent!" (p. 321). There needs to be an active creation of space for multiple narratives and experiences which work to create nuance, and to deepen our understandings. This urges us to move to an ethics of care, and to attend to relationships with one another with intension. We must remain open to receive, attend, and listen to others and their stories.

The Eurocentric developmentalist view of children majoritively understands childhood as a process in which a child *becomes* an adult. As explored in previous chapters, this dominant discourse, which has, and continues to have, great influence and implications, leads to problematic and dichotomous constructions of adults and children as separate from one another and as oppositional. We need to re-examine and challenge these dominant views which are so often taken for granted and assumed as "truths," thereby limiting not only what is thought and assumed, but also what is possible. Foucault ([1981] 2000) maintains "to do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy" (p. 456). We must immobilize our preconceptions in order to be critical of those ideas which are thought of as "natural" and "timeless," however, within this critique it is imperative that we are attentive to not only deconstructing, but also reconstructing. Here, within the landscape of various encounters, we can work together to produce multiple visions and understandings.

Instead of viewing childhood as a predictive journey, much akin to a sapling becoming a tree, what if childhoods were envisioned as journeys within the borderless tangled forest of human development, encompassing a multitude of pathways; some revisited, others skipped and

others yet to be forged? Here, in the forest of detours and shortcuts and unventured areas, journeys intersect with one another and become moments of shared narratives further influencing paths taken. No one journeys alone: replacing power over one another with an interconnected being with, and responsibility for, each other. Let us sit as a tangled heap of spaghetti, not a single strand with a distinct beginning and end, but rather an interconnected web of multiple strands, overlapping and intersecting, in constant dialogue with one another, and always remaining malleable to (re)configuration and (re)imagination.

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Appendix A: Initial Contact Email Script

Dear Families,

As many of you are aware, I am currently perusing a PhD in Education at York University. As part of my dissertation for my degree, I am conducting a research project exploring children's perceptions of childhood. Through this study, I wish to build up research exploring the multiple stories of children by including children's narrative perspectives; exploring ideas of childhood form the perspective of children themselves.

I am looking for children to participate in the study. The study will involve four meetings, which include conversations discussing open-ended questions, a child guided walk around his/her neighbourhood, the discussing of participant-produced photographs and the co-construction of a research book. The children will receive a copy of this book at the conclusion of the study. Through this study, I aim to recognize children as experts on their lived experiences. The names of all children will be replaced by pseudonyms in order to protect confidentiality. The time commitment of each meeting will be approximately 20-40 minutes.

If you would like to have your child participate in this study, and you child is willing to participate please contact me directly at Tiffany_Barnikis@edu.yorku.ca. I am happy to answer any further questions you may have about the research in general, or about your role in the study. Involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences of any kind.

The York University Research Ethics Board has reviewed and approved this study.

Thank you,

Tiffany Barnikis

Appendix B: Consent Form

Date:

Study Name: Children's Perceptions of Childhood

Researcher name: Tiffany Barnikis, PhD candidate, Faculty of Education, York University.

This research project will contribute to Tiffany Barnikis' doctoral dissertation.
Tiffany Barnikis is the principal investigator. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research, please feel free to contact her at: Tiffany_Barnikis@edu.yorku.ca

Purpose of the Research:
This study seeks to explore how a group of children perceive and experience childhood. This study has two key objectives: to contribute to current sociological discussions of children and childhood, and to listen and hear children's voices and stories through the research process. Influenced by the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2017), this research project brings together conversations, walking tours, photo elicitation and the co-construction of a research book in order to explore children's multiple narratives.

What Your Child Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:
Tiffany is looking to recruit four to six children to participate in this study. This form is seeking your permission for your child to participate in the research study. The study involves 4 meetings.

- For the first **2 meetings**, your child will be asked to participate in an interview at your home. The interviews will last approximately 20-30 minutes and will involve discussing some open-ended questions.
- **Meeting 3** will involve your child taking Tiffany on a walk around his/her neighborhood. It is estimated that this tour will last around 20 minutes. The child participants will direct the individual tours and decide upon the routes. The children will be provided with a camera with which they may document the tours.
- **Meeting 4** will involve a reviewing of the photographs which were taken on the tours. During this meeting the participant will select which images he/she wishes to include in a co-constructed research book. Each child will decide which information, textual and visual, he/she wishes to include in the book. At the end of the research process each participant will be given a copy of this research book. This meeting will last approximately between 30-45 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts:
The potential risks of this study are very low. Tiffany will be asking the children to reflect on experiences, and thus it is possible a participant may reflect on unpleasant memories while responding to a question and become upset or feel anxious. At the beginning of each meeting, the participants will be informed of that they may choose not to answer a particular question, or discontinue participating, if they wish, for any reason.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to Your Child:
This study aims to recognize children as experts on their lived experience. The information generated from this study may initiate conversation and future research on children's perceptions of the world around them.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Your child's participation in the study is completely voluntary and your child may choose to stop participating at any time. Your child's decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

In the event your child withdraws from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality:
Unless you choose otherwise, all information your child supplies during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your child's name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. Consent and assent forms, interview transcripts, photographs and handwritten field notes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, and audio files, document files and digital photographs will be kept on my password protected computer. Only Tiffany Barnikis and her dissertation committee (Dr. Aparna Mishra Tarc, Dr. Rachel Berman, and Dr. Naomi Norquay) will have access to the data. All the participant's names will be removed from the data and pseudonyms will be given. All raw data will be kept for six years and then destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

The data collected in this research project may be used – in an anonymized form - by members of the research team in subsequent research investigations exploring similar lines of inquiry. Such projects will still undergo ethics review by the HPRC, our institutional REB. Any secondary use of anonymized data by the research team will be treated with the same degree of confidentiality and anonymity as in the original research project.

Questions About the Research?
If you have questions about the research in general or about your child's role in the study, please feel free to contact Tiffany at Tiffany_Barnikis@edu.yorku.ca or her supervisor, Dr. Aparna Mishra Tarc at AMishraTarc@edu.yorku.ca . You may also contact the Graduate Program in Education at gradprogram@edu.yorku.ca .

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your child's rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I______________________________, consent to my child to participate in the Children's Perceptions of Childhood study conducted by Tiffany Barnikis. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature ______________________ **Date** ____________________
Participant

Signature ______________________ **Date** ____________________
Principal Investigator

Additional Consent (Required)

1. **Audio recording**

☐ I consent to the audio-recording of my child's interview(s).

2. **Video recording or use of photographs**

I ____________________ consent to the use of the photographic images, taken by the participants on the guided tours, to be used in the following ways (please check all that apply):

In academic articles	☐ N	☐ Y
In print, digital and slide form	☐ N	☐ Y
In academic presentations	☐ N	☐ Y
In media	☐ N	☐ Y
In thesis materials	☐ N	☐ Y

Signature ____________________ **Date** ____________________

Participant Name:

3. Consent to waive anonymity.

I, _______________________ consent to the use of my child's first name in the title pages and/or acknowledgement pages of the co-constructed research book. Children may wish to be recognized as co-authors in the process of creating the book. Only the child's first name will be used, and the child's name will not be directly linked to specific data contained within book.

Signature____________________ **Date____________________**

Participant Name:

Appendix C: Assent Form

Assent Agreement
CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDHOOD

This research study is interested in finding out about myself and how I view the world around me.

This study will involve 4 meetings which will include: recorded conversations with Tiffany, taking Tiffany on a walk, taking photographs and talking about them, and making a book.

As this study is asking me to reflect on past experiences, it is possible I may think of an unhappy memory when responding to a question, if this happens and I do not want to continue, I can say so.

It's OK by me that:

1. What I talk about with Tiffany will be taped with a tape recorder.
2. Tiffany will protect the tapes by keeping them safe, and if anyone listens to the tapes my name will not be used.
3. When Tiffany writes about what we talk about, my name will not be used.
4. I can stop talking or looking at photographs any time. To do this is I can just say, "stop now" or I can say, "next question."
5. I can stop at anytime without anyone being upset with me.
6. I can ask any question that I may have about this study at any time.
7. Tiffany might talk to someone in charge if she is worried about my safety.
8. My parent has said it's OK for me to do this, but if I don't want to, it's OK for me to just say so.

My Name: ____

My Signature or Special Mark: ______________________________

Today's Date: ______________________________

Appendix D: Conversation Guide

1) First Meeting

- Tell me about yourself. How would you describe yourself?
- If a new child was about to join your class, what would you want them to know about you?
- At the beginning of the school year, if you have a new teacher who does not know anything about you, what would you want him/her to know about you?
- What is important to you? What do you enjoy doing? What make you happy? What do you worry about?
- Is there anything else about you that you think it's important to know?

2) Second Meeting

- How would you describe a child/kid? / What makes a kid a kid? (Do you prefer to be called a child or kid - or another term?) Where do you learn about being a kid?
- How would you describe an adult? / What makes and adult an adult? Where do you learn about being an adult?
- What makes a kid different from an adult? What makes them the same?
- Would you prefer to be older or younger than you are now? Why?
- Are there things that children can do that adults cannot? Are there things adults can do that children cannot?
- Are there any things that you have been told you cannot do, but you think you are able to do?
- Is there anything else you would like to discuss?