

Primary School Children's Processes of Emotional Expression and Negotiation of Power in an Expressive Arts Curricular Project

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Declaration

I, Hillarie Jean Higgins, declare that this thesis:

- (a) has been composed by myself
- (b) contains my own original work
- (c) has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signature

ABSTRACT

Therapeutic education initiatives embodying a whole child approach can be seen to address the intellectual, emotional, bodily and spiritual as being part of a child's educational self. Through designing and implementing the concept of "aesthetic life narratives" in a primary school classroom, my research produces a curricular example of how therapeutic notions such as those found in psychological thought can be integrated into contemporary Scottish education through narrative and aesthetic means, exemplifying how individual children can make sense of expressive processes and roles introduced to them in an educational context. The specific characteristics of the research space and the particular interactive quality of research participation also illustrate how different children are able to participate in a short-term emotional education intervention specifically designed to be empowering. At the same time, my experience shows that the complex dynamic between the subjective life of a researcher and the historical nature of a child's experience with caregivers in their home life can shape educational/research experience, as well as its adult and child participants, in ways unanticipated. What transpired in the process of applying philosophical ideas to the real lives of children in my research produced ethical implications regarding critical reflexivity and the socio-cultural regard of the child that are of wider relevance to educators, researchers, counsellors and policy makers who interact with children in their own work.

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Thesis Introduction

The whole child movement advocates for approaches that address the intellectual, bodily, emotional and spiritual aspects of a child's life. My research demonstrates that there is potential for educational programmes that involve emotional expression through the aesthetic approach my project introduced and explored with a class of primary school children. The research concept of "aesthetic life narratives" was based on the idea that the act of storytelling can be used as an ongoing exercise to which children should be introduced at an early age in order to develop a more comprehensive sense of self. Furthermore, using art media to express and describe life stories, and the emotions a child consciously and unconsciously assigns to them, addresses the limitations and explicit nature of words that do not embody aesthetic qualities. In this thesis, I present the potential of an aesthetic life narrative approach based on my experience of introducing it through a curriculum-based expressive arts short term intervention in a Scottish primary school with 9 year-old students and co-researchers.

My project demonstrates the potential of aesthetic emotional expression in public education. In addition, due to the form in which the concept was embodied, my research shows that there is potential in short-term educational interventions characterized by brevity, distinction and newness. I also found that my use of hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology particularly brought an unexpected therapeutic effect. In this way, my research shows the significance of children's active roles in research and the potential for certain aspects of

my research approach—for instance, reflective interview spaces—to be adapted and utilized more widely in educational contexts as part of aesthetic emotional expression.

Through my use of reflexive narrative and case studies I demonstrate in detail how children's participation and use of educational processes labelled as empowering, progressive and ethical are continuously negotiated with reference to the relationships they have experienced with caretakers, as discussed through attachment theory. Specifically, they give insight into how children's learned experience of communicating self with parent figures affect their ability to express, share and own their life stories in an educational context.

In summary, this research advocates a changing tide in education which involves a child's emotional self. Along with Salzberger-Wittenberg (1999/1983), I argue that these aspects of self are inherently present in education. Yet, as my research shows, the implementation of these kinds of programmes requires conscious reflexivity on the part of educators and researchers, as well as a critical approach. At the same time, each child will negotiate their role and what exactly these programmes mean to them, based on their historical experience with expression and communication of self. As social science literature continues to be more widely used in therapeutic work, especially in the area of narrative, I conversely argue that theories and ideas based in therapy-based literature can provide additional perspectives on how individual children participate in educational processes advocated by social theory and philosophy.

Thesis Structure

While a graduate student in an education department, I was drawn to the idea of life writing as research and Bruner's claim that the "development of autobiography" should remain a critical part of social and psychological studies (1984, p. 695). Yet, I found there were very few stories told by children. As I will discuss in **Chapter One**, I had encountered many children in my personal and professional life with "street kids" whose lives were packed with intense experiences. I felt that children and young adults could benefit from processing, expressing and sharing their life realities and the emotions they assigned to them, as it could help them to further develop and come to understand themselves.

In **Chapter Two**, I introduce the literature that I used throughout my research process, which is divided into four parts. Part I presents the philosophical framework that drove the research—namely, the difficult possibility of educational spaces, based on the work of Paolo Freire (specifically, 1993/1970, 2005a) and Michel Foucault's (1977) conception of power. At the same time, I felt that words, unless one was familiar with the art of poetry and use of metaphor, not only limit what could be expressed through their rigid form, but also potentially reveal a child's intimate realities in a socially explicit manner. In Part II, I provide a review of the literature from both social science and therapeutic disciplines in order to support the research concept of aesthetic life narratives and the potential of their communicative use in schools.

Inspired by the words of education philosophers like John Dewey (1916, 1934, 1938) and Maxine Greene (1978, 2000), I wanted to further explore the therapeutic aspect of emotional life expression and put these ideas into practice to see what individual school children thought of them. As I will share in **Chapter Four**, my research journey caused me to develop a detailed primary school curriculum and short-term expressive arts intervention, which took place during Scotland's transition to a new national initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*. As my relationship with my 9 year-old co-researchers was far more complex than I had anticipated, I came to play a larger role in children's processes than expected. I utilized attachment theory and other child psychological literature, as presented in Part III of my literature review, so that I could analyze what occurred through my research process. The final part of my literature review looks at my research context and introduces the aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence* that incorporate both therapeutic and social science ideas in, what I argue, is an example of the whole child approach (Matthews, 2006). I conclude this chapter with my response to those who disagree with the ideas behind the emotional education movement, which I feel my project curriculum embodies and represents.

Chapter Three introduces the philosophy behind my hermeneutic phenomenology methodology which shaped my research approach, providing me with a way in which to manage the imbalance of power between an adult and child in educational and research relationships. Yet, as I will show in Chapter Four's reflexive research narrative, I found that the reflective interview space created by my

methodological approach produced a therapeutic effect which came to be an important aspect of children's expressive process.

My research narrative and the remaining three chapters of the thesis present the findings of my research process. In **Chapter Five**, I share four case studies that demonstrate how individual children with different home and life experiences used the educational project in very different ways, and also reflect upon how our research relationship seemed to serve a different purpose for each child. In **Chapter Six** and **Seven**, I offer my explanation as to why things went the way they did and engage in a discussion concerning what may be involved in using aesthetic life narratives in educational settings. Finally, in **Chapter Eight**, I conclude with a discussion regarding the implications of short-term interventions which invite children to engage in emotional life expression and the potential role of whole child projects, such as the one I designed and implemented, in other educational contexts.

In my research construction, implementation and analysis, I have used literature from various areas that extend over distinct academic and therapeutic disciplines. My use of these different ideas caused a fusion of thought, which presented a complex task. I mention this because my personal struggle to bring these ideas together on paper provides some insight into what is currently taking place on a larger scale in Scottish education; namely, an integration of therapeutic thought and broad educational goals in a standardized, structured and systematic way, and the complex ways in which emotional education is also realized in the real lives of children in the classroom.

Chapter One

Chapter One: Background and Personal

Statement

And there is a phosphorescent point where all reality is rediscovered, but changed, metamorphosed – and by what? – a point open for the *magic* usage of things. And I believe in mental meteors, in individual cosmogenies. – Anton Artaud (1965, p. 35)

Introduction

Artaud (1965) argued that thought is based on the existence of inspiration, while our inner worlds shape the ways in which we are inspired. In my case, witnessing the expressed lives of homeless children created an academic research project. These children's aesthetic representation of the life they knew seemed to simultaneously transform its meaning for them as they shaped its expressed form and as their own feelings altered its presentation. Each child was their own witness to the world by which they were formed, and each child was their life's only true artist. When I witnessed their use of art, I was inspired. I believed in the idea of life being art, and a child being its artist. I wanted to share the power I felt these street kids wielded by introducing other children to expressive processes. For I hoped that they could also paint their world and come to know it in a new way and, by doing so, broaden and even reconfigure their cosmos of self.

In this thesis, I share the words and ideas that have inspired my project's structure, as well as the stories of children who inspired my

own interpretation of the research project I expected to create. Yet, before I embark on an academic account of the intersection of politics with person, and self with social, I must first begin with a personal story for, through reflecting upon my own background, I developed an insight as to how the personal experiences of individual children and those I myself hold tightly shaped the beliefs which drove, structured and produced this expressive arts project.

Personal Core: Child as Artist, Life as Art

My time with American adolescents and youth in unstructured environments led me to believe in what I felt to be the therapeutic potential of narrative storytelling and art mediums, which could together serve as safe and empowering languages of self expression. When I was younger, I met some transient and runaway young people who changed the way in which I looked at the world. I went on to work with this population, as I grew older, and found that the same themes which characterized the actions of my former peers emerged with the children I later worked with. As a result, my doctoral project was originally inspired by my first-hand experience of the ways in which street children who continued to deal with difficult life trauma used art to express and exhibit their emotions and realities. They seemed driven to tell their stories and to justify the existence they embodied. These children had no home, and they had few adult figures with whom they could openly engage.

Some children constructed their own audience, both in protest and a kind of desperation, and forced their viewpoints upon the external public at large through public displays: art objects created out of found

items, spray painted stencils on the walls, prose and poetry readings in the middle of a busy square or sidewalk. I was struck at how they seemed to own and wear their internality in public view, and the ways in which they used art mediums to do it. I saw a kind of power in their role as artist and poet. Seeing the way in which society ignored them and did not provide an adequate response to them or their situation filled me with anger and shame. These children inspired my research, and also provided me with the lens through which I saw my project, my research participants, and my role within and in relation to it. My life and the life of the project were intricately interwoven from the start.

School Classrooms: a Transitional Space

In the time spent with these homeless children, I also witnessed the potential of schools. I saw how structured educational spaces could serve as a forum in which aesthetic communication of life could take place. From my early experience, I ascertained two points that came to drive my research: the homeless children's instinctual need to express their often violent lives through art, and the importance of an audience. Some of the children I knew would break into secondary schools and trespass in the art rooms, which contained precious art materials that were not easily attained on the streets and, in one instance in particular, the presence of an empathetic art teacher who served as an interactive audience for these children. They were not able to attend school, as they could not acquire parental permission that was required for them to formally enrol, but somehow found it to be a resource for their survival.

This would have seemed incredibly strange to most of the other kids I knew at the time, who could not wait for holiday breaks, school

outings and, in some cases, even doctor and dentist appointments so that they could leave the classroom. I then realized the potential power of schools and the role it could play in a child's emotional development: it was a resource, and I wondered why it could not serve as a similar resource for those who did not have to fight their way inside. A school serves as a place of meeting—the one location where two very different realities can be joined. Not just between the children who live outside of society, but between a child's home life and the outside social world. These children showed me that schools had real possibility.

This discovery broadened my perspective on education. In my own personal experience, I had never thought of schools as being a resource for living; rather, school was another reality that was neither a reflection of life nor an intermediary vehicle through which I could navigate my own. As a child, I enjoyed school and while whatever the classes covered surely involved me on various levels, they did not usually seem to incorporate my life, and, subsequently, I felt no connection to the subjects in class. At the same time, I loved “show and tell” because each of us had the opportunity to bring in something from our life and share it with the class—I felt proud and pleased to teach the class about my world for a short time. It was empowering. We had an audience for our subjectivity.

From my own experiences, I realized that the ways in which a school deals with the actual realities of children's lives, and the ways in which children feel they are a part of the educational process, can strongly impact their willingness or ability to learn. I began to contemplate the potential and power of education, and the ways in which power could be exercised by children through a communication

of self. While I saw how education could bear little relevance to a child's life, at a minimum, and could serve as an instrument of social control at its worst, I began to merge my older perspectives with a new one in which schools could also serve as forums for personal exploration, affirmation and transformation. I share these personal stories as they inspired my research concept and its context. Based on my earlier experiences, I created a research project in which I could test out new ideas inspired by possibility in a structured educational setting.

Research Concept: *Aesthetic Life Narratives*—Based on my past experiences, the concept I wished to further explore in my research was an aesthetic expression of self where children process, express and share their life stories and the emotions they assign to these through various art mediums in an educational context.

Language

As I selectively juxtapose ideas and concepts from both the social sciences and psychological fields, I am reminded of the ways in which therapeutic talk has been mainstreamed into British education and how important language is in establishing a new bond of redefined meaning. Often, the difference between the essential meaning of a concept lies with the language used to construct it. As I immersed myself in the language of practitioners, I found that my social science background caused me to interpret and define key concepts in more broad and general terms. Therefore, in my attempt to integrate complex

areas, I feel it is vital to clearly define how I use certain phrases and words in this thesis, which are common to both social science and psychological schools of thought.

I define *therapeutic effect* to be a subjective evaluation and/or interpretation of a change that facilitates further knowledge of self, particularly the emotional self. In other words, coming to negotiate, construct and expand understanding of self through the communication and interpretation of self, is an act that I regard to be therapeutic. This concept is based on the philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology as presented through the ideas of Gadamer (1977, 1998/1960) and Ricoeur (1974, 1988), as well as the phenomenological prominence given to perception and what we allow ourselves to see, as discussed by Merleau-Ponty (1962). As such, in the context of my research, I do not regard this effect to be something that can be detected by external tools of measurement, but through the combined perspectives of those involved in participatory interaction.

I regard *self* to be a subjective, impressionable, aesthetic, fictional, historical and temporal construction of being, composed of various parts, such as –concept, –image, –reflection, and –esteem, and which can be seen as a product of language. It is a primarily narrative driven conception, which is fuelled by personal and collective experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Kerby, 1991) and cultivated through its communication (Bakhtin, 1981/1935) and performance (Foucault, 1988).

I refer to *conscious/unconscious processes* in a broad sense; namely, the extent to which existing aspects of self are available to one's

perception of conscious awareness. Once again, my definition of these terms is situated in social science literature that regards self as consciousness (Lamb, 2001), but can be better understood as the connection between emotional memory and language as discussed in psychological narrative literature. “Narrative pervades our lives—conscious experience is not merely linked to the number and variety of personal stories we construct with each other within a cultural frame but is also consumed by them.” (Fireman, McVay and Flanagan, 2003, p. 3) In other words, our ability to see and communicate our life experiences and stories may also be constrained by them or, rather, by their effect upon our notion of self.

I also broadly define *empowerment* through Foucault’s (1977) interpretation of power as being a state of action that can only take place for those who are not under duress; power can be facilitated and created, but it is not a product that can be bestowed. Thus, for the purpose of my research project, I have defined empowerment as the act of helping others to facilitate, exercise and/or create the power they are able to produce, which is dependent on how “free” they feel they are to do so.

Reflexivity

I offer the personal stories that have inspired and driven my research because they have influenced the way in which I organized my project, interpreted the data and behaved as a researcher. Etherington (2007) states,

Reflexivity is therefore a tool whereby we can include our “selves” at any stage, making transparent the values and beliefs we hold that almost certainly influence the research process and its outcomes. Reflexive

research encourages us to display in our writing/conversations the interactions between ourselves and our participants from our first point of contact until we end those relationships, so that our work can be understood, not only in terms of what we have discovered, but how we have discovered it. (p. 601)

Inviting children to use expressive processes in a classroom environment caused a new educational experience for them which, in turn, affected not only the research but further influenced my role as a researcher. As I share in Chapter Four's narrative, my use of critical reflexivity was essential in evaluating and altering my interactive presence in individual children's participation, and I will continue to utilize it throughout the telling of my research experience. As the research process unfolded, I saw how my personal experiences played an essential role in not only the motivation behind the structure and presentation of my project, but also in shaping the children's personal use of the educational processes introduced to them and of me as an external resource. While I intended to remain conscious and aware of the ways in which my presence and ideas were translated in context, I did not fully realize the extent to which both would affect children until I witnessed it first-hand through the research implementation. Reflexivity came to be a vital aspect of my research process, as I saw how my ideas and my use of self had to be constantly adapted and managed through application, in order to maintain not only the essence of my project but the ethical regard I held to be critical.

My use of "ethics" refers to Speedy's (2008) presentation of the "ethics of transformation and emancipation" (p. 84), linked to the ethics of reflexivity (Etherington, 2004, 2007), in that I had to listen to not only what but *the ways in which* each individual child shared their

perspective in the research context I created. I used both images and stories in order to communicate my interpretation to each child, as well as continuously thought about how my intentions and presence affected their perspective and use of the processes introduced. I hoped for the processes to help children expand their knowledge of self and the ways in which they were; I hoped that they could find a kind of freedom through facilitating power as author and artist of their life stories. Yet, I intended to balance my hopes with my need to address the power dynamics between myself and each child through my methodological approach. I did not see this as my effort to protect a vulnerable child, but to respect their perspective and presence as a co-researcher.

Clough (1998) pointed out that “voice” in research is always contestable. On my own, I had not been able to assume the external vantage point which ideally did not disrupt or alter the actions or behaviour of my participants. Rather, much to my surprise and discomfort, I was to play an explicitly interactive role in the children’s educational processes. I was not collecting data solely as a researcher, but actively constructing it with the children as a participant. As a result, I as an individual was impossibly entangled in the data I had previously hoped to keep at a safe and neutral distance. The way in which I designed and implemented my research concept was a direct result of my own experiences, and the literature I cite continues to resonate with my own sense of truth, freedom and knowledge. As a result, the voices used in this thesis fluctuate from that of the traditional academic to the effusive prose of an activist to the thoughtful ponderings of a research participant. I intended to pick one, but found that I could not use one voice to describe and communicate the research project; I could not

detach from my active participatory role, but felt the need to keep it close.

I refer to the philosophy that shaped the research concept in order to explain this kind of reflexive positioning in my thesis. For instance, John Dewey (1916, 1934, 1938), an education philosopher whose work largely inspired my research project, believed experience to be both personal and social. He felt that basing education upon personal experiences may create a more intimate and complex relationship between student and teacher, and thus facilitate a more complete and social understanding of relations. Yet, while questioning how to avoid “violating” the rules of learning through the use of personal experience, he turned to philosophy, “The solution of this problem requires a well thought-out philosophy of the social factors that operate in the constitution of individual experience.” (Dewey, 1938, p. 21) In this way, I have turned to philosophy in order to support the relational intersection between my life and those of the students I worked with, which I will discuss further in Chapters Two and Three. While noting that the role of researcher as subject can be seen as nothing more than “semantic posturing”, Goodson and Sikes (2001) summarize my sense of reflexivity in research, which is based on their conceptualization of the goal of a life historian working in an educational context:

Indeed, why should anyone write anything if they do not have some message to pass on (even at the level of the shopping list to remind oneself of what to buy)? There is nothing inherently sinister, Machiavellian, unscientific, unobjective, or necessarily partisan about this. Thus, not only do life historians re-present the life stories they are told, they do so within the context of their own frames of reference and the particular stories that they wish to tell via their use of what informants say. (p. 51)

Dewey also argued that experiences rise from other experiences, and these experiences lead to further experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 3). Similarly, every decision I made and each reaction I presented caused my research process to turn a corner, and affected the experiences of my child participants. The ways in which I perceived my relational role, brought about circumstances I had not anticipated. As a result, due to my methodological approach and the way in which the research process unfolded, I found that I could not simply differentiate and extract my reflexive analysis from each stage of the research, nor from my telling of what transpired in the research experience I shared with the children. Not only would such an act contradict with the philosophies that drove my research, but would disassemble what I myself had learned through my research experience, and what I had been taught by the children I worked with.

While some would argue that such a subjective presentation clouds what truly manifested in the research process, I can only respond that the truth of what occurred is merely my own interpretation—the difference only lies in whether I explicitly or implicitly own my viewpoint in its telling. My ontological beliefs fuelled my reflexivity, which, in turn, drove the ways in which I approached my research and the data that was created. Yet, this was not an issue for me, since I believed that methodology should not only allow and help us to create a research context that will permit us to explore what we want to explore, but it can, and perhaps should, allow us as individuals and group members to exercise and visibly own our subjectivity within the research process as an act of honesty. In this thesis, I have attempted to balance tradition with the human realities of participating in a

phenomenon as both unwilling subject and conscious observer, and consider the fiction of representation and the verisimilitude of truth so that I could create something real and respectful to the children I am speaking for.

Introduction Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I shared and defined the working concepts I use throughout my thesis. As discussed, my use of reflexivity served as a tool by which I attempted to maintain the distance of an adult researcher who would independently represent children's experience in an academic thesis, while honestly balancing my role as research participant and supporting the philosophical tenets that drove me through the various stages of my research process. My personal experiences caused me to explore what is truly involved in a space, in an intersection of conscious and unconscious ways of being, such as that created in my project. Therefore, I now seek to illustrate in Chapter Two the literature I utilized from both the philosophy of education research and the realm of psychology and child development in order to assist me in different ways at different stages throughout the research process.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, I used various bodies of literature in order to design, implement, evaluate and analyze my research project. I have assigned these to four distinct categories in my literature review; the first is entitled “Education”, the second “Narrative and Aesthetic Life Stories”, the third “Psychological Tools of Analysis”, and the fourth, “Therapeutic Education”. As presented in my introduction, the project was developed and directed by philosophy, as well as education literature and that focusing upon narrative and art research. As a result, the first section of my literature review includes the literature espousing the philosophy, ontology and epistemology which have inspired the project concept, while the second explores theories and research which supported the research concept of aesthetic life narratives and the communication of self. The third section incorporates the ideas and concepts which I have found to be relevant from the areas of psychological thought and child development in order to further explore my research findings. Finally, the fourth section demonstrates how ideas from each of the preceding sections are being integrated and applied in the “therapeutic education” movement, as seen in Scotland’s most recent national education initiative, *Curriculum for Excellence*.

I present these sections separately in order to emphasize how my project is situated in social science literature and draws from psychological literature in order to compensate for what, I argue, each area often lacks. As some therapeutic practitioners in the area of narrative and art are creatively drawing from social science and literary literature in order to support and expand their own practice, (for example, see Angus and McLeod, 2004; McLeod, 1999, 2004a, 2004b; Speedy, 2000a, 200b, 2004, 2008; White and Epston, 1990), I, as a social science researcher, argue that ideas contained within the therapeutic disciplines can be utilized more widely in the social sciences, specifically the area of education, as tools of analysis. For, as I will describe in detail in Chapter Four's reflexive narrative, I found that the social science literature which "sang" (Bird, 2004) to me did not fully provide me with the tools to further explore the complex relationship between a researcher and individual students.

While sociological and education literature that inspires me often advocates for children's own communities, histories and life experiences to be used as the substance of learning, it also operates on a stage where "the child" and "society" are presented as universal concepts in grand power theories. As Ellis and Flaherty (1992) stated over fifteen years ago, "Sociologists now generally recognize that emotional processes are crucial components of social experience...most of the work of emotions has been restricted to issues of conceptualization or debate over theoretical frameworks." (p. 2) Strangely, there is still much less research that focuses on what exactly these processes look like in practice when involved in the lives of individual "real" children. For such research cannot go beyond

describing and explaining the scenes through educational theories that are not equipped to study the effects of family and extra-school relations and their effect upon a child's educational and emotional self. At the same time, psychological theories and ideas are often contained by therapeutic contexts and research facilities, and are not utilized in school classrooms or applied to groups of children who are not identified to have special needs. Thus, my project attempts to bring together "empowering" and "therapeutic", the political and personal, the universal and the particular, in order to explore how a philosophically-grounded, politically engaged and informed research project, as part of a national educational initiative, can be used in practice by individual children in their own unique and individual ways.

Part I: Research Framework

Education and Epistemology

The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action. –John Dewey (1916, p. 514)

...men and women develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation. –Paolo Freire (1993/1970, p. 70)

In my project, I attempted to create a facilitating space of creative exploration and communication informed by the work of Freire, while maintaining an active awareness of Foucault's critique of educational relationships between child and adult. In this first section of my literature review, I outline my personal ontology and values

concerning education and use critical theory to demonstrate the ways in which it is a contested space of opportunity and oppression, power and progression, reproduction and transformation. I also discuss the driving force behind my research concept and design by arguing that the classroom is an intricate intersection of worlds, and creative languages of communication—storytelling and art—are essential in creating collective and individual agency with others in a social educational context. Through conscious reflection upon self through communicative mediums, a child can come to exercise power and develop further understanding of the potential of self through a personally relevant educational experience.

As classrooms often serve as a forum for value-laden political and cultural battles (Apple, 1996), I argue that acts which can help shape education into a progressive instrument are found through the use of critical awareness in regard to the ways in which power is exercised through modes of communication, as well as by helping children to engage in a critical reflection of self and context as they negotiate their role in the spaces offered. Yet, as I will show in Chapter Four, as I attempted to apply my ideas about education in a primary school classroom through my research, I saw how my role as researcher had been expanded, causing me to also assume the roles of educator and student. In this way, my research experience can serve as an explicit example of the ways in which the transmission of knowledge in schools is certainly not a one-way process.

Constructivist Epistemology

...all knowledge is in response to a question. If there were no questions, there would be no scientific knowledge. Nothing proceeds from itself. Nothing is given. All is constructed.

-Gaston Bachelard (2006/1938, p. 14)

In my research, I worked within a social constructivist epistemology (Geertz, 1983; Gergen, 1999) as I attempted to use critical consciousness (Freire, 1993/1970, 2005) as the tool with which I investigated how the children in the project made sense of their experiences and emotions through art. The poststructuralist notion of social constructivism dismisses humanistic notions of absolute truths and allows “infinite possibilities” of local interpretations of text and other forms of communication when a particular individual makes sense of their social context (Speedy, 2008). In this way, the researcher, or “social analyst”, must possess and use “multiple identities (which) at once underscore the potential for writing an analytical with an ethical project and render obsolete the view of the utterly detached observer who looks down from on high.” (Rosaldo, 1993, p.194)

As I came to play multiple and simultaneous roles in my project, these ideas allowed me to fully involve myself in the children’s processes as I hoped for them to construct their experiences with me, while realizing that any negotiation achieved through our relationship would not negate, but helps us to further articulate the interpretations we came to create and present. I also pulled from the broad ideas presented by postcolonial work (see Dimitriadis and McCarthy, 2001), as the use of alternative aesthetic forms of educational resistance is regarded to be a key instrument in addressing embedded power relations and

deconstructing the imposed assignment of identities, beliefs and standardized realities. As my project was built on the politicized notion of art, I attempted to be aware of both the purposes I felt art served, as well as the particular uses by individual children assigned to art-making.

Through observing the acts of processing, expressing and sharing life stories through artwork, I intended to explore whether a child's subjective constructs of self, reality and life were changed or altered, as primarily defined and evaluated by the child. I was initially interested in exploring children's descriptions and the ways in which they communicated these through interaction, observation and individual interviews. In doing so, I hoped to compose an understanding about what was happening and why it was happening as classrooms engaged in the project curriculum and the narrative/art expression process it embodied, from primarily the perspective of the students. I planned for this explanation to be composed of various constructions of "what", "how" and "why", while acknowledging the idea that there is, in fact, no "what". "how" and "why", but, rather, a group of perceptions based on and constructed through experiences and observations.

Learning Life—Educational Ontology and Personal Position

While John Dewey (1938) viewed life as education, it is necessary to also ask what kind of life education portrays, what kind of education is best intended to represent life, and where do real children fit in philosophy. In this way, what I attempt to argue in this thesis is how progressive education or therapeutic notions are not, in the words of

Goodson (1995), “inherently liberating”, but, rather, the potential of freedom lies in promoting, encouraging and taking part in critical and sensitive awareness of the ways in which power is exercised in such fertile spaces. Our perception of life is shaped by our experiences, which occur in various contexts as the result of social, cultural, familial and individual forces (Bruner, 2004). As Dewey (1938) argued, when specifically referring to education as the social institution of schooling, it does not mean one can automatically detach such a circumstance, a framework for new experiences, from the world in which it is embedded. Yet, education can serve as a point of meeting for various worlds, both internal and external, and in this reality a space of agency and opportunity may arise to support maintenance and reproduction, on the one hand, and personal exploration and transformation, on the other (Greene, 2000).

I remain explicitly and personally aware of Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) argument concerning the ways in which the educational system is designed to “demonstrate, once and for all, and as early as possible, that what is done cannot be undone.” (p. 155) Yet, I have found that the constant struggle to control meanings in all the inventive, explicit and subtle ways that the dominant powers use, are often countered by the various creative and usually less blatant responses of resistance acted out by the dominated. As a result, I argue that, even though there is immense power and imposition involved in being educated, there is a constant dynamic at play (see Giroux, 2001). Simultaneously, I continue to believe that there is not also a single action that can be applied to any situation, as activism and approaches in all their forms cannot work in

every situation. It is in this embattled educational context I wondered:
Where is the child in formal education?

Schools: a Contested Space

In *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings* (1965), T. S. Eliot concluded that education “does not appear to be definable” (p. 120), which seems evident. The notion of education has undergone continual evolution as governments attempt to establish a normative definition for it through public policy and political agendas. In this way, education has long been an ideological and political battleground, and to simply “clarify” or “describe” the playing field is in itself a politicized act (Apple, 1996). As Michael Apple (2006/2001) states, “The concepts we use to try to understand and act on the world in which we live do not by themselves determine the answers we may find. Answers are not determined by words, but by the power relations that impose their interpretations of these concepts.” (p. 10)

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) discussed in great detail how classrooms as social institutions often serve to reproduce society and the hierarchies it wishes to maintain with “every appearance of neutrality”, under the premise that “social subjects comprehend the social world which comprehends them” (p. 482). Regarding the classroom to be a reflection of society is either a positive or negative viewpoint—it depends upon which perception of society is transmitted by those with power: teachers and other educators, such as school board members, governmental bodies and even corporations and non-profit organizations that may fund and structure the schools (Boler, 1999). In this way, education is not inherently progressive or reproductive. It can be a

forum for interaction, communication and an exchange and broadening of negotiated viewpoints, as well as a space in which identities are crushed and collective and personal realities are standardized, ignored and/or redefined, as most explicitly seen through feminist (see St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000) and multicultural education studies (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Vandeyar, 2007; see Banks and Banks, 2004). As such, the classroom is an intersection of worlds that does not necessarily entail equality, which can make such a junction a rather dangerous and revolutionary place to be.

The power dynamics between children and educators are often expressed through an imbalance, which, in turn, is exhibited in subtle ways. Michel Foucault (1977) regarded teachers to be mechanisms, tools, of the machine of social control they worked within. Teaching, according to Foucault, is a clever and regulated system of continuous observation. Teachers can exercise their power over children as authority figures in various ways, through task assignment, defining personal and educational boundaries and creating “time and space through their curricular and pedagogical practice” (Devine, 2003, p. 122). At the same time, the power relations present in the child/teacher relationship are often reciprocal, as Deacon (2006) argues:

Those who exercise power in the school are caught up in and subjected by its functions just as much as those over whom power is exercised. In fact, in many everyday educational situations, it is the teacher, performing under the critical gaze of others, over whom power is exercised. (p. 8)

Teachers are under pressure to perform, and rely upon the children to demonstrate their own competence and skill; both teacher and student

are engaged in a mutual and dependent relationship in which power is exercised upon the other in different ways.

While Foucault addressed the historicized notion of self, he characteristically spoke of power and discipline as being, basically, agents in themselves, rather than in social agency grounded in historical action emphasizing the binary and static roles of dominant/dominated (Giddens, 1982). Thus, a strict reading of Foucault offers little room for counter-hegemonic resistance or mobilization. However, as Butler (1999) argues, it is in the spaces between dominant ideological code and its performance that the cracks in which progressive political action may find room to grow. Thus, it is in the dynamic nature of power relations where we can engage with a renewed understanding of the imbalance of power and resistance, and regard sites of educational struggle to be spaces for creativity, redefinition and change. As such, the power exercised in a relationship between teacher/students can be utilized in various ways by its actualizers—the dynamic can be inverted and adapted in an unanticipated manner.

Foucault (1977) conceptualized schools as being socializing instruments of the status quo, creating institutional sites of reproduction, strictly regulating the movement, behaviours, beliefs and presentation of children, causing them to internalize norms in unconscious ways. In her argument for redefining school librarianship, Worley (2006) reworks Foucault's socio-cultural perspective with Winnicott's (1986, 1971) notion of creative spaces, and argues that that the act of redefinition of school context can serve as an act of resistance to the hegemonic, social and cultural forces that structure the school environment, as demonstrated in the following:

...empowering conditions within a facilitating environment (can become the) first act in resisting and teaching children to resist institutional disciplinary power exercised in school libraries, power exercised to normalize and control school children's minds, bodies, and souls. Establishing empowering contentions within a facilitating environment becomes the first step in creating a school (space) where children learn to think thoughts of no consequence, think and do nonsense—learn to live creatively. (p. 2)

In doing so, Worley (*Ibid*) provides an example of how ideas contextualized within psychological literature can be used to support ideas situated in educational practice. For Winnicott (1986) argued that “creativity is...the doing that arises out of being” (p. 39), and that an infant embodies their home world, “In the beginning, the infant is the environment and the environment is the infant.” (p. 72) Therefore, a child's ability to “be creative” is contingent upon the freedom she feels to communicate and express her self in context, based on the examples she has witnessed and embodied, and the support she feels in doing so in her various contexts. A child's ability to exercise power through creativity can only develop if her context is facilitating and “good enough” (Winnicott, 1971, p. 71); an educational context which supports the child in making sense of her environment, establishing her own pace of learning, and supporting her interpretation of her own experiences (Worley, 2006, p. 7), assists children in feeling able to find their own way.

While a child's early and ongoing experiences within the parent/child relationship serve as the initial influence as to a child's personal belief in their ability to make use of creative spaces, schools can serve as a transitional context, an intermediary space between a social world and a child's home world, a way in which children can

connect and explore their inner and outer realities. Winnicott (1986) referred to transitional phenomena as being necessarily involved in the creation of a facilitating environment, for it could allow children to conceive of themselves in relation to their life experiences, and their roles within the contexts in which their concept of life is constructed. Worley argues that, in order to create a facilitating space within schools, educators are to “nurture students’ senses of creating their worlds so students, seeing themselves as creators, empower themselves by creating themselves, by being, thinking, and doing.” (2006, p. 8) In the nurturing school space, educators encourage students to explore and make sense of their own experience, rather than teaching them to be and think a particular way. In the words of Rowan Williams, “Education is how we equip children for transforming their thinking and acting and for relating with both celebration and critique to the world they inhabit.” (2009, p. xvii)

In Foucault’s conception, schools attempt to control the minds and bodies of children. Therefore, in accepting Foucault’s perspective, the act of “being educated” is an extremely intimate process. Yet, as intimacy is an essential aspect of a facilitating environment (Winnicott, 1971), it is the ways in which intimacy is exercised that determines whether schooling is an oppressive or supportive act. Healthy educational spaces occur through “creating intimacy as part of empowering conditions” (Worley, 2006, p. 8), which only transpires through a supportive and constant context in which children feel free to explore their experiences and their roles in context. Foucault believed that power can only occur in a state of freedom, a liberation from constraints, discipline and regulations. Therefore, creating a new

facilitating environment through the introduction of exploratory roles can potentially suspend the captivity experienced in other contexts, and thus support children in exercising their imagination and their own sense of creative power.

In my research design, I hoped to create such a facilitating space within a Foucauldian context. I believed that introducing and affirming children's roles as creators of their worlds, as artists and authors of their experiences, could provide children with a potentially different way of being, a new way of existing in the supportive and safe educational space they were presented with. And yet, there was a great deal more to be taken into consideration. For a classroom is not placed upon a boat in the middle of an isolated sea. It is interwoven with relationships, power dynamics and interaction defined by internal and external forces. It is shaped by the multiple and simultaneous identities it engages with—those we hold as our own blurred with those imposed upon us. Greene (1965) eloquently elaborated upon what the act of communicating in such a context entails:

There is the issue of knowledge to be transmitted—the knowledge that is power, enlightenment or doom. There is the question of morality and what it is to be humane. And there are the complex problems relationships, not only among men, but among distinctive ways of life. And the pervasive problem of keeping a world alive and afloat, with multiple fulfilments being sought, and shifting truths, and (as educators too must understand) the need for confrontation of the “whiteness of the whale.” (p. 99)

The complexities of issues involved in the act of communication transpire both within us and through external facets. Thus, any attempt to create a democratic space that explicitly incorporates children's realities, as well as recognizes the value in their contributions and

encourages open emotional communication, is very persuasive in theory and extremely complicated in application.

At the same time, while the proverbial devil is certainly present, the details also offer the minute spaces in which progressive change is possible. For, although actions and limitations may be prescribed, although the ability to be free in every aspect may be an impossibility, although schools are embattled spaces that often serve to reproduce the hegemonic will, although an individual's internality is inextricably woven throughout their abilities to progress and personal realities may hinder and absolutely prevent them from ever accessing any kind of actualized power, the hope of an idealized "life as education" lies in their evolving ability to negotiate the ongoing obstacles. As Paolo Freire stated, "We know ourselves to be *conditioned* but not *determined*." (Freire, et al., 2001/1998, Emphasis in text, p. 26)

In the realm of education, Freire emphasized ethics in teaching, whereby a teacher does not transfer knowledge, but rather "creates the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge" (Freire et al., 2001/1998, p. 26). Identities are designed and educators may not be able to remove them, but can, through critical awareness, attempt to decipher them and, ideally, redesign their perspective on them. We may not be able to change the conditions of our existence, but we can alter their effect upon us and through this act we do, in a sense, change the world as we know it. Therefore, while Foucault's regard towards education and culture may seem hopeless, it is built upon the idea that hegemony is an ongoing process and is, thus, never finalized (Giroux et al., 1981).

Finding Freedom in Captured Spaces

Foucault (1984) regarded universal conceptions of humans to be means of domination and control. He argued that generalizations regarding human action created codes that restricted all humans to act in the ways particular humans acted. In other words, if a person does not have these certain inherent characteristics, something is wrong with them. While Foucault can be seen as rather pessimistic, his work can also be seen as illuminating obstacles to freedom (1988), which include, some argue, educational theories based on the notion of freedom. For instance, Margonis (1999) proposed that Foucault's critique left "child-centred" pedagogy with little direction, as this theory embodies bourgeois values concerning the creation of a certain type of individual (see Walkerdine, 1992). Margonis also argued that Freire's freedom was based on the child being a "dialogic subject" (p. 100) and thereby limited by the assumption that each child is fully able to engage in dialogue without any obstacles which may prevent them from doing so. Yet, Freire's politicized focus upon situational relations and critical consciousness (2005a), as well as dialogic exchange (2000/1991) adequately address the concerns of Foucault, if "dialogue" is not assigned a narrow definition. Freire argues that the desire to expand knowledge and to move beyond situated identity is at the heart of true dialogue; communication cannot become dialogue unless it is regarded to be an action accompanied by ongoing reflection (Leistyna, 2004).

Kerby (1991) stated, "Freedom relates to the possibilities for self-definition and expression allowed the individual within the system" (p. 113). Freire regarded the act of educating to be an ethical endeavour,

as it essentially formed individuals. It is in this ethics, within this potential space of mutual agency, schools can play a different kind of role; they can serve as a place in which children broaden their perspectives and the horizon into which they gaze. He believed that the goal of learning is to liberate learners from internal and external oppression, so that they are free to change their lives and the social context in which they live. Yet, this kind of power can be wielded and transformed in other ways, in the words of Kliebard (1995), “The world is on fire, and the youth of the world must be equipped to combat the conflagration.” (p. 173) Through critical pedagogy and particular methods schools can initiate an expanded perception of both the world that shapes people and the ways in which people shape the world.

The power created through conscious reflection and recognition is where educators and researchers can help children to recognize their particularity, while also coming to understand that such individuality does not necessarily involve isolation or a separation from a collective understanding. “I” and “we” can be a diverse synthesis—it is not merely a sense of belonging but can serve as a reflective beginning. For it is in this shared and interactive consciousness, this significance of personal being, in which education can truly impact a child’s life. As Greene (1965) once said, unlike educational reformers who seem to stand above the children they are dealing with, and who look “over the heads of the illiterate and disinherited through the glass of reason and warranted possibility”, educators should be like artists, who “stand below in the midst of the field...stand with individual profiles and jutting shoulders in view; they press against the human creatures listening, feeling their pulse, their warmth, their chill.” (p. 6) Educators may be in constant

transformation through their careful relation to the particular lives they are involved in. In the words of Freire (2001/1998),

It is in our becoming that we constitute our being so. Because the condition of becoming is the condition of being...For this reason, to transform the experience of educating into a matter of simple technique is to impoverish what is fundamentally human in this experience: namely, its capacity to form the human person. (p. 38-9)

As Dewey, Greene and Freire argued, children are not blank slates upon which we can slab methods and plans, but particular individuals who bring their lives with them into the classroom, who are not empty vessels, but bodies composed of memories, beliefs, values and experiences unconsciously and consciously embedded upon their internal geography.

Negotiating Educational Power through Languages of Communication

All words have a taste of profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life. (Bakhtin, 1981/1935, p. 293)

While open and interactive communication can be seen as a vital part of a democratic classroom, its progressive potential is dependent upon the forms in which power is exercised through the particular communicative forms used and actualized in an educational space. The stories that words create contain multiple meanings and ages of human existence that stretch beyond our own. As I discuss in Chapter Three, Heidegger and Gadamer regarded communication to be the essence of human understanding—through communication we as individuals come to develop the personal meaning that guides us in our

everyday life. At the same time, the words we use, the forms our thoughts assume and the context in which we communicate all play a role in the meaning our communicative attempts create, as Bakhtin pointed out in the opening quotation to this chapter. Our meanings collude with the meanings of others and their lives, which have shaped the words we use. In classrooms, the use of language is a key determinant in how progressive or oppressive an educational space can be.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1993/1970) wrote,

Education is suffering from narrative sickness...a teacher fills the students with the contents of his narration—contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated and alienating verbosity. (p. 52)

In order to cure this narrative sickness, Freire argued that the stories told in educational settings are to be contextualized in students' lives, and students' lives are to be contextualized in the stories. Furthermore, in redefining the roles of teacher and students as simultaneous learners, the dichotomy of communication can be broken apart and a fluid exchange between subjects can be enacted. Freire believed that our consciousness as humans is only developed through our interaction with other humans and, thus, our consciousness is "first and foremost a social consciousness" (Au, 2007). Thus, we can achieve progress through questioning the "master narratives", the communiqué of Education, and working to develop a collective understanding of our social consciousness through coming to know and understand the stories and experiences of others who share in it with us. A classroom can create

knowledge through communication, rather than reproduce it for consumption.

At the same time, because of the historically layered meanings behind language, communication through critical understanding does not inherently involve liberation or an expansion of viewpoint. As Kerby (1991) argued, to regard dialogue as being an inherent aspect of freedom depends on the possibilities for expression of self. Yet, as Margonis (1999) pointed out, even if classrooms are based entirely on two-way communicative exchange, even if students engage in a critical analysis of the language we use and the stories they tell through their personal understanding of life, the act of communication in an educational space still retains risk. Critical communication is based on the premise that each child feels free enough to speak. Simultaneously, words mean different things to different individuals. Communication in a social space can facilitate emotional exposure and a subsequent feeling of helplessness. As a result, it is important to distinguish between open communication and expressive communication—the difference is found in how much control we feel we have over our own interpretation of the message we transmit, and how easily we feel our audience can decode it. In some instances, the need and desire to express ourselves does not coincide with a readiness to share the realities behind our communication.

As a result, simply communicating experiences in a classroom is impossibly complex. Students' voices can serve a transformative purpose, but they often demand a creative approach in order to bring about such an end (Fielding, 2004). The idea that experiences and their emotions can be blatantly shared neglects the context from which they

cannot simply disengage—for a child who has suffered, or continues to suffer abuse or emotional trauma, for instance, or for a child who owns an identity for which one has been persecuted by perhaps the same peers who serve as audience in a classroom space, a “sharing of experience” is simply not possible through traditional methods. While engaging children in social action in the classroom, where does the life of an individual child fit?

As I have argued in this section, an educational context contains the active possibility of control and transformation, while dialogic communication, the debatable core of progressive education, requires expanded possibilities. If language is essential, if consciousness is found through communication, what form can such intimate life expression safely assume in a school classroom? How can power be safely created and sustained through subjective storytelling? And how can an educator protect children from the abuse they may be subjected to through engaging in the social act? These are the questions I explored through the implementation of my aesthetic life narrative curriculum. In the next section, I present the literature I used to inform my research concept and explore both the educational and therapeutic value of narrative and aesthetic expression.

Part II: Research Concept

Narrative and Aesthetic Life Narratives

Art is the fusion in one experience of the pressure upon the self of necessary conditions and the spontaneity and novelty of individuality. (Dewey, 1934, p. 293)

While I have discussed various viewpoints regarding the possibility of education, I now turn to the concept I created in order to expand what education can personally mean to each child. By introducing aesthetic methods of self expression, children could be provided with a creative way in which to explore and understand self in their classroom setting. As Dewey states in the above quote, art expression creates a situation in which the self a child and others see her to be is expressed alongside other aspects of self that may have previously been unknown or unrefined. Simultaneously, the revealed aspect is disguised by the non-standardized form of “art”. In this section I look at theories and studies concerning narrative and art expression contextualized in both social science and psychological literature.

Along with an increased focus upon emotionality (Denzin, 1992; Bondi, 2005) and the reflexive experiences of the researcher (Etherington, 2004), there is a body of research that utilizes and advocates creative methods of representation which continue to grow in various academic fields; for example, marketing and consumer research (Sherry and Shouten, 2002), ethnography (Richardson, 1992, 2001) and narrative analysis (Sarbin, 2003), as well as in therapeutic practice (see Speedy, 2008). Yet, there remains little research dedicated to the perceived power dynamics and therapeutic effect of the use of aesthetic life expression in education research through the perspectives of child co-researchers. In applying philosophical and theoretical ideas in creative practice with primary school children, I hoped to offer communicative tools and an expressive space that could serve both an educational and therapeutic purpose for them.

Expressing the Experiences of our Lives through

Narrative

Stories are the womb of personhood. Stories make and break us. Stories sustain us in times of trouble and encourage us towards ends we would not otherwise envision. The more we shrink and harden our ways of telling, the more starved and constipated we become. (Mair, 1989, p. 2)

As Mair articulates in the quote above, stories sustain and support ourselves and the life we live. Yet, our stories require broad routes of communication, as well as flexible form and texture. In my research, I chose to define “narrative” as the stories children tell, which, pointedly, can also include the languages and forms in which they tell them—in other words, narrative serves as a constructive form that is developed further through its telling or expression. Therefore, I refer to “storytelling” as the narrative expression of life realities which can include the various forms of life expression; for instance, Casey (1995) provides examples as part of her interpretation of “narrative research”, i.e. life history, ethnography, auto/biography, narrative interviews, oral interviews, life documents, testimonials, ethnohistories etc. I also use the terms “narrative” and “story” interchangeably (Sarbin, 2003), and argue that narratives serve as the “organizing principle for human action”, which is vital for humans who always seek to apply meaning and some kind of order to our lives (Crossley, 2000).

Yet, while narrative is also used as an investigative tool in discourse analysis—the structure, syntax, form and meaning of stories often serve as variables in their scrutiny (for example, see Shiffrin, et al., 2003; Wu, 1995), I chose to focus upon the act rather than the structure of construction and telling. The term narrative provides extensive

research, theories and detailed terminology; therefore, I assumed a broad and varied approach to the way in which I also used and explored this term. Narrative structure does not mean stories are shaped in the way we are taught “good” stories are constructed i.e. plot, beginning, middle, climax, endings. Rather, our narrative structures are inherently abstract, contradictory and simultaneous (Carr, 1986).

Dewey (1934) believed that, in order to study education, we must study life. And life is not fully contained in verbal exchanges; it is expressed through other means of communication. Therefore, as I embarked on my research, I also intended to broadly conceive of narrative as including any communicative effort by a child that expressed their viewpoint; whether the expression of that viewpoint with me included silences, glances, frustration, happiness, truths, lies, gift-giving and/or ambivalence, I interpreted it as being part of the experience they were communicating. For, when conceiving of the word “story”, it is important for a researcher to look beyond the verbal telling and to comprehend the entirety of what is involved in the act, as Munro (1998) adeptly stated:

Narrative does not provide a better way to locate truth, but in fact reminds us that all good stories are predicated on the quality of the fiction. We live many lives...my understanding of a life history suggests that we need to attend to the silences as well as what is said, that we need to attend to how the story is told as well as what is told or not told, and to attend to the tensions and contradictions rather than to succumb to the temptations to gloss over these in our desire for “the” story. (p. 13)

In this way, when representing another’s story, researchers are intimately involved in the particular presentation of a co-researcher’s experience. As a result, it is important to consciously balance the need

for coherence with the reality that lives do not fit into neat categories and the many stories within one's story may tell very different tales, corresponding to their very different lives and ways of being.

Authoring our Life Stories

I grew up in a family that discouraged intellectual adventure and risk. To me, the opera and the Sunday concerts in the Brooklyn Museum Sculpture Court and the outdoor concerts in the summer were rebellions, breakthroughs, secret gardens. Since the age of seven, of course, I was writing. (Greene quoted in Cruikshank, 2008, p. 1)

Symbolic-interactionist and cultural ethnographer Edward Bruner (1984) stated, "A life as lived is what actually happens. A life as experienced consists of the images, feelings, sentiments, desires, thoughts and meanings known to the person whose life it is." (p. 7) He argued that narrative is a form of language that can then enable us to re/create, and assign meaning to our concept of self and personal identities. Narrative can bring individual meaning to the realities and experiences in our lives, as Kerby (1991) stated, "Narration into some form of story gives both a structure and a degree of understanding to the ongoing content of our lives." (p. 33) Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) went even further to argue that the "stories people tell are not only about their lives, but also part of their lives" (p. 8). Bakhtin (1986) also used certain types of narratives to identify the felt-experiences of our lives—in this way, our stories not only tell the tale of our lives, but also shape our life as lived, felt and experienced.

Through narrative and story we can connect the layers and contexts we embody and help to further define the objective of our current role, and our reasons to maintain or attempt to renovate it—we discover meaning as it "arises when we try to put what culture and

language have crystallized from the past together with what we feel, wish, and think about our present point in life” (Turner, 1986, p. 33). As Ricoeur (1974, 1988) argued, we can develop further understanding of self through the communication of our narratives, as our consciousness is shaped through communication. In this way, narrative is an inherent aspect of our internal world—it is our primary way of understanding life and our experiences. At the same time, it is through our expression of narratives we can come to further understand our subjective sense of life.

“Self” as Subject

The use of narrative in an educational setting can facilitate a child’s contemplation and comprehension of self as subject, which presents the self as being impressionable, changeable and not fixed. In my research design, I chose to utilize this broad conception of narrated self, which could embody all the ways in which children constructed “who” and “what” they “are”, and what exactly that meant to them, described through various languages. I referred to Kerby’s (1991) definition of self as “the distinct individual that we usually take ourselves to be, an individual, therefore, that also knows itself to be” (p. 4), or the ways in which our “experience of selfhood and identity is in fact dependent on language and self-narration” (p. 115).

I also referred to Jonathon Lamb’s (2001) definition based on Lockean self as consciousness: “The self I talk about is constituted by reflection, interpellation and language. It is also immediate and remembered; impressions acquired by an embodied mind on which a sense of personal identity depends.” (p. 5) Kerby and Lamb argued that

our conception of self is based upon our self as, in Kerby's term, the "implied subject of self-referring utterances" (1991, p. 4), which is meant to infer that our thinking and speaking represents who we believe ourselves to be. In other words, there is no inherent or essential Self, but, rather, multiple selves, which are produced by the languages we use, and the ways in which we connect, think about and present them.

In her research regarding narrative and reflexivity, Mary Gergen (2003) observes the evolving conceptions of stories and their relations to self—some stories are static and unmovable, heavy and still, while others are in constant motion, fleeting and transparent. The veracity and fiction of our stories are subjective constructions, but our ability to assume the role of author depends on many different factors such as time, maturity and the roles we have assigned to certain stories. For example, accepting a fictional story as true may be vital to our ability to validate and maintain all of the other stories it is connected to. As such, proposing the subjective nature of life narratives and our transient roles as both subjects and authors brings about many questions regarding what that might mean to the people who construct and maintain them, as Gergen (2003) asks, "If people became convinced that their narratives were constructions, open to change, what impact would this have on their sense of their own narratives and their sense of who they were?" (p. 275) For some, believing that the truths we hold are nothing but stories is too difficult to accept—they must maintain the perceived solidity of their structures. For others, this perspective may offer them alternative windows through which to look. My conception of self entails that life is composed of our subjective stories and we are, in literary terms, implied authors of ourselves. As a result, we have an

inherent sense of agency and control in how we construct ourselves, regardless of whether we are able and willing to be conscious of this or not.

A human telling a story is engaged in an interpretive act, a fiction, and, thus, a story expressed cannot represent the Truth, for this concept cannot exist in the life of a human (Cole and Knowles, 2001, p. 119). Each person's past, present and future is a story, a narrative, that we tell ourselves before going to sleep, and while we are acting, reacting, speaking, thinking in certain ways and doing particular things in life, and, most importantly, it tangles itself in our dreams, fantasies and goals. It becomes the map of existential identity, or, rather, survival—of where we have been, are now standing and where we can go. It is a map of reasons and directions.

A personal life narrative has been influenced by not only class, race, gender, sexuality, but also by the cultural stories that have accompanied each identity we may explicitly or silently embody. For our “personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned” (Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992, p. 1). Through the use of narrative, individuals can come to develop a more complete idea of the multiple capacities and elements involved in the experiences they communicate, as J. Bruner (1990) stated, “A narrative is composed of a unique sequence of events, mental states, happenings involving human beings as characters or actors... Their meaning is given by their place in the overall configuration of the sequence as a whole.” (cited in Dallos, 2007, p. 72) Our stories are contextualized within our experiences, which can stretch beyond the backyards of self we are conscious of and

accustomed to exploring. Yet, the authorial significance, the tangible meaning of our narratives lies in the meaning we are able to assign them.

Self as Author and Audience

We must come to form in order to be in touch and so we speak. Our stories are the masks through which we can be seen, and with every telling we stop the flood and swirl of thought so someone can get a glimpse of us, and maybe catch us if they can. (Grumet, 1987, p. 321)

In the quote above, Grumet (1987) emphasizes that the telling of life stories requires an individual to summon up an image of who we are in a moment. The self expressed is intimately connected to the context and to the audience who listens and simultaneously defines who we are on their own terms through what is offered. In this way, the role a person plays in telling their story is interactive—a storyteller interacts with the audience they anticipate, they interact with the audience they encounter, they intersect with their emotions, their sub/consciousness, their memories, their pasts, presents, futures, identities, their idea of family, loved ones and their idea of “myself”:

(A storyteller is) telling their story in a particular way for a particular purpose, guided by their understanding or conceptualization of the particular situation they are involved in, the self/identity/impression/image they want to present, and their assessment of how hearers will respond. (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 41)

By communicating our life as experienced with others, we engage in a joining of horizons. Although we may see our lives in a particular way, engaging with others who may see it differently produces a situation in which we can contemplate the subjective nature of our own interpretation, and even of ourselves.

Madeleine Grumet (1991) argued that the act of storytelling is a negotiation of power, and it is the historical elements involved and the particular ground on which such negotiation takes place that strongly influence its progressive or damaging effect. As Grumet (1987) wrote, “I suspect that the difference between personal and impersonal knowledge, or practical and impractical knowledge, is not different in what it is we know but in how we tell it and whom we tell it to.” (p. 323) Stories change upon their telling, upon their particular reception and the situational contexts in which they are told. By subjecting our stories to an audience, we may gain a different perspective that expands what we had previously known. We alter our memories, our experience of life, through its communication. Our attempt to interpret our memories’ essentiality is tempered by the composition of the moment in which it is expressed and in which we are constructed.

Individual storytelling in a social context can be an extremely personal act that extends beyond sharing “facts” to further constructing self. In this way, narrative storytelling can serve both an educational and therapeutic purpose. It is both a personal and social act. As a result, the area of narrative has allowed therapeutic practitioners to expand their practice and the ways in which they speak about it, contextualizing the “individualised psychologised image” in a sociocultural framework (McLeod, 2004b, p. 353). McLeod argues that such a transition from focus upon the individual to the focus upon the individual within a larger frame required the “adoption and development of a new language, one that would allow discussion of a different type of therapeutic process” (*Ibid*, p. 353). While therapists are integrating the language of social sciences in order to expand their practice, I argue that educators

should explore the ways in which narrative practitioners are using these terms in individualized practice in order to further understand the effect and use of storytelling in schools as an educational intersection between home and school life.

Narrative as Therapeutic Tool

Undoubtedly, there are some similarities between Rogerian counseling and life history interviewing, in that interviewers, like counselors, listen, reflect back, ask questions which encourage further reflection, and are non-judgemental. Both are also often dealing with intimate aspects of life.

However, researchers are not (usually) counselors: they are researching, not practicing therapy. (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 26)

In the above quote, Goodson and Sikes point out the similarities between therapeutic relationships and education research that is focused upon the lives of participants and the telling of their life experiences, while also emphasizing that the objectives of each relationship differ. Yet, once again, the therapeutic effect—whether an intentional or “accidental” result of listening and sharing in the further re/construction of someone’s life stories—is often present in both a research and therapy setting. In my research, I looked to literature contextualized in therapeutic frameworks in order to explore the full potential of narrative and emotional expression used in a classroom context. Narrative as a formally therapeutic tool is often used with children who have experienced some kind of disruptive trauma in their life (for example, Lacher, Nichols and May, 2005), but it does not usually extend beyond the spaces designated to work with children identified as needing additional help.

As in a classroom environment, the role of communication is essential in a therapeutic relationship. Narrative continues to be used as

an explicitly therapeutic tool and, as such, supports the argument that children's use of narrative can help to develop greater understanding of self. Yet, as previously argued, the potential of narrative lies in the ways in which it is used and the use an individual can assign to it. Narrative is more than a means of communication; it can be seen as a language that produces consciousness and development of self. In this way, the ideas expressed by narrative theorists resemble those presented by therapeutic practitioners who have also utilized a therapeutic approach. As Speedy (2008) states, "Unlike most narrative research frameworks, narrative therapy (as an approach, not a model) offers us a transformative conversational practice" that assists us in our efforts to "negotiate the terrain of narrative conversations" (p. 84). In this way, I have drawn from narrative therapy so that I may expand the language I use to describe and negotiate the storytelling relationship between a teller and audience in a classroom. In formal narrative therapy, client and therapist collaborate to explore the different factors involved in various dimensions of situational tellings through their interaction (Monk, Winslade, Crockett and Epston, 1997). In this way, the dialectic communication utilized in narrative therapy represents a relationship composed of Myerhoff's (1979, 1982) conceptualization of "subject-subject", rather than "subject-object", as seen in her ethnographic work (Kaminsky, 1992).

Narrative is also present in studies based in attachment theory (see Oppenheim and Waters, 1995; Bretherton, 1984, 1995; Crittenden, 1995) and has been formally incorporated into various therapeutic approaches; for example, the recent Narrative Story Stem Technique and Attachment Narrative Therapy both make extensive use of the way in

which self is developed and formed through story. Rudi Dallos (2007) claims Attachment Narrative Therapy (ANT) can help people develop and understand their relative identities, as well as the meaning they acquire through their communication. By combining narrative, systemic and attachment therapies, Dallos argues that, at the root of our relationships and our identities are the stories we tell about them and, through telling our stories and expressing the emotions we have assigned to them, we can begin to organize and make sense of our life experiences, helping us to construct a clearer sense of self.

While the founding of “narrative therapy” is often attributed to White and Epston (1990), narrative can be seen in practice and use throughout both psychoanalysis (Schafer, 1992; Leiper and Kent, 2001), counselling (McLeod, 2004b), psychology (Sarbin, 1986; Spence, 1986; Baerger and MacAdams, 1999; Habermas and Bluck, 2000), and is often used in work with survivors of trauma (Alcott and Gray, 1993; MacNeil and Mead, 2005; Cohler, 1991). Narratives and storytelling with children also continue to be used in work with biological and/or adoptive parents (Siegel and Hartzell 2003; Lacher, Nichols and May 2005; Byng-Hall, 1995; Eron and Lund, 1993; McCabe and Peterson, 1991) in the ever broadening field of family therapy. Narrative psychologist Theodore Sarbin (1986) explored the role of imagination in our construction of identities, as he claimed narratives and storytelling can produce embodied imaginings for their audience members which can then lead to self-perception, unless a story conflicts with a viewpoint that is already held (p. 18). In such cases of conflict, we engage in negotiation between the conflicting beliefs, which I regard to be constructions, stories, and compositions.

There are many similarities between narrative work in qualitative and reflective research, and the work done in formal therapeutic settings—the realm of home and the ways in which later contexts interact with it are always a part of the stories we compose in order to fit into our narrative of life, “The facts of a family’s past can be selectively fashioned into a story that can mean almost anything, whatever (family members) most need it to mean.” (Stone, 1988, p. 17) I argue that narrative and the arts can help to illuminate the personal effects of storytelling and help to demonstrate the complex potential of using it in schools as both an educational and therapeutic tool.

Narrative Research with Children in an Educational Context

Researchers who have adopted narrative methods have found them particularly useful for addressing the unmet challenge of integrating culture, person, and change—a challenge that has become especially acute in the last quarter century. (Daiute and Lightfoot, 2003, p. viii)

Narrative continues to be widely and informally used in schools—a child being asked to talk or write about how their summer went, or what they did over the holidays is an example of a child expressing their life stories. In planning the project, I focused on work exploring the “informal” therapeutic benefit derived by the greater understanding of self achieved through the use of narrative in diverse educational settings, specifically in work with teachers’ experiences with students (to name a few, Clough, 2002; Goodson, 1981, 1995, 2000; Goodson and Walker, 1991; Goodson, I. & Sikes, P. 2001; Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995; Clandinin and Connelly, 1990, 1994, 1996). For instance, Ivor Goodson’s work focuses upon widely exploring the

overlap between personal and political in educational research and the stories that are created in the relationships and realities of schooling. Similarly, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) questioned what is involved in educational storytelling, and how experience and personal knowledge play an integral role in the narratives created. In this literature, the role of subjectivity and reflexivity is essential to the educational process, and necessary in order to investigate the narrative orchestration that occurs in the process of telling, sharing and listening. Most importantly, the act of telling and sharing one's story as a teacher can help provide a sense of affirmation of their practice.

At the same time, the writing of this dissertation was inspired by the work of Clough (2002), who honestly pursues the use and presence of ethnographic fiction in a researcher's construction of educational narratives, offering storied examples of a "radical structure" of creative inquiry (p. 7). In this way, my attempt to construct stories in order to communicate the experiences of students and child co-researchers has utilized various modes of writing and representation in order to explicitly present what is contained in these pages as my own interpretation—an interpretation that has been inspired by the lived experiences of and my interactive relationships with the primary school students I worked with.

Yet, when it came to exploring students' personal use of storytelling, I found fewer examples. While pursuing my graduate degree in Education, I explored the use of storytelling and life expression in the fields of narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), narrative analysis (Daiute and Lightfoot, 2003), life histories (see Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995) in education (Munro, 1998; Pamphilon,

1999; Goodson and Sikes, 2001), biography (Goodson and Walker, 1991), auto ethnography (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) and “testimonios” (for example, Menchu, 1984; see Tierney, 2000)—to cite only a few significant examples of each. However, I found relatively few social science studies expressing the lives of children through narrative, besides and what is regarded to be one of the first life histories—Shaw’s (1930) *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy’s Own Story*—and Wolcott’s (1983) iconic life history of a “sneaky kid”.

The “art” and “power” of storytelling is utilized as a pedagogical tool where teachers read stories to and create stories with students in order to spark imagination and stimulate creative thinking (for example, see Collins and Cooper, 2005/1996). The act of collaborative storytelling between teachers has been shown to improve their practice and their ability to connect with students (Shank, 2006). There are studies which explore the use of educational storytelling with various ethnic groups in reference to issues of power and group identity. For instance, female Latina students were inspired to write about and reflect upon their own lives through their teachers’ use of biographies of successful Latina women (Daisey and Jose-Kampfner, 2002). Stories of others were presented to students in order to inspire their own life telling. Through their personal connection as audience, each student themselves also became a storyteller.

Mello (2001) conducted an innovative performance arts-based project in a primary school classroom in which a small group of children were introduced to the art of storytelling, as presented in folk traditions. Identifying a lack in research focused upon the narrative discourses of students, the use of cultural stories were meant to inspire children’s own

storytelling in a “safe, arts-infused” educational space in order to expand a child’s understanding of self. While discussing the stories told, children used their own life experiences to help them explain and explore the plots, and to connect their own lives to the lives of characters. Mello found that both the performance of storytelling along with the “content of the stories told, had an impact on students’ interpersonal relationships, empathy, and interest” (para 37) in class. Based on her research, Mello (*Ibid*) argues that the exercise of verbal narrative expression in a social space helped children to develop an individual perspective and promoted social interaction:

Although the research reported here is limited in scope, findings indicate that storytelling enhanced the students’ abilities to reflect and develop relationships between the texts, teller, and themselves. As a result, these relationships supported and amplified students’ comprehension, listening, and interaction with others.

In Mello’s study, storytelling helped children to compare and reflect upon their own value systems, as well as the ways in which their own viewpoints and interpretations resembled and differed with those of their peers. In this way, Freire’s emphasis upon classroom dialogue is honoured. Children’s own experiences will often infuse their hearing of the stories presented to them, “blending” their own life narratives with those of others (Harris, 2007). Yet, while storytelling can be seen to contribute to the development of critical and social consciousness, the “therapeutic” impact of the expressive process involved in narrative expression is referred to in generalized terms when situated in social science research, preventing further exploration.

Furthermore, while I was interested in what kind of therapeutic impact storytelling could have upon children in a class environment, I

was also concerned with introducing an approach that was used in private therapeutic settings. For instance, if a child found that narrative construction, expression and communication triggered or revealed a memory or reality of which she was not before conscious or that she did not want to explicitly reveal in a social setting, it could be regarded as an expansion of her knowledge of self, true, but at what cost? How could narrative storytelling be used in a way that the teller could also retain a sense of control over what was seen by others? How could children play with the notion of fiction? In addition, speaking of life realities and emotions can be limited by conversation and “finding the right words”; what language could both help children explore their emotional self through the expression of “emotionalized” narratives, while simultaneously help them to maintain or facilitate power as storyteller?

Expressing the Stories of our Lives through Art

As argued in the previous sections, power can be negotiated through narrative construction and expression. Yet, verbal storytelling in an educational context may not sufficiently address the imbalance of exercised power between adults, individual children and peers. While Margonis (1999) offered a critique of Freire’s belief in every human’s inherent ability to engage in dialogue, assuming students are comfortable with sharing their life experiences and the emotions they assign to these in a social space can also be seen as an inaccurate and universalistic supposition. The particular dynamic between each child and their own life stories is unique. While narrative and emotional expression, as well as reflection upon what was constructed through the telling, is argued to be inherently therapeutic and a way in which to

learn more about relational and social self, it is also an extremely personal and potentially dangerous process when performed in a social setting whereby the reactions of one's audience are unknown.

In the remainder of this section of my literature review, I argue that art is a language that allows us to tell stories and access aspects of ourselves we may not otherwise consciously express, while providing a space of safety between artist, artwork and external audience. As Nietzsche (1974) wondered why we couldn't be poets of our own lives, in one of his last interviews, Michel Foucault also offered the following observation: "What surprises me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that has to do only with objects, rather than individuals, or life... Yet, couldn't the life of each individual become a work of art?" (cited in Miskolci, 2007)

Ffrench (2004) writes about Foucault's historical rendition of the "aesthetics of experience", which evolved from the Greeks and survived through the time of Christian ethical and moral standards to reach a more hermeneutical conception of self, preparing the way for a "subjectivication that produces subjects in relation to 'their' truth" (p. 208). It is the aesthetic aspect of experience, produced by the subjective figure playing the role of both artist and audience, in which multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations can arise, creating a layer of meaning and memory embodied in a piece of work. In this way, we can visually reflect upon our internal self in a way that was not before possible, broadening our understanding and knowledge of ourselves as we consciously know ourselves. In this way, I argue art can also be used by students as a kind of layered language in which realities and stories are a bit more open to interpretation, shielding an artist from exposure

and maintaining the walls one wished to maintain while simultaneously engaging in a powerful act of expressive and emotional communication.

Emotional Life of Art

Emotionality is an inherent aspect of expressing one's life through art; while some artists may be most concerned with form and technique, I argue that there is emotionality present at what can be regarded as unconscious levels. As such, I theorized that through the aesthetic process a child's emotional self could be expressed, helping children to develop a more complete sense of being. My foundational views on art are based on Susanne Langer's (1957) early philosophy, in which she claimed that a work of art serves as a developed metaphor that gives form to our emotions through expression and, thus, communicates our inward experiences (p. 136). To Langer, a work of art has the power to express not only our own subjective experiences and the feelings in which they are saturated, but to produce a product upon which we can then reflect, witnessing the presence of emotional material that we may not have before been conscious of, or, in the words of Ellis and Flaherty (1992):

(Art) expresses feelings in a way that discursive language cannot...In fact, it is only through art that the life of feeling can be formulated and conveyed since art objectifies feeling so that we and others can contemplate them...This contemplation leads to self-knowledge and knowledge of other aspects of life. (p. 88)

Our inward experiences, composed of memories, images and stories, are braided together with emotions, which are intimately connected to our daily experiences, and serve to distinguish particular parts from the whole, as Dewey remarked:

Emotion is the moving and cementing force. It selects what is congruous and dyes what is selected with its color, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials externally disparate and dissimilar. It thus provides unity in and through the varied parts of an experience. When the unity is of the sort already described, the experience has esthetic character, even though it is not, dominantly, an esthetic experience. (1934, p. 42)

Dewey discussed the aesthetic ideal, where the present is not abandoned or subordinated to the past or future, but involves them intimately to form a present experience that is whole (p. 18). As segregation often remains between everyday living and our bodily senses, and we detach our emotions from our daily experiences, art provides us with the ability to re-connect our sense and emotions, intellect and body in expression of an experience: “Art is the living and concrete proof that man [*sic*] is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature.” (Dewey, 1934, p. 5)

The art created does not reveal a person’s facts of reality, but can provide a way with which to harness and manifest emotions and experiences that we could not otherwise access, creating a more whole concept of self. Art can give form to the imagination and voice to that which cannot be spoken—through the creation of a tangible object, we can look at what life feels like and come to form a connection with such feelings, in an idealization of a sense of whole. Hepburn (1984) wrote, “Imaginative activity is working for a *rapprochement* between the spectator and his aesthetic object: unity is again a regulative notion, a symbol of the unattainable complete transmutation of brute external nature into a mirror of the mind.” (Emphasis in text, p. 20)

Self as Artist and Audience

As with narrative and the role of author, assuming various perspectives on self as artist and audience can also help children to facilitate a further understanding of self and a broadening of knowledge. Suzanne Nalbantian (1994) pursued the literary notion of “aesthetic autobiography”, and claimed famous novelists’ fictional work to be “artistic manipulations” of their own life facts (p. ix). According to her research, these authors engaged in a creative process, a transformation of life into art, as they expressed a commentary on their experiences through self-reflexivity. Referring to Carl Jung’s work on artistic creation, Nalbantian argued that, in their fictional expression, these authors go far beyond the psychological to the artistic, and yet these two perspectives, or forms, maintain an intimate connection and conversation:

In reading these writers as they are juxtaposed, one realizes the convergence on the aesthetic level of the fundamental devices that turn their autobiographical memories into fictional cohesions. Ever close to the life material, they construed literary methods to distance themselves from it. This genre for fictional autobiography was creating techniques of artistry used for the simultaneous revealing and concealing of the self. And within this mode there lies the heart of the creative process whereby the truths of fact were becoming truths of fiction. (p. 61)

Thus, the stories expressed through an aesthetic process may assume their own independent visual form, and the author can potentially create a distance between herself/selves and her expression, allowing her to assume a new position of perspective.

The facts of one’s life are presented to be malleable and abstract—while they are explicitly revealed, they are also hidden

through their aesthetic veil. Life realities can be detached from an individual's core and expressed as Subject through abstract metaphors. For art depends upon symbolization and the colours of the subconscious, giving a space in which certain stories may tumble and burst without unveiling the explicit experiences of their author. In addition, Lightfoot (2003) describes this new kind of literary analysis to be in "direct correspondence to the 'really real' thus defrocked as the criterion of merit, principles of art and aesthetics emerged as the new gold standard." (p. 24) An artist is able to communicate self while retaining an ownership, a sense of control, over its interpretive deciphering—what is "real" is inherently called into question through one's expression of life.

In creating visual art, Dewey (1934) spoke of a "triadic relationship", which involves an artist, the creative product and an audience—pointing out that an artist can also serve as the audience, affected by one's own expression and by the distinct life of the expression itself (p. 106). In a similar way as narrative can be used, the process of art expression can help us to further explore and shape our realities through their communication. Through the space created by aesthetic expression, between unconscious expression as artist and our ability to engage in conscious reflection as audience, our horizon of understanding can be expanded.

At the same time, our personal epiphanies are hidden from others who would play audience to our work, as they themselves interpret our expression through their own personal understanding of self. In a way, through art-making, we can facilitate others' reflection upon self through our own subjective expression. An artist becomes part

of her artwork's audience, while each viewer is destined to interpret what they see in relation to their own particular scope of sight. In this way, Aristotelian catharsis is achieved through the release of emotions and, subsequently, a sense of liberation from the negative effects of these emotions. In a way, the artist, as well as the artist as audience, is cleansed (see Bennett, 1981).

Exploring our knowledge of self through aesthetic expression is regarded to be a natural inclination. Through her research, Abigail Housen (1996) argued that connecting our own personal experiences to a work of art can seem natural for beginners—we will look for things that are already familiar and present in our own life and will base our interpretations of what we see directly on these elements. Furthermore, Housen extracted five stages of aesthetic development and demonstrated that, in the first stage, beginning viewers actually look for narratives in works of art, regardless of whether a story is actually present (Yenawine, 2003, p. 9). This was demonstrated in Mello's (2001) study for, when images accompanied the stories told, the students were shown to “associate story images with familiar events and places in their own lives.” (para. 25)

The way in which we perceive “art” as both audience and artist can be a personal experience; we will look for experiences, for ourselves, within the visual object of reflection. As Lightfoot (2003) states, citing Winnicott (1971) and Bakhtin (1981/1935), we “experience ourselves within a liminal space between what is and what could be.” (p. 36) While Turner (1974) originally described liminality as a space in which social structure is deconstructed and also formed, Speedy (2008) refers to these liminal spaces as “thresholds” (p. 31) of possibility that

are best generated through more artistic endeavours. Dewey, in his discussion of the power of literature, stated that the “expressions that constitute art are communication in its pure and undefiled form. Art breaks through barriers that divide human beings, which are impermeable in ordinary association.” (1934, p. 244) The term “medium” is taken from the Latin “middle”, and it is in this intermediate or transitional space (Winnicott, 1971) between the artist and the artwork where children can, I argue, explore the narrative possibilities of self.

Regardless of whether an artist creates work to present to an external audience or keeps their art hidden from all others, the expression of experience through art denotes a form of communication between self as both artist and audience. Yet, while Prinzhorn (1972/1921) argued that the artist’s intentions are of what is most importance in creating art, Gadamer (1977) spoke of the possibility for our work—what is produced—to expand beyond our intention as its creator. If we say that our life story is an expression of self, we can consider that the new expressive form—the aesthetic story—is now distinct from its author, producing a space. Yet, it is in the material unconsciously produced we are able to potentially expand our consciousness. As a child expresses his experiences, the emotions he assigns to these, both consciously and unconsciously, are revealed perhaps altered through their aesthetic storied form. While the child as artist arranges and orders the materials that are to compose his artwork, he may also become aware that these materials are transformed through the artistic process. For, as Dewey noted, a similar transformation is simultaneously taking place on the inside—with “‘inner’ materials,

images, observations, memories and emotions”, creating two separate and yet intrinsically connected operations that produce a “truly expressive act” (p. 74):

As the painter places pigment upon the canvas, or imagines it placed there, his ideas and feeling are also ordered. As the writer composes in his medium of words what he wants to say, his idea takes on for himself perceptible form. (Dewey, 1934, p. 75)

An artist may not be conscious of the forms they create; the process of art expression can potentially establish a route of discovery and realizations of self through their simultaneous role as audience and artist. Dewey claimed that this transformation “marks every deed of art” in the sense that an artist consciously uses mediums to communicate an emotion and its experience, in order to produce an expression (*Ibid*, p. 62). Through artistic expression, an artist may intend to communicate particular stories and emotions in deliberate ways, but the product often takes on a form that they did not anticipate, a form that shows no regard for their blueprints and maps, which then provides a constructed viewpoint on internal processes that the artist could not foresee and were not before consciously accessible. Art, like life, simply does not turn out the way one may plan. Yet, these unexpected manifestations shape the vital ways in which we learn about life and about ourselves.

At an early age, children learn that their actions can transform, shape and alter the material around them, and are naturally inclined to attach narratives to objects through symbolization and through their connection to external objects (Burton, 2000, p. 336). Judith Burton (2000) states: “Creating re-presentations is not something young children do instead of exploring and expressing their immediate feelings

directly through lines, colours, and forms; rather, they discover new and more complex means to articulate the imaginative and objective interplay of affective experiences in their social world” (p. 338). In *Art as Expression*, Dewey (1934) also argued that, through experience, a child alters their interaction with the surrounding world, attaching meaning and consequences to particular actions and particular uses of language.

Thus, the development of my research concept depended upon the following theory: if a child creates narratives from her own experiences and communicated these stories through art media, she could, conceivably, develop an initial and/or altered view of her life stories and the role she plays in her own life—perhaps a level of conscious awareness of self could be instigated through playing the roles of artist and audience in a social educational space. This would involve not only the child as artist and audience, but the presence of external audience members who observe and interact with the artwork she creates. In addition, the layered language of art could provide children with a space of interpretation—as artist, a child could communicate their story in a social space and step back and reflect upon their artwork with others, while keeping its story “hidden” within the work until a time when they chose to explicitly share it or not. In this way, using an aesthetic language to express life narratives, spattered with emotions which a child may not previously be aware of or understand, could create a brief separation from the stories once kept inside and a simultaneous emancipation from the potential burden of others also learning the new story at the same time.

Art as Therapeutic and Liberating Tool

Aesthetics can no more transcend the perversely fluid messiness of the ordinary and commonplace than ignore the extraordinary and irreproducible. (Hein, 1993, p. 4)

It is assumed here that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.). (Winnicott, 1971, p. 13)

As Hein's quote points out, the process of creating art does not discriminate between what is everyday knowledge and what is astonishing. In other words, art works in ways we cannot predict and, as a result, what is created is beyond the conscious control of an artist. At the same time, as can be inferred from Winnicott's statement, the space between who we believe ourselves to be and who we are regarded by others to be is a fluid gap that can be negotiated through experiences that cannot be strictly regulated by society. In this way, the arts can be seen as an emancipatory mediator. Like narrative, art has often been used in therapeutic settings, but it also continues to serve a "liberating" purpose as a layered language, due to its non standardized form and abstract quality. For this reason, the use of art can potentially assist children in their attempts to exercise power through their aesthetic expression of self in an educational space, and, in doing so, slip into a liminal space, finding a kind of momentary freedom from ascribed identities or ways of being.

However, there are additional theories and research to help us understand why this may be. Therapeutic literature supports the

educational research of Burton (2000) and Mello (2001), as well as the philosophical ponderings of Dewey (1934), which claim that viewing images often cause us to recall personal experiences. As discussed in earlier sections, contemplating our thoughts, emotions and stories in a visual way may broaden our conscious and subconscious access to self. An essential aspect of Freud's beliefs was that the unconscious needs to be made conscious, and, in *Ego and Id*, Freud (1961/1923) considered the possibility that "thinking in pictures ...approximates more closely to unconscious processes than does thinking in words." (cited in Schore, 1994, p. 447-8) Building upon Freud's speculation, if a child's stories were to be constructed through images, they could perhaps incorporate realities of which they were not before aware and, through their expression, they could consciously access and visually reflect upon what had been previously unconscious.

Arnheim (1966, 1974) emphasized the psychological aspects of creativity and expressing life through art mediums. Similarly, in *Creative Connection*, Rogers (2003) discusses the ways in which our abilities to explore expression through various artistic mediums can help us to further explore our internality—we are all artists, as we are each the expert of our own self-knowledge, and the arts can help us to reclaim aspects of ourselves that may otherwise not be actualized, "We express inner feelings by creating outer forms." (p. 2) In contrast to the way we may approach creating a piece of art, in her person-centred approach to expressive arts therapy, Rogers emphasizes the importance of the process of releasing and externalizing our internal forms, rather than focusing upon the form of the product actualized.

Taking this into consideration, I distinguished those aesthetic forms which create a product as being instruments for extended reflection (visual arts, textual work etc.), from those that do not, which I consider to be expressive aesthetic modes that do not create a tangible visual product (music, dance etc.). While it is, as Rogers (*Ibid*) argues, the *process* of aesthetic expression in which we find a therapeutic release of internal realities that may not otherwise be uncovered, it is our ability to create art, to make a product, which extends the temporality of the aesthetic moment and permits a lasting visual analysis, increasing the likeliness that further knowledge of self may occur in our role as reflective audience. The combination of aesthetic process and reflective analysis of the art it creates can, I theorized, facilitate further comprehension of self through both an interconnected “therapeutic” and “learning” stage. It is a liminal space in the intermediary area between inner and outer reality where the aesthetic process connects and explores our realities. As Hein (1977) argued, aesthetics is not about transcendence, but about the connectivity of self with self.

When reading about art expression, it is apparent that therapeutic and emotional qualities are explicitly or implicitly addressed as the process is described and explained in both literature classified as “therapy” and that shelved under the subject “philosophy”. It can be seen as therapeutic for the same reasons in which narrative expression can be seen as therapeutic, but expressing narrative constructs through aesthetic means also provides artists with a broader vocabulary in which they can speak, more space in which to explore, and through a subjective form that is not easily deciphered by external audiences. Because of this, the arts have often been used as the tools of the

oppressed or the silenced, and artists have often, in general, struggled to challenge socio-cultural values and ideologies, forced to use an abstract language that could never be formalized.

As a result, when looking into how art can serve as a therapeutic tool, I found a great deal of material connecting art therapy to freedom. Following on the liberatory work of Freire, Gramsci and Martin-Baro, there is a good deal of art therapy intended to change society through aesthetics (for example, Hocoy, 2005; Spaniol, 2005; Kaplan, 2007). The premise of this kind of liberation is based on two general ideas: firstly, we can change the world through coming to understand ourselves, the ways in which we see the world, and the ways in which we are shaped by social, cultural and familial forces (MacPhfee and Reuland, 2007). Through this process, we can come to see the hegemonic (political, cultural, familial) forces which capture us in a seemingly fixed way of being. Secondly, while art is arguably the ideal way in which to explore our internal world and its continuous and varied contexts, allowing us to access aspects of self not available to our known consciousness, it also permits us to communicate our understandings and beliefs in a more hidden way with those who know “what to look for”, or whose own experiences allow their interpretation of our artwork to come close to decoding our own. As Housen (1996) argued, we look for our own stories in the art we view, and, as a result, if we live the same realities as the artist, although we may not experience it in the same way, we are more likely to share in the world and message the artist herself intended to communicate.

For beliefs can be more widely expressed and shared under the often novelty wrapping of aesthetics—while dissenting beliefs cannot be

safely spoken in an oppressive context, presenting them socially through art, as through a slapstick cabaret, for instance, could provide those who hold them with a small space of expressive freedom for it is, after all, just music. In this way, art has served, and continues to serve, as the underground railroad of beliefs and emotions which cannot be safely presented in a general or explicit manner. For a child who is being abused, or a political refugee, art has the potential to play a significant role in understanding self and context, as well as in community construction, creating the potential for change through communication, inside what can be seen as an ongoing and dangerous reality. If we can expand our consciousness of possibilities through active communication, art can provide the act of critical communication with a safe language in which it can actualize. At the same time, Hocoy (2002) points out that, while art therapy and the general use of art can take on the form of social action through the power of images and their uncanny and liberating potential to connect the universal with the individual, such action is also moulded by those who structure and wield it. In this way, language, whether using text, imagery or verbal discourse, is not inherently liberating, but it can hold the potential for personal and interpersonal development.

As shown and argued in this and the previous section, images can also trigger responses that may incorporate and reflect both subconscious and conscious elements—we look for ourselves in the images we see. However, our ability to personally explore or socially share what we discover with others can be seen as a negotiation between our experiences in various life contexts, as seen in an attachment-based study conducted Oppenheim and Waters (1995). These researchers

asked young children to respond to pictures of other children of the same sex and age who was experiencing some kind of mild to more severe form of distress due to caretakers (Dallos, 2007, p. 76). The children, utilizing their personal memories, assigned their own experiences to these visual figures, and, when guessing how the child in the picture may feel in the situation they were portrayed as being in and what was likely to happen to them, deciphered the situation and outcome based on those which they themselves had experienced.

Subsequently, the same children, when asked to communicate their own stories regarding their own experiences in the situation pictured, told a different tale. The researchers concluded that their experience with caretakers influenced their ability to share the details of their own stories or willingness to explore their role within their stories (*Ibid*). Children identified as having “insecure” relationship with parental figures or, who had not received consistent and support from them throughout their young life, were not able to connect their experiences to those of the children in the image they had been shown. In other words, the children in this study were able to subconsciously connect their own lives to those of the children in the pictures, but were unable to consciously express or recognize this connection. In this way, the visual stimulus revealed what the conscious mind could not access.

If adhering to Freud’s belief that making the unconscious conscious is a primary goal in psychoanalytic therapeutic practice, I felt that the ways in which visual modes interact with a child’s entire self—both conscious and unconscious—through both construction, reflection and expression as artist and audience could serve as a more effective way to better understand self than through non-aesthetic methods. At the

same time, as shown by narrative-based research (see Oppenheim and Waters, 1995, for a discussion), a child's ability to recognize and own the connective space between the known and previously unknown revealed through an aesthetic narrative process is based on their way of processing all of their life experiences in relation to their conception of self. As a result, the ways in which children use aesthetic storytelling within an educational social space can be seen as contingent upon their individual way of coping with their life realities—integrating their ways of being in their home environment with their ways of being in a school environment. At the same time, involving a child's emotional self, as well as their life experiences, in a public school classroom is a complex endeavour that extends beyond a child's own abilities to negotiate their communication of self and back into a socio-political argument concerning the purpose of education. So where and how does aesthetic storytelling fit in contemporary classrooms?

Art Research with Children in an Educational Context

Art is often considered (by administrators, parents, politicians, even by teachers of other subjects) a soft subject where little thinking is required. Many continue to believe that art is dominantly a matter of feeling, intuition, talent, or creativity, all understood as not including what we normally call thinking; hence, art still has a weak place in the curriculum... (Parsons, 2005, p. 370)

In conceiving aesthetic life narratives as being both an inherently therapeutic process and a pedagogical tool, its role in contemporary education is controversial. This is largely due to art's uncertain position within schooling. Maxine Greene (1965, 1978, 1988, 2000, 2003) inspired my belief in the ways in which art can serve as a nonviolent and yet incredibly pervasive and influential form of

resistance to forces repressing children's potential in the realm of education. Yet, the realm of aesthetics and its characteristically abstract, therapeutic and liberating form remains a divisive element of education as its own potential continues to be suppressed through attempts to contain, evaluate, minimize and standardize its emotional and expressive figure.

Art's arguable ability to introduce realities held by the unconscious to the conscious knowledge of self, as well as integrate the emotional with the intellectual, situates the idea of aesthetic storytelling in the contested whole child approach as part of the therapeutic education movement (see House and Loewenthal, 2009). While Langer argued that art is adeptly used to access emotional realities of which we may not be conscious, art also expresses an overall picture of self, including the cognitive and rational, for, as Dewey (1934) argued, art serves to facilitate a unification of being. Thus, it can play a significant role in a child's ability to learn and broaden their understanding of self and the world in which they exist. Yet, while art can be seen as a way to combat the difficulty in achieving inclusion through verbal discursive language in an educational space (Lynch and Allan, 2007), the arts are often regarded as confined to one curricular area: art.

Some warn of the dangers of imaginative works because they fail to adequately prepare children for real life in society. The marketplace model and what can be seen as the commercialization of education leaves little room for the emotions and imagination, for play and exploring other facets of being, as Loewenthal (2009) argues, "Yet a glance at our education system, with the increasingly central importance given to positivistic auditing, together with the peripheral place of the

arts, suggests that we are increasingly a society where technology comes first, science second and the resources of a human soul a poor third.” (p. 19) The arts have often been associated with the spiritual realm, with the abstract and indefinable—an association that can be seen to emphasize its integral worth but does not help it to achieve prominence in an education system that prioritizes clear and explicitly grounded objectives.

A.D. Efland (2002) and Elliot Eisner (1999, 2002) are two recent authors who argue that the arts have historically been deemed extracurricular and of little real educational value, while, beyond the ongoing battle between hard subjects like mathematics and science and “soft” subjects (of which creative art is often defined as the softest), rote memorization and easily measured areas have been highly regarded in an educational world riddled with standardized testing. In this kind of educational context, in an area like creative arts in which the process can be seen as just as, if not more, important than the product itself, we have to ask exactly how creativity can be measured. Art-making cannot be exclusively ruled by aesthetic laws that define and govern genres in order to produce obedient form and expression for, as Croce (1992) discussed, such an attempt is a laughable task:

Every true work of art has violated an established genre and in so doing confounded the idea of critics, who have been forced to expand that genre, without, however, being able to prevent the genre thus expanded from seeming too strict because of the rise of new works of art, followed, naturally, by new discords and embarrassments and—by further expansion. (p. 41)

Art embraces all aspect of life, and provides us with a way of seeing the world and ourselves, and, as such, it cannot be confined into dictated

space—in fact, as Croce argued, an effort to do so, is contrary to its nature, purpose and state of being. Therefore, in an educational environment that praises areas in which clear measurements can be made, art is, I argue, often mistakenly deemed to be of less worth than those subjects which fit easily into the limited space they are assigned.

As a result, it is easy to understand how, in an educational system based upon evidence-based accountability, art teachers have found difficulty demonstrating their vital contribution to the educational curricula, since the rational and emotional are still regarded to be in dialectical opposition—for, if art is the language of emotions, others point out that it is cannot also be the language of intellect. Yet, there is a great deal of research exploring the possible correlation between self-development, academic achievement and art (for example, Eisner, 1999; Fiske, 1999), which can be used to address the anti-intellectual label art often wears. However, these studies also focus upon the long-term results and consequences of art, and do not look to document how it works or what the aesthetic process looks or feels like.

In order to address this, participant action research has been regarded as one way in which art educators can communicate the procedural and “process” aspect of their area, without having to force summation from products for measurement (see Soep, 2005; Burnaford, 2007). In reviewing literature, I found that my research has much in common with the many artists, educators and researchers who have used the PAR method when working in the arts. These kinds of art-based educational projects differ in research focus and in the objectives of their respective studies. Barone and Eisner (2006) identify two criteria which define arts-based educational research (ABER): the first is any research

that involves an artistic activity that can be regarded as educational, while the second involved the “presence of certain aesthetic qualities...that infuse the inquiry process and the research ‘text’.” (p. 95) While ABER projects use aesthetics in evaluating new educational methods (for example, Welch, Howard, Himonides and Brereton 2005; McKay, 2006) and others focus upon the possibilities of qualitative research in both educational (Roulston, 2006) and therapeutic spaces (Bundy, 2006), each shares the role of researcher with that of participant. For, in using such an interactive approach, educators and practitioners are able to document and reflect upon the educational processes performed in their classroom and counselling space, and create a hermeneutic example of the ways in which educational progress had been subsequently achieved over a period of time through aesthetic processes.

Cynthia Lightfoot (2003), who also uses a constructivist perspective of self and identity, conducted research that explored children’s fictional narratives and “aesthetic activity”, which she defines as a kind of fictional story. Lightfoot and her colleagues collected fictional stories from elementary, high school and college students so that they could then conduct external analysis of each child’s story and, hence, each child through the evaluation, definition and categorization of their individual narratives. She categorized children’s narratives by labelling them as being progressive (cohesive conclusion), stable (no transformation theme) or regressive (unravelling, incoherence), and by noting how created characters were placed temporally and in relation to a child’s own conception of self (p. 27). Lightfoot’s research is reminiscent of narrative-based attachment work, in that, by categorizing

a child's stories based on characteristics and themes, one can reveal a child's perspective of self in context, and the life realities which are masked under explicit layers of aesthetics. Using the notion of "aesthetic" expression as fictional storytelling, as did Nalbantian (1994), Lightfoot demonstrates the ways in which narrative imaginings are directly, if abstractly, related to the facts we un/consciously hold to be true.

Besides Lightfoot's work, there is also research which explored how art was used to express emotions and life realities, in order to facilitate further self-understanding, in an educational setting. For instance, using a hermeneutical methodology and Kolb's experiential learning model of picture analysis, Marjo Räsänen (1993) focused on her student's experiences as a starting point for aesthetic understanding. The point of her research was to strengthen her assertion that, through art, a child could develop a stronger sense of self and refine both her own understanding of self, the emotions, experiences and memories which compose it, and her identity in relation to the outside world.

Recalling Dewey's (1934) "triadic relationship" of aesthetic learning, Räsänen stated that the "role of experience is emphasized in the triangle of the artist, the work and the responder (where) the reception-aesthetic point of view becomes the main point." (p. 73) She argued that, through a dialogue concerning visual artwork, a person uses her own experiences which are based on self-reflection, and this process accentuates the meaning of sharing in a group, combining two realities—one of the group's dynamics and one of the individual's personal experience:

In a dialogue with works of art and other people, we increase our picture of the world and increase our knowledge about ourselves. In this dialectical process, where I and the world outside are in interaction, both parts are changing. (Räsänen, *Ibid*, p. 74)

This quote by Räsänen sums up what I have attempted to argue in Part II of my literature review. The concept was meant to not only help children to learn more about themselves, but to also affect the ways in which they viewed the social world; expression of self is proposed to be a social act.

The therapeutic and educational potential of aesthetic life narratives as an educational research concept is supported by narrative and aesthetic work being performed in school, research and formal therapeutic settings. Processing, expressing and sharing life narratives and the emotions a child assigns to these through various art media in a social space can facilitate access to unknown aspects of self, as well as encourage reflection of their relationship to the emotions and stories contained in the artwork. To engage in a simultaneous process of narrative construction, storytelling and art-making can be seen to help children explore the space between what they do and do not know about themselves, while also allowing them to share their stories with others while maintaining interpretive control over what they expressed in a social space.

Yet, while many educational theorists advocate “child-centred” focus in which a student’s life experiences and perspectives are broadly integrated into the body of knowledge discussed by the class, there is little research focusing upon the particular processes of individual children. As a result, I have drawn additional support from literature situated in therapeutic frameworks in order to further explore the ways

in which children's different worlds may affect the ways in which they participate in expressive educational processes. In this way, as McLeod (2004) argues, the individual lives of children are contextualized in wider socio-cultural theories; my research is presented as a realistic perspective on how the philosophy of inspirational theorists like Dewey and Freire can actually be applied in educational practice and used by different individual children.

As I tested out my aesthetic life narrative research concept in a Scottish primary school classroom, which I will again share in Chapter Four's reflexive research narrative, I encountered personal revelations while gathering children's perspectives concerning the short-term intervention in which the concept was embodied. For I discovered that my social theories did not provide me with the language to speak of and explore the complexity involved in my research relationship with individual 9 year-old children, as well as with the class as a social body. As a social science researcher, I found that I had to consume an entirely new set of literature that reached across various therapeutic disciplines. I used literature based in psychology and child development so that I could better articulate the intersection between a child's home world and that of school. By doing so, I could further explore the particular ways in which each co-researcher used the educational processes and roles introduced to them. Thus, the next section will present literature that served as my primary resource for my analysis of what occurred when I applied aesthetic life narratives in a short-term educational intervention.

Part III: Psychological Tools of Analysis

Introduction

In Part I of my literature review, I discussed my ontological position, and looked at the ways in which language and communication, as well as the lives of children, affect and shape the progressive and oppressive nature of a classroom experience. Meanwhile, the education studies introduced in Part II demonstrate that storytelling and art can serve as effective pedagogical methods that have the potential to create a personally-relevant learning experience for each child. Yet, what effect do such communicative processes have on their extra-school life? How do personal relationships affect students' expressive process and the stories they tell in class? Which stories do children choose to share, and which do they keep to themselves? Why? These are the questions I pursued in my research, but, in order to answer them, I found that I had to once again draw from therapy-based literature in order to support an intervention driven by and contextualized in a social educational framework.

In Part III, I present a general overview of attachment theory. This literature helped me to explore how interactive exploration in an educational context can serve as a transitional space between inner and outer worlds, a bridge between the conscious and unconscious, while the ways in which a child emotionally, cognitively and physically uses such a space can be understood with reference to their early and ongoing attachment relationships. In doing so, I argue that a child's ability to explore a new space is based upon her foundational conception of the world at large. However, her foundational framework can also be

simultaneously changed through her interaction with the world at large. Thus, while home life is vital, the world of education is also likely to play a significant role in a child's development of self.

Introduction of Internal Working Model

The foundation of attachment theory is based upon the idea that the interactive roles of caretakers in a child's life, especially the role of the mother, are the primary and initial determinant of a child's early emotional development and coherent concept of self. Bowlby (1982/1969) presented the idea of the working model of self as being developed through a child's conscious and unconscious idea of how "acceptable or unacceptable" they are in the eyes of their caretakers to whom they have formed attachment (p. 236). Through interaction with attachment figures, a child begins to anticipate their caretakers' accessibility and responsiveness to their expressed needs, and the likeliness that they will or will not respond appropriately. This learned prediction helps a child decide whether they should turn to them for support, or if it is a futile, or even harmful, mode of action.

Bowlby's attachment behaviour was originally based on the idea that a child feels their proximate primary figure to be better equipped to deal with the world at large, and will provide an appropriate response to the child's expressed needs which will allow them to once again feel safe and protected against external (and even internal) threat (Bowlby, 1988, p. 27). If a child's instinctual need for comfort and reassurance is consistently met by their caretakers, they are able to develop a secure form of dependency upon their attachment figures, which will help to healthfully shape their concept of self in relation to

others. Bowlby's working models—often multiple models that operate relationally in concurrent and analogous, or in segregated and conflicting ways—shape a child's perception of self and the ways in which a child believes they are perceived in the eyes of others. These working models inform and guide children's sets of behaviour while interacting with others and encountering various situations. Upon my reading of this literature, I felt that these models could be seen as regulating aspects of self.

Hinde (1982) referred to the attachment system as being continuously active, as a “theoretical organization for the forces controlling attachment and exploratory behaviour” (cited in Seifer and Schiller, 1995, p. 148). A child who possesses a secure mental representation of her attachment figure as being available and responsive, or a “secure base” from which to operate (Ainsworth 1963; Ainsworth, et al. 1978; Bowlby 1982/1969, 1988), is notionally better prepared to regard the world as a safe place in which to venture and explore. However, for those children who are not reassured by the knowledge they are protected from threat, the world can appear to be an unsafe place and thus not especially conducive to exploration, making “play”, for instance, more inhibited, or causing play to serve a different purpose and become a redefined experience (Cassidy, 2008, p. 8). In this way, a child's ability to engage and participate in both expression and reflection within a strange context with an unfamiliar character, as in my project, could be seen as strongly influenced by their attachment relations with parent figures.

Bowlby (1973, 1988) felt that the quality and openness of parental communication were key elements in the transmission of

internal working models between parent and child. In the hierarchy of attachment relationships, a child is likely to seek reassurance from one primary attachment figure, usually the mother, but, in her absence, a secure child is more likely to feel able to turn to another known attachment figure, preferably one who is familiar and known, for the child has grown to expect reassurance from the adults in his immediate world. Children with responsive and caring parents are likely to develop a secure base, which will enable them to be better prepared to cope with life difficulties in a positive way, while children who have been neglected, abused, and/or rejected by their caretakers learn early on that it is perhaps unsafe or futile to reach out, to appear vulnerable, or to engage in human interaction. If a child learns to anticipate a lack of response, or a hurtful response, from his attachment figures, he will begin to organize his sense of self accordingly: he may stop turning to attachment figures in times of need and turn inwards, or detach from a sense of need altogether.

Attachment theorists suggest that, without receiving adequate physical and emotional care from a caretaker, a child may not be provided with a model by which he himself can develop characteristics like sensitivity to others, empathy, and other interactive qualities. Early relationships may be seen as providing children with a range of characteristics from which they can draw—a bank of resources, which are available to them for later use. At the same time, some children who have not received adequate care from their attachment figures may find another path of interaction that adequately satisfies their needs, and find other models to learn from.

Dallos (2007) discusses the ways in which a child comes to develop a cognitive representation of episodes they have experienced—it is a child's memories of experiences which shape their predictions and expectations of the way in which they are perceived in the world; an experience creates a kind of script that guides a child in negotiating their being in context. It follows that a child's personal narratives of self-development are entangled and exchanged with the stories embodied and conveyed by parental figures. Dallos argues that a child's scripts are likely to be “local and specific”, composed of their episodic memories (p. 63), and, therefore, the stories a child tells about their life are intimately connected to the layers of experiences and memories produced by a child's relationship with attachment figures. The communicative relationship between child and parent can be seen to produce a child's initial notion of being in context and the possibility of autonomous personal transformation. In addition, if a child is able to engage in supportive and interactive communication with attachment figures, they are more likely to engage in exploration and further human interaction (Ainsworth et al. 1978; Bowlby, 1988). At the same time, it feels necessary to point out that a child's ability or motivation to “transform” can be based on the lack of early and consistent parental support. In my past experience, I saw how children who coped with incredibly difficult family situations disowned the identity they seemed destined to own and became something else. Regardless of what transformation looks like, it is part of an active negotiation of a child's early relationships with the potential of new ways of being.

Conscious, Unconscious and Physiological Processes

Fonagy (1995) and colleagues (Fonagy et al., 2004/2002) sought to move beyond strict classification found in attachment theory, and explore an individual's core capacity, or reflective function, and the ways in which this centralized multi-faceted faculty operates in relation to children's various attachment behaviour (Slade, 2008, p. 64).

Reflective function is described as a skill developed and influenced through the many relationships, social networks and contexts—immediate and distant—a child experiences, perceives and interacts with, which incorporate their emotions, responses, and the internal and external expectations they have developed over time. It is a skill that may only be present and utilizable in certain context-character-dependent situations and, thus, can be presented as situational, and not as part of general or normative function capabilities (Fonagy et al., 2004/2002, p. 60). Yet, this unevenly applied skill can be seen as a child's efforts to adapt to different contexts and characters, and, in some sense, present a kind of unified front to the world and to self, as the situations the child faces are not placed on a flat plane, but upon a landscape of mountains and canyons. In other words, a child engages in a continuous process of adaptation as they face different situations which may call for distinct coping strategies.

Fonagy et al. (2004/2002) formally translate Bowlby's internal working model into a malleable unconscious system of action, which guides the ways in which a child continues to regulate her emotion in relation to others. Yet, while the home environment has a primary influence upon a child's initial concept of self, their working model is an

evolving idea—one that has the potential to shift and move over time. In this way, I argue that the role of the conscious and unconscious mind, or what a child is and what a child is not aware of, are likely to both play a role in the regulation and construction of relational and dynamic self.

Emotions in Attachment Theory

In this section, I elaborate further upon what is referred to in the attachment field as affect regulation, or what I refer to as emotion management/regulation, which has become an expansive area of focus in the attachment field. Once again, while acknowledging arguments based on the distinctions between, for example, “narrative” and “story”, and “aesthetics” and “art”, I also do not engage in a differentiation between emotions and affects, due to the constraints of this thesis. Affects have long been a focus of various therapeutic disciplines, but now, reflecting and perhaps instigating current cultural thought in the educational field, as discussed in the final part of this literature review, emotions are the focus of various areas of developing research in the psychological and counselling field, and have been subsequently brought into the forefront of thought (Magai 2001, 2008/1999; Mayne and Bonnano, 2000). As feminism and the politics of caring developed and strengthened in the area of academic research, the notion of data production has even come to be seen as an emotional co-construction, which “requires both researchers and those with whom they react to deploy a wide range of skills to which emotional life is integral.” (Bondi, 2005, p. 236) Emotions are now widely regarded to be an inextricable aspect of the creation of knowledge. However, while the social perception of emotions has apparently evolved to some extent,

affecting academic research and educational policies, an individual's ability to engage with their emotions can be limited by more than the changing cultural tide.

In the therapeutic education movement, emotions are now a curricular subject; their expression is classified as a learnable skill and part of the new embodied learning approach of the whole child movement. Sarbin (2003) argues that emotions are not necessarily illogical or obscure constructs. Their presence can be seen as a symptom of an individual's familiarity with emotional expression—if a child is not accustomed or encouraged to disclose her feelings, or if she is not regularly supported in her attempts to do so, it is unlikely she will know of ways in which to express herself emotionally. Therefore, while the effort to educate the emotional self is a delicate enterprise, it seems evident that a child's ability to and comfort with expressing their emotions can be seen as a consequence of their historical experience with doing so. As such, the ways in which children engage in emotional education is inextricably interrelated to the ways in which they have previously engaged in emotional expression/exploration of self in their other contexts.

The realm of emotion management is dedicated to looking at the ways in which we organize and communicate our emotions in relation to our life realities, memories, and experiences and how these reflect the coping mechanisms we use to deal with our past and ongoing lives (for example, see Mikulincer and Shaver, 2001, 2003, 2008; Cassidy and Berlin, 1994; Shapiro and Levendosky, 1999; Fonagy et al., 2004/2002). Emotion regulation can be referred to as a “constructive coping strategy”; a secure individual is able to recognize and resolve an

emotional response produced by a situation or event through a recognition and reappraisal process (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2008). In this way, a person does not suppress or deny emotions, but can work to disassemble their negative influence through problem-solving, compromising, and expressing them through open discussion with attachment figures (Clark, Shaver and Abrahams, 1999). The often overwhelming nature of emotions can then be muted and, in a way, rationalized as a something over which one can implement a measure of conscious control.

Furthermore, the ability to assess, evaluate and express one's emotional state, can be seen as a positive sign of a secure sense of self (Bradford, Feeney and Campbell, 2002; Mikulincer and Nachshon, 1991). However, for those who are not confident in their ability to effectively regulate their emotions, they are likely to dread them out of fear that the triggering of emotional states will resurrect memories, thoughts, behaviours and "unwanted attachment needs" (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2008, p. 519). For these children, it may seem more effective to block emotions entirely in order to preserve the current peaceful state of false and feigned control in order to redefine a more "workable" reality in relation to caretakers (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2008, p. 519).

Yet, while a child's thoughts can be explained in logical terms—in other words, it makes sense that a child does not want to feel something that she knows will hurt her—the decision and ability to "block" emotions is often an unconscious process. As the attachment system can be deactivated in order to preserve a child from experiencing the pain of neglectful and abusive interactions with parental figures, the emotional system can also be blocked in order to similarly prevent

emotions that could potentially allow a memory, a remnant of an otherwise deadened reality, to slip through and shake the foundations of what can be regarded as a more safe state of being.

Fonagy et al. (2004/2002) argue that being “conscious of one’s affects, while remaining within the affective state” (p. 96), not only allows us to constructively cope with our emotional responses, but to recognize and comprehend the spectrum of emotions we may experience at any one time. However, once again, the ability of a child to expand their understanding of self is contingent upon his ability or desire to acknowledge and own his emotional self. In this way, a child who should come upon emotions he was not aware of through aesthetic expression may not be able or willing to recognize or include them. For this contingency would necessarily require negotiation with a lifetime’s experience with being received as an emotional being, and would not simply result from a conscious decision to simply “participate” in, for example, an emotionally expressive research project.

Open Communication: Home and School

A child’s ability to engage in emotional expression may be first developed in their home environment with attachment figures, but a child’s domestic experience does not preclude the potential affect/effect of an educational context. While communication is an essential aspect of an educational context, the languages and form in which communication is presented is important as to the therapeutic, ethical and/or progressive aspect of the act. As discussed in the first part of this review, communication in a social environment can be a liberating and potentially exposing action, as we cannot necessarily control the way in

which our audience will react and how this will affect us. However and because of this, we can attempt to predict the ways in which others will respond, based on our historical experience with audiences, and adjust ourselves accordingly; for example, we can limit our communication or present a “false” self (Winnicott, 1960). What we expect from communicative reception is developed through our early experiences.

Bretherton (1995) referenced Bowlby’s (1973) insistence upon how open communication instigated by parental attachment figures regarding working models—in essence, the emotions, perceptions, beliefs and opinions in relation to one’s context—can effect a child’s idea of how such conceptions may be altered and modified. A child’s confidence or positive expectations with communicating self can be due to the nature of their experience with doing so in their home environment. At the same time, Bretherton and Mullholland (2008) cite the potential importance of close relationships that take place outside of the home, in that, despite the detrimental impact of a child’s insecure attachment with parent figures and a further lack in psychological explanation as to how this may occur, individuals may still develop a secure relational self as long as “the individual has had an opportunity to learn that experiences of rejecting or inconsistent caregiving do not define his or her self-worth.” (p. 116) It is within this indefinable space of agency education theorists like John Dewey and Paolo Freire have operated, as they wrote about the affective impact schooling can have upon a child’s life. While home life is significant, a child’s other contexts can also play a potentially pivotal role in their emotional development. The literature presented here has served to supplement the ideas of social philosophers who idealize the rights of the universal

child, by offering ideas as to how particular children may make use of communicative and expressive processes in a social setting. For education is not distinct from the private worlds of children, but presents a different environment in which to apply and further negotiate their home experiences and ways of being.

Part IV: Research Context

Therapeutic Education

Introduction

In the final section of this literature review, I provide an example of the ways in which the educational and therapeutic notions I have discussed in the previous three sections have been merged in contemporary school programmes. In doing so, I also look at the context in which my project was implemented, the ways in which power can be exercised through the recognized use or exclusion of emotions in the educational realm, and how emotional self and therapeutic notions have been “mainstreamed” into Scottish public education as part of the whole child movement. While there is progressive potential in having children come to further understand themselves as simultaneous emotional and rational beings, there is also great risk in attempting to teach and evaluate the emotional self in an educational context in which standardized measurements and educational standards are the norm. At the same time, to recognize the emotional self as an inextricable part of the educational process is, I argue, progress in itself. For this reason, I conclude my literature review with a response to Ecclestone and Hayes’ *The Danger of Therapeutic Education*, which is a piece of work

dedicated to arguing against the explicit education of the emotional self. I argue that, while there is in fact danger in evaluating the emotional self in a social space, the ways in which we define the child as vulnerable being or active agent, as well as the use of a critical awareness of the ways in which such programmes are implemented, are key determinants as to the potential progressive or disempowering aspects of emotional education programmes.

Emotional Expression through “Empowerment” in Modern Education

In the past twenty years, the world of education has naturally evolved. Following the United Nations Rights of the Child (1989), governmental and organizational policies have been adapted and developed to embody the concept of the contemporary child. The notion of the “whole child”, which focuses upon the development of the emotional, moral, social and intellectual faculties, has produced policies intended to empower children. As a result, new roles in which children can exercise their renewed recognition through this politicized educational process have been created. Yet, the social realities of schools are riddled with financial concerns and teachers who have been trained to meet the standards of different educational policies. Simultaneously, child-focused policies are transformed through the distinct and collective lives of all those involved in its implementation; thus, the practicality of new educational legislation is always limited by the constraints of everyday life. In theory, and in my view, whole child policies are progressive, but it is, as always, in their application where the practical effects of their idea transpires, as Dunlop (1984) stated,

“There has always been a conflict between the ideals of good schools and many of the realities of the societies they served.” (p. 115)

Scottish Curriculum and the Child

The social contemporary definition of the child is evident in the new Scottish national curriculum, and in the ways in which this curriculum strongly influenced the practical shape of my research structure and implementation. In 2000, the Scottish government introduced the Education (Scotland) Act, which provided that "education should be directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential" and that "due regard, so far as is reasonably practicable, should be paid to the views of the child or young person in decisions that significantly affect them, taking account of the child or young person's age and maturity" (Curriculum Review Group, 2004). The need to ensure children's perspectives were included in decisions affecting them is present and shows a recognized responsibility of the state to make efforts to involve children in such political and educational processes. Subsequently, through the National Debate on Education conducted in 2002, the Scottish Executive undertook an extensive consultation of the Scottish people on their views regarding the state of national school education. While, many people claimed that they valued and wanted to keep many aspects of the current curriculum, some also made compelling arguments for changes to ensure all our young people achieve successful outcomes and are equipped to contribute effectively to the Scottish society and its economy, both now and in the future.

Therefore, in November 2004, the Scottish Executive formally introduced Curriculum for Excellence, or, as it is commonly referred to, “CfE”—a redesign of the National Curriculum, which was to be implemented through multiple building stages. According to this redesign, the goals of education were to create successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective social contributors through a holistic and “whole school” approach. In the curriculum’s 2007 expectations and proposed outcomes contained in the curriculum’s overview, *Health and Wellbeing Across Learning: Responsibilities of All*, therapeutic notions and a critical approach to evaluating self in context seem apparent; for example, through participating in this curriculum, a child can expect to establish connections to others and to the outside world, engage in a reflection of relative self in context, conduct personal assessments, recognize the responsibility of adults to “look after” and “listen to (one’s) concerns”, and attain the development of “physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing and social skills” (see Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), 2009a, p. 1). The draft experiences and outcomes focus upon both the breadth and depth of learning, emphasizing the reality that each child comes from their individual familial and community context and, subsequently, will approach learning in various ways.

In this material, the new social definition of the “whole, complex and capable” child was now to be generally taken up as part of standardized policy. For instance, every area in the curriculum is to be introduced through a Health and Wellbeing approach. In CfE draft outcomes and overviews, the emotional, social and physical self are addressed independently and united, so as to give the impression that

although a child may be composed of different “areas” of being, these are also mutually dependent and equally significant. In addition, according to the draft outcomes, it is the responsibility of the schools to recognize and address difference, embracing flexibility, innovation, coherence and relevance.

The curriculum material also states that its implementation requires the construction of learning environments which are challenging and enjoyable, meeting the needs of all learners and taking into account individual and /or community contexts. In doing so, the educational space described through CfE documents defines Winnicott’s (1960) notion of a facilitating environment; for example, in introducing this material, the Health and Wellbeing publication states that the development of the whole child in a learning context should be “positively developed by fostering a safe, caring, supportive, purposeful environment that enables the development of relationships based on mutual respect.” (LTS, 2009b) In this way, children may internalize their teachers’ and classmates’ “whole” regard of them, apply others’ perception to themselves and, in turn, see themselves as simultaneous emotional, social and cognitive beings.

Currently, Scottish primary schools are in the midst of implementing draft outcomes of this redesign initiative, which is also meant to reduce overcrowding in the curriculum and to provide each child with more choices and space in which to learn. A theme in this new educational movement is taken from the therapeutic belief that a child’s ability to effectively navigate through their formative years is strongly dependent on their ability to explore and understand their own complex conceptions of self. CfE, in theory, promotes educational

programmes that support the development of individual thinkers who are aware and involved in the construction of both themselves and the world in which they perceive themselves to be. It regards children as being capable of experiencing and designing their own learning experience, and being able to contribute to it.

For instance, in the early and first stage of the Art and Design portion of the Expressive Arts area (see LTS, 2009c), the goals for each student are as follows:

- Through natural curiosity, exploration and imagination, I have worked on my own and with others to solve design problems. (EXA 006GH)
- By working through a process, I can communicate how I have used exploration and imagination to solve design problems related to real-life situations. (EXA 108H)

The theme of working independently and with others in a creative and exploratory way, and utilizing one's own personal experiences to do so, is seen throughout this curriculum. The child is regarded to be an active agent, and a child's life is seen to be directly relevant to the educational process. Interestingly, the notion of freedom is also incorporated into the curriculum; for instance, the draft goal for the early stage of dance is as follows:

- I have had the freedom to choose and explore ways that I can move rhythmically, expressively and playfully, discovering how to control my body and how to use space and resources creatively. (EXA 007K, LTS, 2009d)

In every area, the curriculum embodies the idea that a child is free to find her own way in a supportive environment. The emotional and personal aspect of learning is emphasized throughout the draft outcomes and primary outcomes as being “a sense of personal achievement”,

ideally making a child's educational experience inclusive and personally relevant.

Educating the "Whole Child"

In his idealizing of the primary characteristics of "emotional education", Dunlop (1984) identified encouraging "emotional autonomy" to be the most important, in the sense that, while teachers are to treat children in a serious and respectful manner which facilitates the process, they are to insist that the children will "only find the answers by looking within themselves." (p. 110) In this way, Dunlop argued that conscious and rational choice does not, in itself, motivate learning and social responsibility, "The first thing to remember is that the 'self' who is to be encouraged to rule itself is not the will, or the 'reason', or the intellect or any other partial function or activity of the person, but the whole stratified person himself." (p. 108) Dunlop's notion of whole child can now be seen as a significant part of Scotland's new educational approach, bringing the idea of emotional education into the forefront.

Mathews (2006) argues this approach, which he terms as "educating the whole person", can help education fulfil its responsibility to prepare children for a changing world by incorporating broad characteristics of the human condition. As an integral aspect of this kind of teaching, Mathews (*Ibid*) refers to Lamb's (2001) focus on the importance of teachers recognizing the ongoing lives of individual children, and where school fits into their world:

First it means that the educator has to recognize that the child has a personal history that she brings to the learning situation... Secondly the education of the whole child obliges the educator both to recognize and, to some

appropriate degree, address cases of discontinuity and distinctiveness in children. (cited in Matthews, 2006, p. 15)

In order to truly respect and connect with students, a teacher and school utilizing a whole child approach are to be aware and take consideration of the worlds a child may come from and which they are continuously shaped through. They should also work to raise collective awareness of a child's broader socio-cultural context (Cummins, 1994) and encourage children to assume a critical approach to their learning process.

The wholeness argument recognizes children to be sources of education, rather than serving as empty containers. At the same time, the ways in which wholeness is implemented in the current educational context should be a careful and broad enterprise on both a cultural and individual level. For there can be practical complications with this movement's application in an environment where schools are under pressure to meet proposed requirements. Teachers may not have the time to incorporate children's lives if there simply is not official space designated for children's lives in the curriculum. Due to such constraints as standards, lack of time, excessive quantity of imposed content, schools may feel forced to separate facets of self into categories to be taught in a fragmented way, once again delegating the rational, or cognitive, to one and the emotional, or affective, to another, creating a fractured conception of self (Matthews, 2006, p. 15). The idea of a "whole person" may as well run the risk of having children believe that there is "completeness" in being human, that personhood can be a finished product, and not an ongoing fluid process (McLaughlin, 1996, p. 11). In this way, the unravelling of personal meaning can be defined

by institutional norms, and not through a creative autonomous development.

In addition, if self-development is now a primary goal of education, and emotions, now officially regarded to be a vital aspect of self and “being”, are assigned as official curricular material, the emotional self is potentially subject to the same measurements and goals applied to general curricula. The fact that school assessments are largely conducted in isolation, without consideration of individual children’s socioeconomic or cultural background, is a major point of contention as to what exactly schools are, out of context, really measuring (Snow, 2006). For these reasons, the formal integration of emotions into mainstream language and into the educational policies of governmental movements has proven to be a controversial and sensitive endeavour. For emotions do not work like mathematics. Defining the correct way to feel seems immensely more personal than teaching the right numbers to reach at the end of calculations. Therefore, the ways in which governmental bodies go about creating standardized instruments of measurement and goals for what has largely been an idea explored through moral philosophy demands an ongoing detailed and critical look.

Educating the Emotional Self

A child’s self-esteem, in the wholeness view, can be seen as explicitly affected by a child’s success with balancing worlds or ways of being, and the extent to which education assists children with integrating various notions of self. The notion of self development in educational settings is now a very popular and common focus of research projects

working with children (Hattie, 1992). For instance, some projects focus on the role of perceived gifts and talents upon a child's academic performance (Marsh, Chessor, Craven and Roche, 1995), while others evaluate the effectiveness of self-concept interventions upon particular populations, such as those with learning disabilities (Elbaum and Vaughn, 2001). While some research seeks to find a consistent and effective method present in self-enhancement research (Craven, Marsh and Burnett, 2003), other research is more interested in children's own formative assessment in an educational context (Miller and Lavin, 2007). However, despite variation in focus, each project argues that a child's situated and relational self, combined with a child's ability to perceive the other and to adapt socially in response, can be seen as a primary indicator of a child's ability to learn (Dweck, 2000). It is not only one's external behaviour, but the internal processes that guide the behaviour—the external and internal, conscious and unconscious—which are now part of the formal curriculum. It is now popular to think that a child's social and emotional “intelligence” both play a role in the benefits a child will accept through education.

However, for educators and practitioners, this is not a new idea. It has long seemed quite apparent that a child's ability to learn is affected by the way(s) in which a child feels about one's self (Cohen, 2001). There is an inherent emotionality involved in learning and teaching (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1999/1983), and the ways in which emotion and power work in the act of educating is a primary factor in its effectiveness. However, when a child's wellbeing becomes the official responsibility of a school, the question of power exercised in teacher/student relations is articulated in the details of the transaction.

Whilst this therapeutic turn in education can be seen as a turn for the better, it also produces serious implications for teachers and children on very personal levels of which we must continue to be aware. For example, Daniel Goleman (1996, 1999) took the notion of emotional intelligence and translated it to be a skill that can be measured in the standardized ways in which intellect is measured—through an Emotional Quotient test or “EQ” test. Although we can easily measure success in other areas, it is only when someone lacks affective “ability” that emotions are brought to attention. To implement standardized evaluations of emotional deficiency is where education can become a potentially harmful, rather than therapeutic, instrument in relation to a child’s overall sense of wellbeing.

Emotionality of Education

Boler (1999) asked, “What is it about institutionalized power relations that construct isolation and powerlessness?” (p. 141), and this question can be seen to frame the current debate in education regarding the whole child movement and the divergent ways in which children can be conceived by teachers, organizations and state bodies. The emergence of educational curricula focusing upon an explicit evaluation of emotion management and development can help children as a group to create a collective sense of ownership. A child can learn that she is not alone with her feelings. At the same time, defining emotional control as now being a measurable skill involves the handling of something extremely personal in an extremely standardized way.

For it creates the possibility that children who are unable to express emotions in the ways prescribed can be seen as possessing a

kind of learning deficiency (Boler, 1999, p. 103), while the ability to cope with these feelings is still intimately woven with a child's historical experiences with control and responsiveness in interaction with others. A child could feel relatively powerless in his attempts to manage himself. Therefore, in response to this seemingly affective turn in educational policy, it is important to ask, as Boler argued, if the emotional realm is now recognized to be a site of official education, what can this mean for the individual children "taught" emotional literacy, and in what ways can educators and practitioners work to sustain and recognize each child's self as agent in the process. While John Dewey viewed life as education, the question that surfaces is what life is education portraying, and what kind of education is best intended to represent emotional life.

In the whole child movement, emotionality is an inherent part of the educational process, whether it is part of formalized curricula or continues as a kind of defining characteristic. As argued earlier in this chapter, a truly democratic classroom is one that engages in interactive exchanges inspired by the intimate realities of both emotion and intellect, formally bringing all facets of self into the classroom. Saying that, the role of affective education in schools, as with all education, is a "hit-or-miss undertaking" and limited by many factors; for instance, the "innate limitations of pupils", a child's early maternal relationship, oppositional idealization of school and the possibility that, regardless of the form or fashion of a teacher's efforts, some children will simply be more receptive to features of affective education (Dunlop, 1984, p. 11). Yet, beyond its potential or questionable effectiveness, the question for some is whether the education of emotion should even be an official part

of the curriculum, or should remain an implicit aspect of the educational process.

“The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education”

As with any educational initiative, there are potential and particular dangers that lie in the integration of the whole child movement into schools. Yet, the driving force behind some critiques of the movement is the question of whether the education of emotion should even be an official part of the curriculum, or should, rather, remain as an undeniable but unrecognized aspect of the educational process. In this final section of the literature review, I summarize and provide a response to critics of not only the implementation of therapeutic education, but the idea of the emotional self being recognized in education in any facet. Since Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) oppose or dismiss most aspects of the personal educational and therapeutic literature and ontology through which I contemplated, constructed, implemented and experienced my research project, it seemed appropriate to address them at this point in my thesis.

In his foreword to Ecclestone and Hayes’ (2009) controversial book *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education*, Frank Furedi asks, “Why has the curriculum become a political football that is always chopped and changed?” These authors follow on the footsteps of Furedi (2003, 2004), who, in a recent article posted in *The Australian*, argued that the “pursuit of happiness is personal”, and “therapeutic education encourages introspection, which distracts children from engaging with the world” (Furedi, 2007). According to Furedi, public policy established by the state should not advocate for the emotional state of

children—this is a matter for the world outside of school, and simply distracts children from the social world, creating self-obsessed individuals who have been taught to abandon intellect and reason.

My beliefs regarding the purpose of education being both a site of hegemonic reproduction and a forum for hope and progress have caused me to agree that no matter how much I may agree with the overall direction of therapeutic “movement” in public education, it still and certainly requires a thorough critical analysis. Not every programme advocating “empowerment” and “freedom through participation” is going to create what they advertise, and may, in fact, serve to further disassemble their possibility. And yet, my inherent disagreement with *The Danger of Therapeutic Education* is with the primary message Ecclestone and Hayes, as well as Furedi (2003, 2003, 2007), argue, which can be summed up in the following:

There is a growing orthodoxy that (students) want a more personally relevant and “engaging” education where adults and their peers listen to them. This view erodes subject disciplines and encourages a curriculum which assumes that topics and processes can only be engaging if they relate to the self. (2009, p. 63)

As with other critical educators and theorists, I disagree philosophically and essentially with the authors’ argument, based on my belief that awareness, reflection and communication help to increase our ability to understand not only ourselves, but also the ways in which we function in the social world and in our interaction with others.

The emotional education movement focuses upon the idea of interactive participation, which explicitly incorporates children’s perspectives as being an integral part of the educational process, in order to *interrupt* the education machine of reproduction, in order to bring a

child's world into the classroom and to make it personally relevant for a child. Is teaching children what to think that much different from teaching children how to feel? Is the intellect truly in binary opposition to emotion? This is a larger issue, recently revived in neurological and cognitive research (see Finger, 1994), and, notably, sustained in philosophical thought that extends throughout history and time.

While dominant views now seem to be moulded by a new cultural concern for children's overall wellbeing that has officially shaped educational practice on a large scale, Ecclestone and Hayes' claim that we are now "living at a time when ideas about what it means to be human, and political responses to those ideas, are no longer defined ideologically or politically but culturally" (p. 123) seems rather illogical. Culture has been inextricably entwined with the world of ideology throughout the history of education through socio-economic and racial assignment, through the differential treatment of women and the continuing exclusion of general sexuality from education. It is simply when our culture no longer reflects our own ideologies that we come to regard the power exercised by culture to be a sudden threat.

Ecclestone (2009) argues that the "emotional introspective focus and (the) expansion of counselling services throughout (education) also limits social justice based on optimism about human potential." (p. 151-2) However, as Loewenthal (2009) points out, therapeutic education does not have to promote individualism, but, rather, interpersonal relations and a sense of collective and relative being. For, before a child comes to understand the world around them, it seems sensible to first and simultaneously come to understand who they are in relation to it and to the human context in which they are living. To limit what they are to

explore, to focus upon only standards and objectives to measure themselves against and to restrain the space in which they are able to explore themselves can be regarded as a rather pessimistic view regarding a child's broad and complex potential, as House (2009) states, it is the "provision of *space* and unhurried *opportunity* (that) is crucial." (Emphasis in text, p. 164)

The heart of the debate concerning therapeutic or emotional education, in my opinion, lies in the question Ecclestone and Hayes ask readers to reflect upon: "What sort of child, young person, adult, what sort of *human being*, is presupposed in this policy or initiative?" (2009, Emphasis in text, p. 144) Similarly, Clark and Percy-Smith (2006) argue that we as adults must ask ourselves whether we see children as passive or active agents, and if context affects our perspective. Ecclestone and Hayes' basic premise is derived from their definition of a child as being a passive recipient in the educational process—children are helpless to the forces of schooling and, thus, "made vulnerable" by emotional education. In this way, the authors seem to hint at a dialectical relationship, a persistent static imbalance of control with only the schools able to exercise power over the children.

In response to Ecclestone and Hayes, the words of Freire once again seem appropriate, "We know ourselves to be *conditioned* but not *determined*." (Freire et al., 1998, Emphasis in text, p. 26) If educators support children in their brave exploration of self and everyday living through an ethical regard of the child as being a capable communicator with rational and emotional capacities, as well as affirm a child's knowledge as being intimately relevant to their own, they can play their part in a democratic exchange of being and stretch their perceived

authority to the edges of progressive possibility. It is up to each child to determine and define her own freedom in the progressive contexts educators attempt to introduce as part of emotional education or whole child curricula. Ecclestone and Hayes conclude with a response for their critics, “Don’t change the subject”, when it is their very definition of the child *as* “subject”, as the universalistic conception of child, in which their perspective finds its ground.

Ultimately, the battle over education comes down to our own personal convictions and philosophical interpretations of what life is all about, and what this means for the children we define and fix within our own map of being, as Greene (2007) beautifully argues in the following:

These are old and familiar questions for those of us involved in education. They have been posed on some level since the schools began facing industrialization and urbanization, along with the break-up of small, homogeneous communities; but they have become so familiar we are seldom aware of them. We ride off on our particular hobby horses in the conviction that the roads we took are the reliable ones, that our conceptions of democracy, equality, freedom and justice are correct, that our views on the growth of children and their nurture or their training are sound. Some of us do so in a kind of weariness. (p.1)

In response to critics like Ecclestone and Hayes, the foundation of a whole child approach can be seen as attempting to create a collaborative exchange between child and adult and a space in which children are free to be creative and explore an area that is not formally designated and a set of knowledge that is not already established. Whether this is what actually occurs in schools depends upon the people and contexts involved. At the same time, recognizing children as having souls, hearts, bodies and histories seems to be a more realistic premise upon which to base an educational plan.

Emotional education proposes the question of how the processes of emotional expression and life communication, contextualized in a supportive space, can be defined as “therapy”, and whether these processes can also be regarded as part of a regular healthy lifestyle. While individual children will make use of the support offered in various ways, influenced by their home contexts, I agree with Barrett and Trevitt (1991) in arguing that, regardless of outcome, it is the responsibility of schools to continuously attempt to provide a positive relational context. However, as Worley (2006) argues, I also feel that all children, and not just those exhibiting disruptive behaviour, deserve change or further affirmation in their educational experience in a facilitating and interactive context in which their lives serve as their own educational material to explore.

Combining the philosophy of education with the evaluative and descriptive processes of a formal therapeutic lens, such as, for instance, attachment theory, provides a well-rounded picture of how the personal is, in fact, political, and the emotional is an individual and social aspect of schooling. As Dewey (1938) argued, personal experiences are constitutive of inherently social factors. While attachment theory can be seen as implicitly embodied within the philosophy of Curriculum for Excellence, with its emphasis upon healthy relationships and relational self in supportive environments, it can also be used to conceptualize effective educational approaches. Not so we can categorize every child as secure or insecure, but to formally acknowledge that each child already brings an entire lifetime of education with her into the classroom. It is the responsibility of schools to provide a supportive and interactive environment which serves as a positive example of how each

individual child can be regarded, without expecting them to match a universalistic definition of how a child should feel and what a child should be.

Literature Review Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the literature I selected, reviewed and applied from various areas of research and thought situated in social science, educational philosophy, therapy-based approaches and psychological disciplines which supported the project I created and implemented. I offered the educational philosophy that supported my epistemological framework, as well as inspired my project's design, as part of a communication-based educational context. I argued that storytelling through aesthetic form provides a more comprehensive vocabulary for children to use in their emotional expression, as well as additional space of interpretation in which they can facilitate power as artist in an educational space. I also provided the theoretical basis I used to analyze what manifested in the research process through individual children's particular use of and relationship with the communicative processes introduced to them.

My project is contextualized in a debate concerning emotional education and the whole child movement. The changing context of education in Scotland and the particular ways in which these ideas were implemented came to define my research. In this thesis, I present my documentation of a short-term educational intervention to be a significant and original contribution to what is currently possible in the field of emotional education. Yet, the ideas I sought to implement in my

research were not new, as they were inspired by established philosophy that has guided progressive education for decades. I now go on to share the philosophical foundation of my research project, which developed and refined the methodological details of my conceptual application and influenced the particular curricular shape my research concept assumed. In addition, while I provided social space in which children could express and explore their personal experiences, I found that the research relationship we constructed through my philosophical design added a new dimension to the personal experiences we shared.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three: Philosophical Background and Methodological Approach

Phenomenology is a science of “beginnings”. The genuine beginner is an adept, not a novice. To begin, in this sense, is to start from the primordial grounds of evidence, from oneself as the centre (not the sum) of philosophical experience. Such self-centeredness is the opposite of philosophic *hubris*; it is a confession of humility: the admission that, unless the inquirer has turned to himself in full awareness of his life, he cannot claim to have sought, let alone found, the truth. (Natanson, 1973, Emphasis in text, p. 6)

Introduction

As I have argued in the past two chapters, there are inherent therapeutic elements involved in the act of educating through communication and interaction. In Chapter Three, I introduce the philosophies that resonated with my own beliefs and inspired the structure of my research project—namely, the defining characteristics of phenomenology and hermeneutics, and the ways in which they have been combined to create my research methodology, hermeneutic phenomenology. The ideas embodied by the philosophy helped me to define and make sense of defining characteristics of the whole child movement. For example, I explored the role of “well-being”—a primary objective of *Curriculum for Excellence* and the therapeutic education movement (see Loewenthal and House, 2009)—through what Heidegger intended when he conceptualized “being”. The philosophy introduced in

this chapter also guided my research process. The expansion of children's knowledge of self through communicative expression was based on the horizons of Gadamer, while Bachelard's emphasis upon the formative importance of one's notion of home widened the perimeters of my research. Furthermore, through my interpretation and use of this philosophy in my research project, I saw how my research relationship with the children as co-researchers created a particular dynamic that went beyond that which could be solely attributed to the curricular implementation.

My approach involved the use of a classroom social space in which my aesthetic life narrative curriculum was implemented, an individual interview space in which children gave their opinions of the short intervention and the expressive processes it introduced, as well as a second interview, in which children reviewed my interpretation of their experience and had the opportunity to engage in editing and/or affirmation of the representation. I found this approach led the research process itself to embody a therapeutic quality that would come to affect the experiences of both the children and myself in ways I had not anticipated. For, as Etherington (2001, 2004) demonstrates, a therapeutic effect can emerge through the particular way in which a researcher interacts with her participants and involves herself in the research process. As I described in Chapter One, I argue that the combination of perspectives can cause such an effect to occur through subjective interpretation of a change that facilitates further knowledge of self, particularly the emotional self. In this chapter, I outline the reflexive methodological approach I developed and used in my project, which can be seen as broadly based on Colaizzi's (1973, 1978) own approach,

which I customized in order to address the power dynamic between an adult researcher and each child co-researcher in my attempt to create and maintain a progressive and ethical educational space. Similar use of these philosophical ideas can be also found through techniques of re-presentation used in innovative narrative approaches (for example, Clandinin and Connelly, 1994; Denzin, 1997; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 1992, 2001; Speedy, 2008).

Using an interpretivist framework, I necessarily support the ontological perspective that there is not just one reality, but multiple realities that are constructed and can be altered by the knower (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). My epistemological stance can be summarized by my belief that knowledge does not address or consider what is real in absolute terms; rather, knowledge is only the best understandings and interpretations we as researchers have been able to construct, produce and analyze thus far. Thus, the best knowledge a hermeneutic phenomenologist methodology can produce is a constructed understanding of a phenomena, validated and confirmed by both participants and researcher. In this way, philosophy serves as the scaffold which supports each component of the research process as it incorporates interaction with a researcher's subjectivity and reflexive sense of self and the various interpretations constructed with and between participants. As such, in what follows, I discuss the philosophical perspectives that drove and moulded my research process.

Phenomenology: Overview of Philosophy and Practice

Husserl's Revelation

In my research design, I sought to create an idealized interactive and egalitarian space with the children. I envisioned creating a final research document that would, on my part, include my explicit personal assumptions, my own narrative process as the researcher, and the “philosophical basis from which my interpretation had occurred” (Allen, 1996, cited in Lavery, 2003). While Edmund Husserl’s scientific and logical focus upon objectivity in phenomenology contrasted with my need to explore the subjective, his desire to expand the responsibility of a researcher to engage in reflexivity inspired my own effort to do so in my project.

Regarded to be the primary founder of phenomenology, Husserl (1931, 2001/1970) advocated the essential need for critical conscious reflection by questioning the thought processes of human beings who are shaped by the world around us (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl argued that our empirical knowledge is embedded in our consciousness, and this affects the ways in which we see the world, and the ways in which we interact with others; in this way, consciousness is in a continual discourse between self and the world which self perceives (Lavery, 2003, p. 5). To Husserl, human beliefs and expectations contaminate our ability to collect data, for it is always shaded by our own subjectivity. Our inability as researchers to comprehend the ways in which we interpret the world around us forbids us from seeing data as it “is”, and limits our ability to discover that which contradicts the

consensual expectations. For Husserl, reason is not naturalized—it is developed through ideals, presuppositions and other subjective traits. To not acknowledge these, and to claim that human reason is, in itself, an objective endeavour is to engage in an irrational act or, to use his word, “absurdity” (Husserl, 2001/1970).

Yet, Husserl also believed objectivity must be attained in both natural science, and in the empirical field of psychology. As a result, he instigated the phenomenological tradition which seeks to reduce our data until it is stripped down to what he felt would be its objective essentiality. In his introductory book *Ideas*, Husserl (1931) applied his belief in the objective absolute when he argued that we are to “parenthesize” the world, or more strictly, our judgments concerning it in the form of an epoché. Husserl’s insight is that we often live our lives in an unquestioning sort of way, blindly taking part in the customary roles and behaviours we perform in our everyday life, as Cogan (2006) puts it, “We take for granted our bodies, the culture, gravity, our everyday language, logic and a myriad other facets of our existence.” (p. 10)

We accept our existence without question, and this acceptance is what keeps us in a kind of captivity. For Husserl and other phenomenologists, the epoché is a procedure whereby we no longer accept it—we “transcend” our empirical existence; it is the moment in the phenomenological reduction where we acknowledge our subjectivity, and step outside ourselves to engage in what can be seen as critical reflexivity. In this way, through conscious reflection upon self in context, we can come to understand our relative roles in relation to subjective self, and find a freedom in distinguishing self from the

identities we are assigned, facilitating our ability to access a more objective viewpoint. Yet, Husserl's focus upon ultimate meaning has led various academics to point out the possibility for misuse of Husserl's methodology in research (for example, Paley, 1997; Yegdich, 1999), as he felt the goal of research to be certain Truth.

As my own research was based on the power created through expression of subjective self, as well as the interpretive conclusions of a researcher, I fundamentally question the goal Husserl regarded to be vital. Yet, I still found great value in aspects of the phenomenological process he introduced. For, in order to bracket our subjective inclinations, we must first recognize and sort through our internality, judging what is our own, what we have inherited, and what we have attained in the moment. This in itself seemed to be a very intimate and subjective process, and this is what I wanted to convey to the children I worked with through my expressive aesthetic intervention: we can exercise power through exploring our empirical knowledge and the ways in which it shapes our understanding of our context and ourselves. While this is a point of contention amongst those who study his chronological conception of power, Taylor (1984) argued that Foucauldian power cannot exist without the notion of liberation. Thus, as I referred to this philosophy in conceptualizing my project, I came to define freedom as both an act and cause of power; we can only exercise power when we feel free to do so, and we are also able to find freedom through exercising power. In other words, freedom through the mediating act of power is actualized through a conscious recognition of the forces that shape us, which is simultaneously limited by our consciousness. Therefore, while Husserl argued that we should

recognize and detach ourselves from limitations and prejudice in order to attain objectivity, our freedom to do so is also limited by our reflexive awareness of what these limitations and prejudice might be.

I planned to utilize the idea of critical reflexivity in order to describe, explain and own what transpired through my significant affective role in the research process. Yet, Husserl would not approve of the reflexive use of self in research. While Husserl argued that we must bracket and discard our assumptions and beliefs, keeping them away from our research participants to avoid any infection or disruption of data, I drew inspiration from the ethnographic work of Etherington (2004) and personally felt that my subjectivity drove the project. If I were to discard my personal stake, I would no longer clearly see a point. If I was to remove my notion of self from the research process, the project would lose its meaning for me and, perhaps, would diminish potential meaning my research participants would be able to derive from our shared experience.

Heidegger's Phenomenology

Martin Heidegger followed in the footsteps of Husserl, but eventually distinguished himself from his predecessor's basic argument. Heidegger (1962/1927, 1978) introduced a more subjective and situational characteristic to the philosophy of phenomenology, which brought about the version of phenomenology to which I came to adhere. Heidegger did not believe that consciousness could be separated from an experience, but, rather, he felt consciousness to be a historically lived experience (LeVasseur, 2003). It is intimately contextualized into our fabric of being. We could never truly separate ourselves from any

interaction, for understanding is not a way we know the world, but a way that we are.

Heidegger shifted Husserl's focus on scientific essentialism to the particular lives of humans and how we interpret our roles in our social context. To Heidegger, we are stitched into the world. He wanted to focus on the complexity and intricacy of humans, and how we make sense of the world in which we live, and, in turn, how the world makes sense of us. According to Heidegger's emphasis upon the contextualized subjective and unified individual, we are able to create partial awareness of our biases, so that we may own and work from them, managing and even altering their effect, but we cannot detach from the forces which created them, nor simply set them aside. In this way, every understanding constructed in the research context is built upon those developed in our other life spaces, especially those created through and within our home contexts.

Phenomenology of Contexts

I was first fascinated with phenomenology while reading Gaston Bachelard's (1995/1958) *Poetics of Space*, in which he beautifully described the intimate ways in which our concept of home defines our concept of our lifeworld and our roles within it. In Bachelard's view, we are to discover the ways in which we are attached to various aspects of our home world, for it is the responsibility of a phenomenologist to decipher and explore our domestic preferences or, what Bachelard termed "shadings", of perspective:

For a phenomenologist, these shadings must serve as the first rough outlines for a psychological phenomenon. The shading is not an additional, superficial colouring. We should therefore have to say how we inhabit our

vital space, in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root, day after day, in a “corner of the world”. For our house is our corner of our world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word. (p. 4)

Bachelard argued for the vital importance our perception of home plays in our development of self in relation to the world we inhabit, as well as our perspective on the world itself. It is not enough for us to accept our ways of being; it is our responsibility to articulate and come to understand why we see the world in our particular fashion through our interpretation of our early domestic world. In this way, Bachelard argued that we must become cognizant of the familial forces which have shaped us. Our home world as a child, our first universe, and all that has come to compose it—life events, family members, possessions, play, communication, interaction—provide us with the material with which we navigate the world beyond.

After Bachelard’s influential book, phenomenology, which had been always primarily concerned with the human experience, turned to explicitly explore the specific roles context and “place” play in the human experience of one’s lifeworld (see Casey, 1993, 1997), and therefore inspired ample research focusing on the phenomenology of environment (for example, Barbey, 1989; Berleant, 1992; Ralph, 1976, 1993), the phenomenology of home (for example, Graumann, 1989; Boschetti 1990, 1993, 1995, Million 1994), phenomenology of the practice, experience and contexts of education (for example, Koukal, et al., 2002; van Manen, 1982, 1997, 2002) and even the combination of both (Seamon and Murgerauer, 1985; Sinclair 1994). While my project was inspired by the philosophy supporting this kind of

phenomenological research, and I was attempting to create understanding through language and context, it was only through my own application of these ideas where I saw how my project could serve as a general example of the phenomenological processes these other projects have elaborated upon. For, in my own research, I came to create experience within a new exploratory space in an educational environment through my research process which was directly impacted by the home environments of individual children.

Being in Context

As discussed above, Heidegger's notion of being was essentially contextual. This was expressed through his concept of *Dasein*, which can be interpreted as being-in-the-world, or, simply, human life. The ontology of *Dasein* incorporates relative and contextual terms, through which we as humans interpret and come to understand our role in the world, "'Being-in' (around world) an environment and 'Being-with' (with-world) others and with oneself (own-world), underlies all participation, engagement and concrete involvement with the world that is given in a person's immediate preoccupations and concerns." (Mills and Polanowski, 1997, p. 71)

According to Heidegger's belief, we are creatures in constant motion, engaging in stages of becomings and ongoing evolutions of what I interpret as "self". In this way, the complexity of human life is not constructed through a clear and solitary path of being, but can be seen as a complex network of interconnecting, simultaneous and often conflictual becomings or what I refer to in this thesis as "identities". According to my basic interpretation of Heidegger, it is through our

ability to realize and come to understand our layered subjectivity we can come to truly know ourselves and the experiences which influence our ways of interacting with others. In other words, our becomings are shaped by the world around us—we are products, but to come to recognize and decipher these modes of production is to engage in an act of consciousness and freedom. The process of aesthetic life expression was intended to not only communicate life narratives, but to reveal aspects of self previously unknown. In assuming the role of audience to their artwork, a child could explore the liminal space between self and subject and come to reflect upon and negotiate the product of their communication, expanding their consciousness of self. At the same time, the children's way of being in their home environment affected the ways in which they participated in the educational processes I introduced, as well as the way in which they used me as an external resource.

Heidegger argued that our potential construction of self cannot be extracted from its various contexts—what we become is dependent upon our life experiences. In this way, freedom is defined by our ability to reflect upon self as subject, and to ascertain the ways in which self has and continues to be formed through communication and context. Based on the notion of phenomenological being, my project was built upon the idea that reflective communication with oneself, continuous interaction of self with others, and an understanding of our experiences of relational self in context are, in essence, acts of freedom and, most importantly, serve to potentially broaden our consciousness of being—beliefs which I attempted to incorporate into my research concept and through my methodological design.

Hermeneutics: Overview of Philosophy and Practice

While I seek the “wild being” who exists outside textual representations, and comes into containment only under duress, I understand that no one exists outside a text and that text produces subjects. (Denzin, 1990, p. 213)

Using Multiple Subjective Interpretations

As can be inferred from the above quote, the communicative product of our expression becomes a subject—a tool for self exploration. At the same time, what is revealed is limited by the vocabulary constraints—the language—of its containment. In this section, I provide a short overview of the second half of my philosophical hybrid: hermeneutics. In a hermeneutical research endeavour, subjectivity plays an essential role in its development, as it did in Heidegger’s phenomenology, but it permits the exploration of subjectivity to also include *the ways in which* phenomena is described.

Hermeneutics is dedicated to the interpretation of languages and, ironically, it is a field of thought that has also defied a standardized description or explanation. Heidegger’s way of exploring consciousness and the evaluation of our interpretations, grounded in the contexts that shape them, occurred through a series of hermeneutic circles (Packer and Addison, 1989). When conducting research, a researcher will use her own “preconceptions and interpretations” (Denzin, 1997, p. 43) to interpret phenomena. In *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Hans Georg Gadamer (1977) expanded upon Heidegger’s notion of “hermeneutic circles” and applied it to the interpretation of various expressions, including text, verbal and any way in which thought could be

communicated. For Gadamer, the process of learning and understanding is an endless process, but, through our ongoing attempts to construct meaning through various rounds of interpretations we have the best chance of truly coming to understand the broadest truth of an experience.

As we continue in our attempts to understand, in our ability to consistently re-examine and make sense of the meaning, we derive through our interpretations and, most importantly, through approaching each re-evaluation with an open mind. For as our thinking progresses, we are most likely to develop as complete an understanding as we can achieve as subjective creatures. Gadamer (1998/1960) valued what he termed as “prejudices”, as he felt they were excellent records of the ways in which our multiple contexts and the identities they have produced have shaped us. In this way, by recognizing and exploring our prejudices, by not detaching from them, but using them to further develop our understanding, we might come to expand our thinking. In a research endeavour, awareness of our prejudices and of the ways in which they may impact the research process can be seen as the substance of reflexivity.

Capturing Temporal Subjectivity

Paul Ricoeur argued time shapes subjective meaning and, thus, qualitative research data can only attempt to capture a particular moment of interpretation, rather than an essential understanding of a phenomenon or experience. Ricoeur’s (1988) version of hermeneutics was roughly based upon Heidegger’s Dasein, and emphasized the way in

which our own sense of self is what can come to be revealed in our interpretations of objects:

What a reader receives is not just the sense of the work, but, through its sense, its reference, that is, the experience it brings to language and, in the last analysis, the world and the temporality it unfolds in the face of this experience. (Ricoeur, 1988, pp. 78-9)

As discussed in the quote above, a work does not only hold its creator's meaning, as well as its own meaning, but the meaning through which its readers interpret both the material and the rest of their lifeworld. It summons an audience member's contextualized being and the experiences through which it has been developed. Based on Heidegger's concept of layered realities and Gadamer's subjective use of hermeneutics, Ricoeur (1988) emphasized the temporal nature of meaning and interpretation and, as a result, he felt it vital that we "fix" temporal meaning in a certain time and space.

Interpretations evolve—the meaning of one day will change in its passage through another. As such, we must record our variable meaning and fasten it to time. In this way, we have not captured an object's essence, but have, in a way depicted our way of seeing it at a particular point in history. In developing my research methodology, I wanted to ensure that my interpretation of the perspectives a child offered one day were re-presented for their review on another in order to negotiate a more complete understanding of their educational and research experience. As the meaning and interpretation of a child's aesthetic life story could only be expressed through a temporal framework, based on what she is able to see in a particular moment, the research data was to be a negotiation of perspectives between myself

and each co-researcher in a second interview dedicated to reflection over what had already been shared.

In Ricoeur's view, the meaning of any text, or of an experience, is truly the "meaning" of a subjective interpretation fixed in a historical moment, which can be further interpreted by all those who come to interpret it in other moments, in their own particular situational stance. By doing this, we can create and communicate a record of thought with others, and perhaps expand and explain our understanding in a more complete way. For while traditional hermeneutics focused upon creating a standardized way of interpreting texts and communication through methods like discourse analysis, Ricoeur's hermeneutics emphasized the temporal aspect of language and communication, the shifting form of momentary meaning, in which we can forge new ways of understanding. Through this perspective, we can free ourselves from the captivity of fixed and essential meanings, and feel able to constantly grow in our knowledge of self and context. The aesthetic life narrative concept was intended to allow a child's experience to be transformed into a malleable subject over which she has some interpretive control through its aesthetic expression and its transient exposition. Similarly, by offering a child an opportunity to review and critique my interpretation of her experience, she could exercise power through her ability to change and/or affirm its representation. Through the research concept and the methodological approach a child could find brief emancipation from identities that seemed fixed.

Hermeneutic philosophy insists that the human way of being in the world is one of understanding. We understand ourselves through the interpretation of the cultural and linguistic world in which we find

ourselves, and the languages we use to interpret. Our linguistic interpretation of our context—the way we speak about it—leads us to create our personal understanding of it, and our understanding of ourselves and our role within it, as demonstrated in the following passage:

One embeds oneself in the process of getting involved in the text, one begins to discern configurations of meaning, of parts and wholes and their interrelationships, one receives certain messages and glimpses of an unfolding development that beckons to be articulated and related to the total fabric of meaning. The hermeneutic approach seems to palpate its object and to make room for that object to reveal itself to our gaze and ears, to speak its own story into our understanding. (von Eckartsberg, 1998, p. 50)

While our own experiences affect the ways in which we are able to receive a created work, the act of reception itself can also contribute to our knowledge of others' experiences and expand our understanding to include those we have not ourselves lived. In this way, the use of hermeneutics can be applied to our own understanding of the stories of life we use to decipher our personal meaning and our role within the world we are able to see and comprehend, while also helping us to see beyond its borders. While my research concept was intended to expand a child's knowledge of self, the research space also offered them an opportunity to participate in a construction of their life experience through the viewpoint of another.

Gadamer's Broadening of Horizons

Gadamer (1998/1960) understood hermeneutics to be a process of co-creation between the researcher and participant, in which the production of meaning occurs through a hermeneutic circle of readings, reflective writing and interpretations. Gadamer did not believe in the

idea of “fixed meanings” and, as a result, separated himself from traditional hermeneutics (Madison, 1991). Through Gadamer’s process, the goal of research is to develop an understanding of the experience through not only a philosophical foundation, but through the horizons of participants and researcher—what both participants and researcher are able to see, what they can allow themselves to see based not only on their conscious descriptions, but the meanings produced through their contextualized interpretations. As Bachelard and other phenomenologists explored the ways in which our early contexts shaped our view of the world, Gadamer emphasized the knowledge found in the collaborative spaces created through temporal interactions. As I hoped to create meaning with the children I would work with in my project, I utilized Gadamer’s beliefs and saw the data process as being a co-construction, a way in which the horizons of children and myself could be combined to produce a more complete understanding of the research experience.

Reader Response Debate: Power of Author and Audience

As part of my philosophical overview, I feel it is relevant to my thesis argument to briefly mention a more modern conception of hermeneutics which was developed through reader-response criticism (Fish, 1980, 1994, 1999; Iser, 1974, 1980; see Tompkins, 1980 for a chronological review). This school of thought set out to explore the divergent meanings different individuals derived from the same pieces of text, arguing that the audience of a piece of work defines its meaning, and that the act of reading, or viewing, is itself an action. An individual

is not a passive recipient of the expression, but will make sense of it in relation to their own identities, values, and sets of belief. More recently, while agreeing with the notion that difference matters in interpretation, and who we are as individuals and group members will affect the way in which we perceive communication, critical theorists also point out the danger in standardizing the “interpretation” of certain identities, such as race, sexuality and gender (see Fetterly, 1978; Showalter, 1998/1977; Butler, 1993; James, 1999; Crow 2000, to name a few).

On the other hand, formalists, or those who feel that a piece of art, for instance, holds an essential and independent meaning, frame the idea of inherent subjective meaning or the “power” of an audience, as being, in the words of Wimsatt with Beardsley (1954), an “affective fallacy”. In this way, formalists or text-oriented critics regard any reference to the inherent creation of subjective meaning to be a mistake produced through our “irrational” emotional realm. By doing so, formalists can be seen to place the emotions in opposition to rational thought, which is an argument continued through the past decade and espoused by critics like Ecclestone and Hayes (2009). In contrast, my project design depended upon the power of interpretation, combined with the influence of a child’s early and ongoing worlds, through which, I theorized, a child could play an active role in meaning-making and, by doing so, engage in an act of empowerment and an expansion of their understanding of self.

Reflexive Hermeneutic Application: the Definition of Self as Active Subject

Ricoeur explored the metaphorical and aesthetic possibilities of life re/configuration through narrative, and argued that life is “no more than a biological phenomenon as long as it is not interpreted.”

(Nalbantian, 1994, p. 40) It is through our interpretive descriptions we create meaning, and develop subjective realities—in a way, we breathe life into the intangible by involving it as part of our perspective.

Through my research design, I argued that it is through our own interpretation of self and situation by which we create personal meaning and relevance, and our simultaneous personal truths are an inherent aspect of the process. In doing so, I acknowledged that this is a significantly erroneous stance in the opinions of those who adhere to fixed meaning and static knowledge. For them, we are able to separate ourselves from our various identities, and not allow them to affect our reading or perception of a text or phenomenon. As Ellis and Flaherty (1992) argued, citing Denzin (1989b), “Emotional and cognitive orientations are viewed as competing perspectives, instead of ‘blurred together in the person’s stream of experience’.” (p. 3) Our subjectivity can be seen as entrenched in our emotional realm, and this realm is not distinct, but a part of our whole self and any attempt we make to interpret, describe, understand or reason.

The heart of this particular debate on interpretation sits in the core of what can be seen as the biggest debate that is battled in various fields and disciplines: the way in which self is conceived and, more specifically, the way in which “child” is conceived. This remains a point

of essential contention between those who maintain the idea of “active agent” as united self composed of various facets of intertwined capacities and beings, including interdependent cognitive and emotional processes, and those who perceive the self as being “passive audience”, who is capable of extracting one’s essential, rational self from all the various becomings that define us as individuals and group members. For some, we can be objective creatures and, for others, objectivity is a constructed concept.

This is a debate on “who” and “what” we are, and there is no debate that is quite as intimate or personal as that attempting to define our sense of being through general terms. As a result, the argument can be poignantly summarized in Michael Payne’s *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, “Much of audience-oriented criticism would agree that what reading a literary text does is more important than what it means, although it will not agree on much else.” (1997, p. 456) The ways in which self is conceived and the power each member in a dialogic or creative exchange is able to exercise through the interaction continues to be contested by those in various academic disciplines through the way in which they conduct their research and define the creation of knowledge, the role of participants and the goals of their research endeavours.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Developing Methodological Approach

While it could be implicitly derived from the work of Heidegger and Gadamer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel

Foucault and Paul Ricoeur formally incorporated the idea of contextualized self and reflexivity into the further development of a combination of the two philosophical fields briefly discussed in this chapter, which also served as my research methodology—hermeneutic phenomenology. While acknowledging the iconic positioning of Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur in the development of hermeneutic phenomenology, I am sadly limited by the practical constraints of this thesis and am unable to provide a thorough overview of each individual's contribution to this philosophical hybrid.

Sartre (1984/1956) emphasized the existentialist hermeneutic aspect of phenomenology by idealizing the “being of the knower” over a “primacy of knowledge” (p. lxvii). Subjective perception is the key component of a research process, and through its unfolding and negotiation with the interactive collaboration of participants, the meaning created is not absolute, but unique, situational and personal. In contrast to Husserl, Foucault (1988) believed that an “essence” of self does not exist; rather, the self is only formed through Heidegger's becomings, through an ongoing description (phenomenological) and interpretation (hermeneutical) of self.

While phenomenology demands the process of insight and observation, in which one's own world is inextricably involved, hermeneutics places any attempt to engage in awareness to also be a temporal and situational act of interpretation, as summarized in the following quote:

Phenomenology especially emphasizes what Merleau-Ponty (1962) called the “primacy of perception,” (that, to put it crudely, to be is to be perceived from the perspective of a human subject), while...hermeneutics stresses that

our knowledge of such being cannot escape from the historicity and locatedness of our gaze. (Kerby, 1991, p. 10)

As such, after partaking in an act of reduction, a researcher is not relieved of prejudice, as Husserl believed, for our concept of liberated subject is in itself a construction of subjectivity which we use in our subsequent interpretations in the research process. We are rarely conscious of all the ways in which we are, subjective or otherwise, and can, thus, never truly achieve the freedom to ascertain knowledge that has not been “affected” by us in our research process. Therefore, in hermeneutic phenomenology, one engages in continuous reduction—not in order to achieve transcendence, or to deem ourselves able to access essential meaning, but to come to understand the ways in which our ongoing negotiation with context and interactions continues to shape our general ability to understand our experience and the experiences of others. In this way, the methodological approach can be seen as an ethical endeavour, as defined by Etherington (2007) and Speedy (2008).

Role of Language in Developing Understanding

The interpretation of language is explored intimately in the field of hermeneutics, while the balance or, rather, tension between an interpretive and descriptive phenomenology defines its practical application and use (Koch, 1995; see Lopez and Willis, 2004 for a review). Gadamer (1998/1960) did not regard the task of hermeneutic phenomenology to create a standard mode for understanding, but instead to “clarify further the conditions in which understanding itself takes place.” (p. 295) In agreement with Heidegger’s view that language and understanding are inseparable structural aspects of being human, and that language, in fact, produces consciousness, Gadamer stated,

“Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting.” (1998/1960, p. 389) In this sense, a “horizon” is a range of vision that includes everything seen from a particular vantage point (Lavery, 2003). Gadamer felt that our subjectivity, the way in which we can recognize, form, expand and shape it, could be used in our search for understanding and meaning. As such, it is Gadamer’s belief in *inter*-subjectivity, the interactive negotiation of meaning *between* individuals, which guided the way in which I structured my research, and which is now widely emphasized in qualitative methodologies (for example, see Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

At the same time, as Fonagy et al. (2004/2002) argue, the ability to reflect upon ourselves in context is, in fact, shaped by our context. The extent to which we can understand what others are thinking is shaped by the responses we have already learned. Yet, although we ourselves may not be able to see beyond the sight we have developed through our contextual history, we can come to expand our consciousness, our awareness and horizon of being, by combining our own vision with that of another. As in therapeutic endeavours, it is through an interactive reflection, incorporating the perspective of another, in which those involved can develop an increased or expanded perception of self. While merging our perspective with that of another does not necessarily change our knowledge, it does bring about a negotiation in which we somehow make sense of the interaction with the tools of interpretation we have learned through our earlier interactions. Knowledge is, in a way, clarified and engaged in an active re-evaluation, although this kind of self-examination may not be entirely, or even mostly, conscious. We as human beings are composed of temporal

identities, momentary epiphanies and minute affirmations. Yet, through every interaction, we change, even if it simply strengthens our established yet evolving sense of being.

Therapeutic Regard through Reflexive Ethics

In my research, children were invited to be co-researchers and engage in a brief relationship with me as we combined our horizons in order to construct an idea of what exactly occurred in the implementation of my short-term educational intervention. I found that this approach caused the research process to assume a therapeutic characteristic. Practitioner researchers have written compelling accounts of how research relationships can serve a therapeutic purpose (for example, Etherington, 2001; Hart and Crawford-Wright, 1999), while social science researchers using a qualitative narrative approach (for example, Birch and Miller, 2000; Goodson and Sikes, 2001) have also noted therapeutic qualities of the research process.

Using the philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology involved a conscious recognition of the vital role of both researcher and participant in the research process, in the interactive experience they both shared in their individual way. I later found this approach to be embodied in Colaizzi's (1973, 1978) application of the same philosophical ideas. After gathering and reading all the descriptions produced in the research process, Colaizzi suggested that a researcher engage in an interpretation of the "significance" of each piece of data, as is customary, but then also return and share one's interpretation with the participants involved (Laverty, 2003, p. 20), as Colaizzi argued that all members of a research process are "related to each other as moments

within a structural whole” (Churchill, 1998, p. 191). Colaizzi (1978) meant for this shared dialogue to illuminate the presuppositions and develop the contextual understandings that guide the interpretation of participant(s) and researcher, which, in turn, led him to assume a therapeutic regard of the interactive process, as expressed in the following:

Genuinely human research, into any phenomenon whatsoever, by seriously including the trusting dialogical approach, passes beyond research in its limited sense and occasions existential insight. This is nothing other than therapy. (cited in von Eckartsberg, 1998, p. 69)

Colaizzi pointed out that it is not simply the behaviour or words of a research participant we as researchers are recording and interpreting, but we are also attempting to understand the participant themselves as an entity and being. In some ways, the researcher can be seen to assume the role of therapist, which requires one to engage in critical reflexivity in order to address any ethical issues which may easily arise (see Hart and Crawford-Wright, 1999).

Applying Ethical Regard through Therapeutic Regard

Because of the ideas outlined above, I felt that an explicit construction of data that went through a process of affirmation and validation could help make the research a more liberating and ethical endeavour. By reducing, as in the phenomenological tradition, my interpretations in order to derive the “essential” points of my interviews with the children, and through their re-presentation, I could engage in an exchange of understandings with the children. And by communicating and re-examining our interpretation of the phenomenon we shared, as in a hermeneutic endeavour, we could together negotiate our perspectives

and construct a more complete description of our interactive experience. It was essential that the children be involved in a review of my interpretation of their experience, in order to provide a more complete description of our joint endeavour. If I was to capture the reality of our shared experience, it would require explicit cooperation between the children and me—we were to share our roles as creator and interpreter.

This aspect of the project was vital to me because, in order to respect the roles of the children, it would seem unethical to remove and interpret their communications without their input—the experience would be incomplete and it would, I felt, be inherently presented in an extremely disrespectful manner. Thus, the children were to be invited to assume the role of co-researcher. For me, this was an ethical act, produced through my perception of each child as capable of exercising their own power as a communicative agent and my responsibility as a researcher to come to understand and respect the perspectives they offered (Etherington, 2007). At the same time, the recognition of participants' communicative role and the co-construction of data as a means of expanding one's own understanding, as well as the breadth and quality of the data, evoked formal therapeutic ideas. While my project was intended to help children explore their emotional self through their expression of emotions and interpretations of life realities—as structured through an explicitly informal kind of emotional education project—I later saw that this methodological design also helped to shape the project itself into a therapeutic exchange between children and myself.

Project Concept and Design

As I discussed in Chapter One, my research concept was based on my belief that the act of storytelling and life expression should be introduced at an early age so that children may come to develop a more comprehensive sense of self upon which they can build throughout their life. In Chapter Two, I argued that utilizing an aesthetic language provides children with more space in which to express and explore their life realities as both artist and audience. The shape of my research concept—*aesthetic life narrative*—is not original, for many adults have written “fictionally true” narratives in their expression of life as they have known it, or to further explore the person they have become. Dilthey and Rousseau are reputed to be pioneers of the autobiography; its use was not meant to record life as how others may know it, but to further refine their own understanding of self (see Sheringham, 1993). In fact, Rousseau strongly denied claims that his autobiography was fictional or false, as it was only accurate and true as to his *emotional* history. Similarly, in *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*, Pierre Bourdieu (2008) also pursued life writing later in his life, which he claimed was not autobiographical, but, rather, an application/analysis of the same socio-cultural methods he used to analyze other parts of society, with “himself” as subject and “him” as sociologist.

However, in designing my project, I felt that this process of life biography could be used as a continuous and ongoing activity, started at the beginning, rather than at the end, of one’s life. In this way, I hoped to apply the autobiographical task to young children, through what I called an *aesthetic life narrative*—a personal expression of the colours

that a child has attached to her personal experiences and stories or, in other words, the truths, facts, fantasies and the emotional glue of which these constructs are composed. I did not necessarily regard the artwork children created to be the primary data for my research, but, rather, the active process of expressive learning which I was attempting to record through their communicated experience of using it.

My project fits in Barone and Eisner's ABER (2006) criteria as an educational and artistic activity, as it infused an aesthetic quality into the research and its text; namely, this dissertation aims to achieve a "transmutation of feelings, thoughts and images into an aesthetic form" (p. 96) by utilizing a degree of poetic writing, and incorporating the reflexive and emotional experiences of the researcher alongside the affirmed experiences and artwork of children. I did not set out to attain certainty or concrete explanations, but to offer a new way of viewing educational phenomena (*Ibid*, p. 96) using therapeutic literature. In a similar way as I have conceived "narrative" and "storytelling", I refer to "art expression" as the physical creation of artwork, and "aesthetic expression" as the reflective aspect of this process. In this way, the use of narrative as process, as I have defined it in my research, can also be seen as aesthetic, in that it is meant to be explorative, expressive and free from absolutes, from truths and lies, from standardizations and technical form, and ideally from the inflexibility of identities and frames of conscious mind.

Because of the hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy that drove my research design, my project differed from other projects that seemed similar to my own, which I discussed in my literature review. For example, despite her position corresponding to my own, and her

argument for the value of aesthetic expression in a social space, Räsänen's (1993) research primarily served as a model for aesthetic analysis, a technique by which one may "objectively" interpret artwork. Yet, as I conceptualized being through communicative interaction in which subjective negotiation was paramount, my own focused on the communicative purpose of the aesthetic process, created by the child and subsequently subjected to personal analysis by the child as artist and audience.

Lightfoot's (2003) research corresponded with my own in the sense that both studies regard a child's realities to be expressed regardless of whether they intended to communicate them or not; the subjective possibility of the aesthetic process is what was held to be significant. Yet, once again, the difference between our studies lies in the methodological approach I chose to use. For, in my own research, I did not want to play the role of sole expert, but, rather, I wanted to create an analysis conducted by and through the interpretations of both individual children and myself in a collaborative process. The child was to be regarded as the expert of their own life. I wanted to uncover what each child got from the process through conscious reflection, which they would then reveal, or not reveal, to me. My purpose was not necessarily to categorize and conceptualize each child based on their artwork and the stories they told, but to explore the child's own process of expression and reflection in an educational space, and the extent to which they felt comfortable participating and sharing their experience with me.

In other words, if a child did not discover something about himself in our time together, my ability to ascertain my own

interpretation of the “real” meaning of a child’s experience in a further disconnected academic space would do him little good, for it was a child’s own ability to explore self through the roles of artist and audience which was valid to me. Therefore, I hoped to include each child in the process of interpretation through the second interview and their response to my interpretation and representation of their experience. For this reason, when planning to explore aesthetic expression in a classroom context and a research space, my methodological approach came to define my research in a way I had not anticipated. My privileging of subjective power of interpretation, as well as my belief in research participants’ own ability to partake in analysis through roles intended to create power, caused our research projects to differ essentially on what can be seen as philosophical grounds. My project concept and design were informed by the philosophical tenets I adhered to, which distinguished my research from the studies of other social scientists whose educational aesthetic focus seemed similar and likened it to the work of narrative theorists and practitioner researchers who regard data to be subjectively constructed through the reflexive communicative relationship between researcher and participants, between audience and storyteller, and between self and subject.

Project Curriculum

I introduced aesthetic life narratives to primary school children through an expressive arts curriculum entitled *Child as Artist, Life as Art* (see Appendix 2.1), which was presented to children as a short-term expressive arts intervention. This curriculum was constructed through my philosophical application of Dewey (1934, 1938), and my use of the

philosophical ideas introduced in this chapter. Yet, the creation of this curriculum expanded beyond literature; while the concept was based on my early life experiences, as introduced in Chapter One, it was further shaped and structured through my interaction with the project class teacher with whom I collaborated in its application, as I will share in Chapter Four's reflexive narrative of my research experience. The scripted curriculum began with the teacher and class participating in an interactive introduction to the idea of expressing life stories through art mediums. The use of examples was also essential in this curriculum, as I intended to emphasize learning and teaching through both verbal and visual means. For the purpose of my project, the children were first introduced to the idea of searching through research, in order to involve them in what exactly I was doing and also what I was asking them to do in the proposed role of co-researcher: try out the notion of aesthetic narrative expression in class, and tell me what they think of it in an individual space.

A child's becomings, their multiple simultaneous identities, could be explored through circles of both phenomenological description and hermeneutic interpretation. The curriculum was structured so that children could experience aesthetic expression of self through various roles: as a member of class, a member of a small group (through desk groupings), a storyteller, an artist, audience to their own work, as well as the work of others, and a co-researcher who was to review the processes and data I created. Each of these steps could be seen to involve a conscious and unconscious reflection upon self in relation to artwork, artist and audience, in order to integrate Gadamer's horizons and expand a child's knowledge of and relationship with self and self-in-context.

The beginning session was otherwise dedicated to teaching children that artists use art to express, or, in other words, to tell life stories and to communicate feelings. The children were then introduced to the notion of self, which I equated to “you”, and which I defined as being composed of emotions, the people in our individual lives and the acts performed by ourselves and the people in our life, or our “selfhood of experience” (Kerby, 1991, p. 115). As children were shown to assign (Burton, 2000), see or look for themselves (Housen, 1996) and their experiences in images shown (Mello, 2001), project children were to be shown images of individual unknown children who were each exhibiting different emotions with their facial expression and body language. The class was then asked to share what they thought the child pictured was feeling, and why they may be feeling that way, in order to show them how emotions and experiences could be visually expressed through a photo.

The children were also asked to create individual circular graphs, personalized through each child’s own life, in which each child listed and connected emotions, characters and life events; this graph was meant to help children create the stories they wanted to express through the various art mediums by giving them a physical “map” of what they wanted to communicate. The final aspect of the introductory session was dedicated to helping children to see that there is no such thing as “right” or “wrong”, or “good” or “bad” artwork; they were encouraged to create through the idea that creating art is a subjective process and product of self expression. If stories identify our felt-experiences, as Bakhtin (1986) argued, and art objectifies feeling (Langer, 1957), then the shape

and form of an artist's aesthetic story could not be measured against any standardized notion.

The second part of the curriculum was comprised of three example-and-workshop sessions, in which children were to be shown examples of the three mediums which would be utilized in the class—painting, text and clay, and then children were invited to use each respective medium to express the life stories they decided to tell. These choices were made in accordance with what materials were available in the project primary school classroom. The final component of the curriculum was to involve having the children create one piece of art from the three pieces of art they had created over the workshop period. This single piece of art was to serve as a self collage, in the sense that who we are as individuals is a composite of the emotional narratives we communicate and keep inside of us. In this way, I felt that the creation of a collected representation of aesthetic life narratives could serve as an effective way in which the past and future could be contemplated in the present moment, instigating a delicate balance, “Art celebrates with particular intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is.” (Dewey, 1934, p. 18)

In the curricular workshop, children were asked to actualize their stories—their realities were no longer enclosed, but visible and tangible. It could also present each child with a representation of who they saw and felt themselves to be through the narratives they told, fixed in a moment (Grumet, 1987, 1991; Ricoeur, 1974, 1988), while being its audience in another moment, reflecting upon their evolving relationship with their aesthetic presentation of self (Gergen, 2003). Assuming the

role of artist and audience, each child could explore the form and substance they may have already ascribed to their personal stories and the ways in which their understanding of self had increased or been further developed.

The sharing of a child's art was meant to emphasize children's roles of power as artist and author, and serve as a way in which to communicate one's self through an abstract and, thus, safe way. Expressing life experiences and their resultant stories through art was not to be the only important aspect of the process, but the sharing and exhibition of one's artwork—the product, I argued, of one's own emotions—would also be an essential aspect of the process. As discussed by Dewey, the triangulation aspect of art creation is integral. As a result, inspired by the powerful effect of audience and additional perspectives, I also planned for the children to exhibit their work in a class art show, which would be ideally organized by the children and their class teacher. This would be an opportunity for children to communicate their life stories and the emotions they had assigned to these with peers, as well as looking for themselves in the work of peers, negotiating their interpretation and expanding their vantage point upon self through others, as Gadamer theorized was necessary in order to create knowledge. In this exhibit, each child would not only consciously evaluate her own sub/conscious expressions, but engage in public communication concerning her work. Yet, the reason for such a show was not only to facilitate further communication with others, including those who may be able to relate or identify with the emotions expressed, but also to develop and demonstrate that the children's lives, their life

stories, were worthy and valuable enough to be regarded and presented to others as “art”.

Research Data Set

As an ABER project, I utilized various methods of collection so that I may create an “enhancement of perspectives” (Barone and Eisner, 2006, p. 95) of both the child co-researchers and myself. My research concept was based on the idea that non-aesthetic language may limit what a child is able to express. In the same way, I utilized different approaches in my research, ranging from aesthetic to conversational, so that I could find a more comprehensive way to comprehend, record and communicate the emotional and educational experiences of the children as co-researchers and participatory students. Throughout the curricular implementation, I utilized the tools of observation, individual interaction and two open-ended individual interviews. My data set included transcribed interviews, photographs of children’s artwork, a research diary, which included non-interview interaction with individual children, and triangulation as each child and I played the role of subject and reviewer to each other’s interpretations and descriptions.

Throughout each class session, I observed, recorded and interacted with the children as they participated in the curriculum and its activities. After each session, I wrote a descriptive narrative based on the notes I gathered during the class, and I transcribed any data acquired through interviews via an audio recorder. Using a digital camera, I also took photographs of each child’s artwork, including the children who chose to not take part in the research interviews, so that each child in the class could receive a bound book of their artwork at the end of the

research project, as well as each co-researcher's text story that summarized their experience with using the expressive process introduced through the curricular intervention, based on our classroom and interview interaction. These choices were intended to support the aesthetic quality of my research, but they were also structured by my methodological design, which I will explain and support in the next section.

Application of Methodological Design

Through my research design, and in order to address a power imbalance between an adult and child, I created a reflective space in which a child could communicate their perspective of their experience as author, artist and audience to me through an individual interview that was to follow the class exhibit. I then transcribed each child's words in the initial interview, and from them created a "story" constructed through my own interpretation of the child's experience, combined with my own classroom observations and participation, and returned with the data I had created, and not simply collected, in a second interview in the form of an individual storybook (see Appendix 5.1a and 5.2a). In this way, I did not technically re-present their experience, but constructed it through my own experience as observer and interpreter.

I provided each child with the storybook as physical and visual material for them to reflect upon, so that they could re-evaluate their work and my interpretation of their experience throughout the aesthetic process, confirming or dissenting with my perspective of who they were and what they communicated in our time together. The construction of this storybook was aesthetic in form, and inspired by the narrative work

of Clandinin and Connelly (1990, 1994), Denzin (1997) and the ethnographic work of Ellis and Flaherty (1992). At the same time, while I was inspired by the use of aesthetic form in representation of participant's experience (for example, see Richardson, 1992, 2001), I did not take any aesthetic license with the story portion—my transcription and construct of each child's experience—as I hoped to directly communicate what I thought in a way that 9 year-old children could understand. For the intention behind this act of representation was to ensure that I had, in fact, understood what the child had communicated, and to provide the opportunity for them to disagree and make changes.

In design, each child's art was to be the focus of the interview, and I offered pens and pencils, so the children were given, at a minimum, different ways they could choose to communicate. As artist and editor, each child was then also invited to mould and shape, add and detract, break or gloss their creations, or my interpretation of their experience, in this interview space. In this way, the child's active power over the artwork and the data created was meant to be a metaphor for life: as a child was able to alter her subjective expressions, she could also, theoretically, simultaneously, alter her perspective on the emotions and realities she had assigned to them (see Appendix 5.1b and 5.2b). In order to confirm this, after our second interview, I implemented any changes a child suggested, and returned for the last time with a final story book (see Appendix 5.1c and 5.2c). The bound book included their artwork and a copy of their approved story of their experience confirmed and validated by each child, expressing our negotiated interpretation of the child's experience of our time together.

The book was also meant to ensure that each child, as co-researcher, was able to walk away with the data we produced together from the research in the same way as I did—in this way, we both had a physical record of our co-construction, in addition to our own individual memories and perspectives. The parents were not aware of the storybook and, thus, I felt it allowed children to share the book with parents and others, but only if they chose to do so. Therefore, I regarded the book to be another way in which children could assert a sense of control over their experience in deciding to reveal it to others, keep it for themselves for any amount of time and/or destroy it.

While it could be argued that the book served as an unwelcome bridge between our external reflective space and a child's home and school world, rather than providing children with another way in which to exercise power, I still feel that the point of the research project was educational in the sense that it was intended to help children come to understand more about themselves. Any information they came to discover about themselves was theirs to disburse—the book was meant to provide them with a way in which to share this without having to articulate or present it verbally on their own. Furthermore, the point of the second interview was to allow children to choose what exactly was placed in the book that could be seen by others. As a result, the book did not reveal our research space but, rather, the self each child chose to disclose in their ongoing worlds.

Ethical Concerns

I received ethical consent to conduct my research through the University of Edinburgh School of Health in Social Science. The

following is a summary of the ways in which I attempted to maintain an ethical regard of the child in my research and to address potential instances of vulnerability created by my research methodology, design and implementation.

Redefining the Child in Education: Participant Action Research

At the heart of my ethical stance is my regard of the child, for I believe that the evolving definition of “child” in society creates further opportunity and inspires a more progressive approach in working with children in educational spaces. Thus, since my ideas about public education are derived from the work of both Paulo Freire (1993/1970, 2001/1998, 2005a, 2005b) and Antonio Gramsci (1971), it is fitting to refer to the type of educational action research that is attributed to them: Participant Action Research (PAR), which strongly influenced the application of my research design (see Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, 2000 for a review). While my own methodological approach was inspired by the potential therapeutic aspect of the ways in which power relations could be addressed through what I deemed to be ethical regard (Etherinton, 2004, 2007), my research also involved the ontology of and political thought behind PAR projects.

For instance, the practical approach of constructing meaning with one’s research participants as part of an inter-dependent interaction, which is a foundational aspect of PAR, requires children to play an active role in the data production process. As such, in my research, I attempted to create a democratic and egalitarian classroom environment by asking children to work with me as co-researchers and to produce

data based on their life experiences. In this way, my research approach addressed the need for more research which incorporates the perspective of the children involved, both in classroom contexts and elsewhere (see Miller and Lavin, 2007; Reeves, Bryson, Ormston and White, 2007). In conceptualizing this design, I used the Gramscian notion of “organic intellectualism”, which regards children to be capable of being researchers, historians, authors, teachers and artists, and educational knowledge is produced through the roles they play.

The 1924 Geneva Convention and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child established the viewpoint that children are born with fundamental freedoms and the inherent rights of all human beings, and they have a formal right to express their views and be part of any process that affects their lives. Subsequently, in the past twenty years, governmental policies, research initiatives and educational pedagogy have begun to involve the formal inclusion of children’s perspectives in research (see Fraser, et al., 2004; Masson, 2004) and day-to-day planning and implementation in programme development and school affairs (see Chawla and Heft, 2002; Spicer and Evans, 2006; Skivenes and Strandbu, 2006; Melton, 1999; Pinkerton, 2004). Such a shift in political and cultural thought points to a new social conception of the child as being an “individual” with their own viewpoints and feelings which they are able to express (Lee, 2001).

At the same time, critical educational theorists address the multi-layered complexity involved in “participatory” and “empowering” spaces, and call for a critical analysis of the ways in which the child is continuously defined, which some argue has severely affected educational policies and the subsequent treatment of children in school

contexts (to name a few, Ball, 1997; Clark and Percy-Smith, 2006; Kellett, et al., 2004; Kirby et al., 2003; Percy-Smith, 2005; Slee, 2001). While the change in educational policy seems to indicate an ethical and progressive turn, there is a great risk that the creation of empowering educational programmes and reforms formally involving children in decisions and discourses have been corrupted by political agendas which give little attention to the ways in which such programmes are implemented and, as a result, may serve to instead disempower children (Cockburn, 2005).

In its design, PAR attempts to redefine the traditional role of child, and aims to redesign research contexts, roles and interactions in order to address differential power relations (Alderson, 2000; Mayall, 2000; Reason and Bradbury, 2006/2001). In evaluating the ways in which power operates in an educational setting, Stoudt (2007) argues for careful construction of “safe spaces” in order for children to securely engage in critical analysis, and an ongoing examination of the ways in which to compensate for power imbalance in research interaction in schools. For example, he explores how students can assume the role of “co-researcher” and how “insider/outsider” roles can be assumed by adults. Stoudt’s approach aligned with my own research concerns, as well as the ontology I adhere to and wished to perform through ethical action in my project. In this way, I agree with Stoudt in that we cannot create real freedom, educational spaces can never be truly safe, and we will not be able to protect children entirely from harm inflicted internally and externally. However, through a thorough reflection upon the ways in which power is created, exercised and diminished in work with children in educational spaces, we can work to achieve impossible

goals and find that, through our efforts, education can become a bit more like the progressive idealizations we feel we maintain.

Research examining the ways in which an outsider role comes in as a participant of an established community of learners (see Minkler, 2004), and the ways in which a researcher's context and identities intercede with those of the other research participants, bring about a vital area which demands critical reflexivity. Personal motivations and beliefs drive research and shape the experiences of the children we work with—we as researchers are ourselves participants who often exercise the most power in our project. Skivenes and Strandbu (2006) cite Archard (1993) when they argue that those who fight for children's participation and rights either generally perceive of themselves as being "child savers" or "child liberationists" (p. 20). While the former group see themselves as protecting children who *require* protection, the latter presents children as being capable independent actors, who are to be freed of inappropriately assigned labels of helplessness and fragility. There is often a tension between these two conceptions of child; thus, the attempt to balance the two in a way that is respectful, ethical and responsible is crucial; those of us who work with children are to ask ourselves what exactly are we protecting, saving and liberating children from (Skivenes and Strandbu, 2005, 2006). Are we saving them from themselves, or protecting them from ourselves and our own fears as adults?

In describing my role in the research process, I attempted to balance my emancipatory language with what I felt to be my ongoing attempt to be aware of individual children's changing roles in the process. I chose to assume the role of what Allen (2007) terms, a

“conscious witness”, which may be a role that was not otherwise filled in a child’s life. Adults and children can work together to further articulate our reflective roles—we as adults can expand and broaden our listening abilities and help children to explore their modes of communication to support further processing, expressing and sharing of emotions in order to bring about a healthier concept of self. We can do this by simply making ourselves available as responsive listeners, as witnessing their ways of communicating themselves and their ways of being. While in the past I played a detached spectator—someone who felt as if she stood on the outside of children’s processes—in my project I found myself to be the type of witness who felt responsible and intimately involved in the scene unfolding before and through her (Boler, 1999).

Safety and freedom are both relative terms. For me, the most important aspect of participatory spaces incorporating critical education is the ways in which children’s lives are incorporated, communicated and received. This viewpoint incites a range of questions; for example, how can we help children to find a safe way to communicate their lives? What form can emotions and personal realities assume that will facilitate expression without compromising a child’s emotional well-being and exposing their intimate worlds? In my research, I did not only want children to express their viewpoints regarding their role in education, in society, in choosing what subjects they study and how they learn, in what food they eat in the cafeteria, but to *express their life as they know it*.

I intended to ask my co-researchers to express their intimate details of life realities and the affective patterning that bound them

together and kept them apart. I felt that constructing a space “safe enough” for the personal perspectives of children would not only require careful critical thought on the part of myself as adult researcher, but also the introduction of form and languages for children to use to protect themselves to the extent they felt necessary. In this way, their safety was not exclusively exercised through my administrative power but through the power they would create through their use of a layered interpretive process.

Consent and Information Forms

Before the start of the project, the teacher was given an information sheet regarding her role, as well as a consent form to sign and return (see Attachment 2.3 and 2.4). On the first day of class, children were invited to be co-researchers and participate in the research portion of the project, but information and consent forms (see Appendix 2.5 and 2.6) were not handed out until the final day of the class portion, allowing the children time to think over whether they wanted to participate after engaging in the processes introduced and after spending time working with me on a daily basis. The consent forms were not asking a child to give permission to take part in the curriculum, as it was mandatory as part of the school’s regular curricular plan once the head teacher decided to have her school take part in the research. Rather, the consent forms asked children to decide whether they were willing to take part in the research interviews. The parents/guardians of children who wished to participate were then sent information and opt-out consent forms through their child, as this was the way in which the

project school normally handled the disbursement of parental consent forms (see Appendix 2.7 and 2.8).

Due to the personal topic of the study, which involved the individual emotions and perspectives of each child, and because the research was to be held in a school setting and not in a child's home or other facility, I personally agreed with the opinion that the decision to take part in the research project should lie with the potential child participants themselves (Reeves et al. 2007, p. 24). Yet, since the age of children I worked with in my project were nine to ten years of age, and because I did not possess the expertise to deem and pronounce a child adequately mature enough to give informed consent, I planned for a parent/guardian's dissenting opinion to take precedence over a child's assenting opinion in the area of consent.

Thus, if a parent/guardian actively objected to their child's participation in the research by returning the opt-out form by the date indicated, I would not have been able to work with their child. On the other hand, as stated on the consent forms, any data collected in the research would not be available to a parent/guardian without the permission of the child. Although children's participation in the research was to be approved by their parent/guardian, the data created was to also belong to each child and each child could retain a sense of personal ownership over it. Furthermore, as stipulated in the child consent forms, it was emphasized that each child could decide to withdraw consent at any point in the research process without any repercussions. While these ethical safeguards were set in place, no parent dissented by the designated date and each child who chose to participate did so.

Addressing Potential Outcomes

The primary ethical concern I foresaw with this project came from the fact that I was asking children to process and share the realities of their lives, with the full awareness that their lives could be composed of difficult stories and emotions. However, my project was based on my belief that the expression of life stories—big and small, bright and black—contributes to a healthy emotional development of self. Again, the research was originally conceived through children who had suffered abuse and trauma, and their use of art as a survival method inspired me to shape and share that idea with other children who may also be going through similar situations. The project was since expanded to a general public school classroom, and was no longer focused on children who had been identified as abuse survivors. Yet, my motivation and passion behind the project still lay in the fact that this process could reach children who were silently coping with life difficulties, and who may not otherwise be given a space in which to process, express or share them. I strongly believed that the repression of these feelings and experiences would not remain crushed below the surface, but could, in time, likely push through the layered filters and reveal themselves in potentially destructive manifestations. Thus, the need to process and express one's realities at an early age was, I believed, essential. In addition, I felt schools were to serve as a personal resource, providing a safe space for children to further explore self as an ordinary part of their educational experience.

This project was meant to introduce children to different ways to communicate, express and share their sense of self through their

stories and emotions. Before I began, I was quite aware of the possibility that, for a few children, the expression of their life stories may cause them to view and realize realities, which they may not before have been aware. In fact, in theory, such an occurrence was inherently part of the process: once we communicate our emotions and stories through the subconscious expression of art, we can then acquire a perspective on aspects of our life of which we were not before cognizant. While I thought about how this research project could induce instances of disclosure, which could, in turn, cause psychological and emotional stress for a child, I could not ethically withhold my opinion that such disclosure would more likely contribute to healthy emotional development than if a child continued to silently keep her hurtful realities secret, which I recognize as being a bold stance to assume.

Thus, since this project was to take place in a public school classroom, I planned for any potential situation to be dealt with in accordance to the school policies and rules in place. Before the curricular implementation began, I met with the project teacher to discuss the possibility of disclosure and what school policies were in place to safely cope with such situations, so that the welfare of each child was optimized. As I attempted to create a balanced relationship with each child, I was vehemently opposed to assuming the role of expert, analyzing the artwork or behaviour of the children as subject. Rather, my role was dedicated to coming to understand how each child made sense of the expressive processes introduced, and how they themselves saw their artwork as artist, author and architect of their own life and all of its stories and realities. At the same time, I remained consciously aware of children's behaviour and expressions, and planned

to engage in any reparative work with children through the second interview in cases where I felt individuals were placed in a vulnerable position in the class portion. Most importantly, the Place2Be counsellor who served as my initial contact for the project school also allowed me to ensure that the children had a familiar figure to whom I could refer in any instance I felt remained unresolved.

Philosophy and Methodology Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided the philosophical basis which drove and distinguished my research project from other projects which relied upon adult expertise and strove for technical objectivity. My project was built upon subjective expression and interpretation, as well as a collaborative construction of meaning, which comfortably contextualized my research in the contemporary Scottish educational movement embodied within the newest national curriculum. In addition, my methodological approach allowed me to address an imbalance of power that often occurs while doing research with children by helping them to facilitate power through their active roles as co-researchers. Yet, while I intended for each child to provide their own analysis of self and for my role to simply represent their interpretation, I found that the collaborative nature of my research design produced a complex dynamic in my research relationship with individual children that I later sought to manage and explore through my use of psychological literature. In the next chapter, I share my reflexive account of what occurred in my research experience, and produced the data that reshaped my focus and further expanded my idealized role as researcher.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four: Implementation—a Reflexive Narrative Account

There is an irony in (the period following research implementation) for narrative inquirers because they tend to be less sure of themselves, less clear of what it is they have to say, *after* investing themselves intensely over time in their research than they were prior to doing their research...Part of the writer's uncertainty comes from knowing, and caring for, specific participants. Abstract theoretical categories might be uppermost prior to the research, but participants, and one's relationship to them, are key by the time the research text is to be written. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, Emphasis in text, p. 145)

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a narrative of the various stages of my research process as a participant, subject and researcher. As the quote above states, while I had set out to explore children's perspectives of expressive educational processes, I found that my experience as researcher and participant, as well as the contextual research relationships that developed, became a significant aspect of my study's results. In order to show this, I look at how the philosophical ideas I introduced in Chapters Two and Three were transformed through their practical and particular use. I discuss how the role I had envisioned as a researcher was adapted to work in my research context, as well as to own the relative roles I played in response to those individual children presented to me. For I became intimately involved in my research in a

way I had not expected, and this directly affected the way in which I am able to tell the story of my research experience. My subsequent use of attachment theory was then meant to elaborate upon how, in the face of obstacles and relative impossibilities, the children in my research manoeuvred and found their way in the context I created.

Yet, what follows in this chapter and the next can be seen as different, or perhaps “less academic”, from other chapters in this thesis, as I do not depend as heavily upon references to support my statements. In fact, I assume a more literary form of writing; I argue that Chapters Four and Five are academic in a different way, whereas the telling of my research experience presents an example of how narrative informed by reflexive thinking can be practically used in understanding a phenomenon and the relationships that form within it. I refer to Speedy’s (2000b) use of “short story” and “externalising conversations” and aim to present a narrative illustration that proficiently shows *what happened* through my personal viewpoint as an adult researcher amongst child co-researchers, and, in doing so, “describe, rather than define” (p. 368). As such, I have chosen to construct and share a reflexive narrative which shows how I used and applied the ideas I have discussed in earlier chapters, and describe the ways in which these were actually put into practice in my educational research study. My research narrative embodies how issues of power-making and ethics can interact in processes involving social communication, expression and emotionality in intimate and complex ways that stretch across the personal and social in both educational and research contexts.

In this thesis, I cannot tell the story of what happened; rather, I can only tell my interpretation of what happened (Clough, 2002), which

has been directly and explicitly informed by the children who participated and helped to create the narratives I will share. This chapter documents the larger idea that, while ideas and educational goals may seem progressive and simple in design, it is only through their practical application that we can come to see what kind of effect they actually have upon the individual lives of children. In my research I came to put aesthetic life stories/narratives into action in a public school classroom. Again, I felt that having children process, express and share their emotional life narratives through art mediums could bring about a stronger and more complete understanding of self—in this way, the project concept could be seen as both educational and informally therapeutic. At the same time, I found that executing this research concept in a classroom was much more of a compromise and a co-creation than I had anticipated, causing my role in the project to be far more visible than I had planned. In addition, individual children's use of me also came as a surprise, as I found that the very factors I felt would limit any kind of attachment—namely, brevity, newness and distinction, which I will discuss in Chapter Six—actually seemed to facilitate their positive regard and the seeming depth of our momentary relationship.

While I planned to be a spectator who observed my research concept unfold and be used by others, I instead played the role of co-creator and conscious witness (Stoudt, 2007) who was directly involved in individual children's use of the processes introduced to them through my research concept. The unexpected relationship between individual children and myself came to be a defining occurrence in my research. For I was led from literature grounded in the social sciences, which produced my research concept, to that normally located in the realm of

psychological thought, which guided and supported the detailed analysis I then used to evaluate the interaction which occurred between individual children and myself. Thus, I present a research narrative that documents and demonstrates the ways in which the application of my own ideas about ethics, power and therapy, understood through the lens of my life experiences, transformed my way of thinking and interpreting through their implementation in the research process as I became fully aware of the effects of being a “co-researcher”. Reflexivity provided me with the tools to address my misconceptions about my research role, as well as come to terms with the reality of educational participation and the emotional implications of being a co-researcher. In what follows, I tell a story of how a research concept inspired by adolescent American street kids came to be used by Scottish primary school students.

The Project Beginning: Finding Co-Researchers and a Context

It is our view that that the essence of narratives is to make connections, to link events, feelings, experiences into a neat, tidy, logical and consequential sequence. (Sikes and Gale, 2006)

The telling of my research experience is explicitly presented through my own simultaneous perspective as both participant and researcher. I found affinity in Richardson’s honest introduction to a chapter concerning re/writing the other and self, “This chapter is consciously self-revelatory, but my purpose in writing it is sociological, not confessional.” (p. 125) While I have argued that narratives are rarely chronological or neat, and find that “messy” texts described by Clough (2002) and Speedy (2008), as well as the use of fictional quality (Banks

and Banks, 1998) are both more honest and, in my opinion, meaningful, I found that representing my research journey in the order I experienced it explicitly illuminates the connections Sikes and Gale speak of. My chronological telling demonstrates how distinct areas of thought, as represented in Chapter Two's four-section literature review, occur simultaneously and layer upon one another in educational practice and research endeavours according to their temporal placement. Thus, in this chapter, I reveal how my philosophical conception of education and the power of aesthetic communication were insufficient to explore the complex particular ways in which individual children utilized the educational processes and negotiated their interactive presence as a co-researcher.

As introduced in Chapter One, I came to develop a research concept based on my personal experiences with American street kids using art and transgressing classroom space for materials. I was inspired by witnessing these children's expression of self through art mediums and the ways in which this population seemed empowered by communicating extremely difficult realities through the roles of artist and audience in order to address the difficult life realities they had experienced. I adopted John Dewey's (1934) concept of life as education/education as life, and intended to bring this kind of ontology to children in structured settings, children who did not live on the streets, children who were still contextualized within a home and school environment, in order to further explore the progressive potential of mainstream public education.

Yet, many of the specific details that came to define my project were not guided by literature, nor were they necessarily driven by

personal preference. Rather, my project was shaped by practical consequences created through my context and the people with whom I interacted. While I was certain of what I wanted to do, when it came to moving to a different country to do my research as an international student, I was suddenly quite unsure about which population to work with, what context the project would work best in, and in what form the idea of aesthetic life narratives should be presented. The project had developed through my interaction with children who had experienced traumatic life realities, and, as such, I wondered if it would serve a more effective purpose with children identified as victims or survivors of abuse and trauma, or if I should work with children who had not been labelled as such and pursue the general therapeutic notion of education I had grown to embrace. Meanwhile, I had never worked with “regular” kids who lived a “regular” lifestyle. I suppose I was biased in favour of those who had lived through wars, as I felt they deserved the attention more than other children, and that this process was more essential for them.

Thus, in my first year of my postgraduate research in Scotland, I set out to find a home for my ideas through widespread interaction. I met with various practitioners and organizations throughout Scotland, ranging from formal therapeutic spaces dedicated to abuse survivors that used play and art therapy, sexual exploitation awareness programs created by self-labelled exploited children who utilized various communicative mediums, storytelling services that worked with various populations, community art centres, homeless organizations who put on art exhibits for children of homeless parents, and ongoing and short-term intervention school-based programmes (see Appendix 1). During

this time, I established a contact through Place2Be, which is a growing non-profit organization that places counsellors in schools, who use creative therapeutic methods to directly support students who are experiencing life difficulties. My contact encouraged me to try out my project in the primary school she worked in as a Place2Be representative, and set up a time for me to meet with the school head teacher.

Recalling my renewed interest in the potential of educational spaces, I found myself excited by the possibility of exploring the ways in which my ideas could be implemented in a structured educational setting. After speaking with the head teacher of my contact's school, it soon became clear that working within primary schools would be the most practical solution for my contextual dilemma. It provided me with a group of children who were already comfortable with their environment, and who had built up a level of trust with one another and with the teacher who I felt, at the time, would solely facilitate the project. It also allowed me to apply my idea in a context that had played a key part in inspiring my project's actualization—a public school classroom. My observation of the ways in which street kids had used an educational space, as well as my love for the educational philosophy introduced in Chapter Two, caused me to feel quite excited about trying out my research concept in a formal classroom context.

Again, it was not literature, but, rather, the helpful range of individuals and organization representatives with whom I met in my first year who influenced my decision to work with children aged 7 to 10, which I had never done before. I chose this age group because they appeared to sit on the bridge between childhood and adolescence, which

meant that, hypothetically, they were still relatively uninhibited as younger children, but also possessed the linguistic capabilities to participate fully in verbal interviews, as older children were able. It also permitted me to explore my belief that, if younger children were encouraged to explore and express their emotions at an earlier age, it could help them to cope with the transitional years ahead. Therefore, although I had only worked with children over the age of thirteen previously, I planned to explore the advice of those I met in my induction year, and work with younger primary school children in my research.

Negotiating Research through Contextual Reflexivity

My personal experiences and interaction with my project context further shaped the body of my research concept. The use of aesthetic life narratives by teachers in the United States shaped my own proposed attempt to then introduce it into a Scottish educational context through my research. As I approached my project's implementation, I carried with me the experience of "having done this before", as a few American teachers had informally adapted my project concept for their own classrooms in the past. For instance, a teacher friend of mine continues to use aesthetic life stories as part of her language curriculum with urban secondary school students. Therefore, since I had decided upon the age of children I would work with, and the structured setting of a primary school as my research context, I intended to present the concept of aesthetic life stories through the interactive primary school curriculum I introduced in Chapter Three. Yet, the methodology curriculum presented in the Appendix (2.1) was not the curriculum I had

first constructed. Originally, I designed the curriculum to be rather basic and broad, philosophical and abstract, encouraging and expecting a teacher to shape it in order for it to work in his or her educational context.

I felt a classroom to be a delicate balance of power relations which I did not want to “disrupt” with an externally imposed structure that did not fit. I assumed this approach, because it is the one I had always used. In my previous experience, I would come up with an idea, and my American teacher friends would take, adapt and apply it in their way in their own particular context. At the same time, I had never before physically involved myself in my ideas’ application, and, therefore, along with my efforts to create a safe space within the class and within the research context, I still envisioned myself playing a very minimal and scientific role in the class implementation—in a way, I saw myself as a contaminant.

I wanted to express myself solely through the curriculum, and, as a result, decrease the possibility that I could further infect the children’s processes. If my beliefs were going to serve as Foucault’s authoritarian discourse in the classroom, I certainly did not want to do any more to directly shape children’s experiences. So I planned on taking the proverbial backseat, serving solely as an observer to the ways in which the curriculum was practically used in a classroom. In approaching the project, I was conscious to the fact that I certainly did not have an open mind; in fact, I had very clear expectations of which I was cognizant, and, in planning to stay in the background, I attempted to critically evaluate and own them. As a result, in implementing my research concept, I intended to keep my role to a minimum.

Designing Curriculum for Context

As I first introduced my curriculum and research project to a Scottish teacher, I saw how my beliefs and expectations were to be explicitly shaped by the educational context. The head teacher I met with through my Place2Be contact was willing to have her school take part in the project, and asked that I meet with one of her probationary teachers, as I would eventually work with one of the new graduates in their first year of teaching. She hoped that I could get a better understanding of these teachers' expectations, so that I could take their advice under consideration in my curricular design. Therefore, I met with the young teacher and found that she expressed concern about facilitating the curriculum. She thought it was creative and that it would be great for the children, but she herself was worried about "doing it right", "doing it justice", and "making it work" the way it should. She felt the idea needed to be more detailed and my role expanded. While I had originally expected the teacher to interpret what she felt to be the core of the project, and implement it in whatever way seemed best, I found that I needed to provide more substance to accompany the application of the proposed endeavour.

Therefore, I stepped up to assume greater responsibility over the shape and structure of the project concept, and set about designing a scripted curriculum. While uncomfortable with my new role, I was also thrilled to work within the limits of Scotland's latest educational objectives as presented through *Curriculum for Excellence*. The new national curriculum seemed to embody the therapeutic and educational tenets I hoped to communicate through my own project, and inspired me

to excitedly add new dimensions and make further adjustments to my original curriculum, while uncomfortably dictating structure. For example, I provided conversations and simply hoped/guessed as to how the children would respond, while stating that the mediums and dialogue were meant to serve as mere examples. Since I had never designed a curriculum in this way before, I was somewhat nervous of how it would come across and if the children (and teacher) would find it accessible and interesting.

As time passed, the primary school of my Place2Be contact turned out to be the one school I would exclusively work with. Furthermore, the young educator with whom I first met, and who, specifically, helpfully inspired the detailed curriculum, had been asked to continue on teaching in the school. I took this as a sign, and decided to simply work with this teacher in her Primary 5 classroom, and explore the experiences of her 9-10 year-old students. While I had designed the curriculum to be implemented in either a long-term or short-term intervention timeline, the teacher felt it best if the curriculum was implemented over a few days' time. As a result, my project idea became a short-term expressive arts intervention: the classroom curricular portion would take place over the course of four consecutive school days, which would include three class workshops and the class art show, while the research process would take place intermittently over a five month period. Practical factors shaped the temporal structure of my project, which, in turn, shaped the experiences of the children and me, as I will discuss in my implementation narrative.

Design Implementation Overview

Before I tell the story of what happened, I present an overview of the “facts” of my findings. Seventeen of twenty-two year 5 primary school children volunteered to take part in the research interviews, while every child took part in the class portion as presented through the short-term curricular intervention I designed. The children’s artwork presented a range of emotions attached to personal life realities. Of the research children, eight expressed sadness/anger, two created art expressing a mix of emotions, and seven children expressed happy/excited emotions in their artwork. The data I present focuses upon the painting and writing artwork, as the clay work did not retain its form between the class workshop time and the class art show. The class art show did not provide anonymity as designed, which caused me to later engage in reparative work with a few children, in order to manage the negative consequences of this unintended outcome.

In addition to my interaction with children in the classroom setting, two individual interviews were conducted, which lasted from two to twenty-two minutes each. As part of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the interview space format was intended to be left open, in order to increase the likelihood that a participant’s response is, in fact, their own response, and not shaped by the request of particular knowledge by a researcher. Therefore, I based the interviews around the general question, “What did you think about what we did in class?” Yet, as I had not before engaged in interviews with this age group, I also prepared a broad set of additional questions for the first

interview, in case children did not have much to say, which I did end up using in some cases:

- What did you think about using art like this?
- How did you feel when sharing your emotions?
- How did you feel when telling your story in class?
- How did you feel when others came to see your art?
- What would your family think if they saw this art?
- Have you shared the stories you expressed in your art before?

The second interview was again left open, and focused upon children's evaluation of my re-presentation of individual's artwork and the story I had created from each child's first interview transcript, which was presented in the form of a personal storybook. Once again, the objective of the second interview was to give children the opportunity to review and respond to my interpretation of their research experience. Again, the length of time dedicated to the second interview varied with each child, and depended upon how much each child had to say in response and the extent to which they wished to make edits to my account. Five children chose to not make any changes to the storybook, while twelve children opted to implement a modification: six children chose to remove text, five children chose to add text, and eight children wished to make a visual change. Examples of this editing process will be provided in the four case studies which follow in Chapter Five.

Implementation: Primary School Short-Term Expressive Arts Intervention

The implementation of my research concept is expressed through what follows—a reflexive description of my experience working with the class as a whole, with individual children in a social space (classroom) and a private space (interviews). I found my particular assumption of the role of co-researcher caused me to become both a “subject” as my frame intersected with those of individual children (Myerhoff, 1982) and an intimate part of children’s interactive participation. This narrative is meant to demonstrate the potential of a primary school short-term intervention that incorporates aesthetic self-expression, while exhibiting the interactive complexity of negotiating expressive processes and the vital role critical reflexivity plays in both education and research endeavours. I further illustrate my experience through the presentation of dialogue that occurred between individual children and me; in doing so, I use the pseudonyms each child chose to represent themselves in the research text.

Application of Ideas: Classroom Implementation

In the classroom, the children as a group loved the idea of being artists. On the first morning of class, the teacher and I talked about expressing emotions in general, and did not focus on expressing the negative versus the positive, or whether expressing one kind was better, or healthier, than expressing the other. We attempted to keep the discussion quite general, so it was interesting and a little unsettling, to see the ways in which children absorbed the information and reported it back to me in our interview time. While I fully believed in the message I

was sending, I also realized first-hand what power an educator can wield in a classroom. The children were, in fact, paying close attention to what seemed to be, for many of them, a new idea. At the same time, each child interpreted the message in their own way, and applied it to themselves and others as they saw fit, as Lauren demonstrates in the following interview excerpt:

Lauren: Well I learned that you shouldn't keep something in, that you should like let it out and tell people.

Hillarie: And what do you think about that?

Lauren: Well, you could get, because if you like kept it in you could get a little bit even angrier, but if you tell someone or write it down or do something then it's out of you.

Hillarie: Did you think that before or did that come through what we did in class?

Lauren: In class. It's quite new.

The children participated eagerly in the first day's morning discussion about expressing emotions. The educational aspect of the curriculum—*teaching* children that it is healthy to express themselves—seemed to catch on quite quickly. While I did not believe I had presented the idea of emotional expression in such a “militaristic” fashion, the children's enthusiasm created their own collective battle cry, “*getting it OUT!*” While I feared that my message was more directive than I had intended, and perhaps made those who did not feel able to express “it” uncomfortable or upset, each child did, in fact, seem to “get it out” during the class period and, in many cases, claimed they had not done so before. Because of this, some children were immediately put into a new position—one in which they had expressed themselves when they otherwise did not.

Following the class discussion concerning emotional expression, pictures of various unknown children of roughly the same age were projected upon the wall, so that the class, as a group, could contemplate

what emotions the children pictured were feeling, and what possibly made the depicted children feel that way. Recalling the ways in which children have been seen to unconsciously attach their own stories to the photographs of anonymous children (see Oppenheim and Waters, 1995), I hoped that having children view and express narratives in response to images of other children could also place my co-researchers in a position where they unknowingly assumed the role of audience, an external perspective, to their own internal realities. For, as Housen (1996) argued, we as humans look for ourselves in the images we see. The children could, I theorized, experience a distinct perspective on their concept of self, as both audience and subject, for they would potentially assign their own realities to the children in the images, and, in doing so, speak for themselves in unconscious ways.

This exercise was structured in order to stimulate children's thinking about life experience and emotion. At the same time, I was interested in whether children responded more candidly when asked to assume the 3rd person perspective in reference to an unknown child's emotional state. The children responded enthusiastically, as many hands were raised simultaneously throughout this portion of the discussion. In addition, when ascribing emotions like sadness, anger or loneliness to various figures, the children came up with detailed potential explanations for the unknown child's state. It seemed quite obvious that children were speaking from personal experience, but they seemed to feel rather safe and unexposed when taking this outside position in a social context, despite the fact that they also appeared to be revealing personal realities. In this way, they seemed to engage in a kind of unconscious narrative of self. I had not expected the level of depth to

which many children went in their narratory explanations, and hoped to again offer this outside perspective to the children when they later reviewed their own artwork in our individual meeting. I was interested in whether the children would exhibit the same fervour in telling their stories when they assumed the explicit role of self-as-subject in relation to the expression of their own life realities and emotions.

The second half of the first day was dedicated to painting, and this turned out to be the best medium for the children as far as instigating emotional expression. It was easy for them to use, and allowed them to engage in an expression of self that seemed a bit more natural than the other mediums. I walked around and talked with individual children, kneeling down by each of them as they worked and engaging in conversation with them. The children sat in small groups, with four desks and, in one case, six desks, pushed together, but, while the children were positioned quite closely to one another, many seemed focused within and upon their individual space. The conversations I had with the children were, in some cases, quite extensive. I was amazed at the evocative artwork being created, ranging from sunshine and rainbows, to death and abandonment.

On the second day, when we were to introduce the medium of writing to the children, I found that, although I had created a substantial curriculum offering step-by-step guidance, the project teacher did substitute the proposed discussion over media examples with another interactive discussion about art in general—she ended up adapting it in a way that seemed best for her and her class. I was quite happy to see this, but somewhat concerned as I felt the writing medium definitely required some kind of diverse visual examples to assist the children in

developing an understanding of the different ways in which text could be aesthetically used. While the designed safety of writing lay in its aesthetic form of presentation, I found it was difficult to “explain” poetry in a suitable way and disliked attempting to explain it through conversational verbal language, which is why I had planned to visually show them examples of the ways in which others had used poetry and aesthetic writing.

Therefore, the teacher and I took to the blackboard and provided the children with visual means of using the text, which, along with a crash course in the use of onomatopoeia and metaphor, seemed to help. I wasn't certain whether it was the second day of rather intensive emotion processing and expression, or the reality that writing was not perhaps the best medium for aesthetic use with this age group, but some of the students began to show some frustration with their task. Yet, by the end of the day, each child had created at least one piece of expressive art through text. I was again surprised to find the level of expression demonstrated by the children.

The third day involved the use of clay, which held nothing but pure delight for the students, while also seeming somewhat inappropriate for the task at hand. I had originally struggled with the idea of using clay for sculpture, because I felt it limited children in what they could communicate. Children struggled to conceptualize the use of aesthetic metaphorical representation, as briefly introduced to them in a morning's activity, with a ball of clay. However, almost every individual I spoke with in my initial induction year commented that children love using clay. My project teacher also was quite excited about the possibility, since the children rarely got the chance to use it and

would love the opportunity. In the curriculum, I had a section dedicated to collage and multi-media mediums, and soon wished I had substituted these for the clay, but this was a decision enforced by the project teacher, as it gave her a chance to use the resources she did not often get the chance to use. Therefore, clay served as the third and final medium.

The children did love to use it, but also seemed so very excited they forgot what they were supposed to be doing—it was now all about the magic of clay and, as many children later said in the interviews, they kind of, in a sense, forgot about their story and emotions during this part of the class. In fact, an entertaining round of make-believe ensued. Their attempts to express a life story were quickly abandoned and eleven football fields quickly surfaced. The intensive evocative artwork seemed scarce, but I felt that perhaps the children needed a break from digging inside and offered a chance to play.

I was aware that, in play, children test out various identities drawn from their immediate world of family life and that of the larger social world, as well as explore their own conceptualizations of social and familial meaning and processes within these realms. A defining feature of make-believe requires that a child is able to not only create “I wish” or “what if” scenarios, but also to share these mental representations with others in their outward expression and, as a result, allow others into their inner world (Bretherton and Beeghly, 1982) in a way that may not be readily accessible otherwise. I saw this quite explicitly in the way children in class used the clay to create visual representations of “wishes”, such as gifts they hoped to receive in the holiday season, or identities they dreamed of one day assuming, such as becoming a professional football player. Therefore, interestingly, the

children were no longer expressing past or immediate realities, but “hopes” they had assigned to the future. While this was an unexpected turn of events, I reminded myself that responsiveness to this kind of play was a way in which a child’s inner world could be reflected back to him by an adult figure; it allowed the child to perceive himself and his world exemplified in the actions of another (Winnicott, 1971). Therefore, I was conscious of sharing individual children’s excitement about their potential future and, in this way, perhaps affirming its possibility.

I was also aware of how I displayed my joy at seeing the hopes and dreams of children actualized through art, as this act showed that each child was *capable* of expressing their hopes and dreams, and could not help but compare it to the way in which the street children who had inspired the project presented their own. This group of Scottish primary school children expressed their wishes freely and openly, and many hummed to themselves as they did so, eagerly sharing their work with their peers. In contrast, the older children I had worked with in the past treated their wishes as escapes, as vital elements of their everyday survival, and, thus, they were presented as secrets, out of fear that someone could expose or rob them of their hope. Their present was exceedingly temporal for one reason or another, and their hopes *had* to work out in order to provide them with the lasting security they lacked. There was a kind of desperation in their presentation. However, the children in my project were quite proud and unaware of the consequences of their wish expression. I was not certain of whether it was primarily due to their age, or because this was a different population, but this aspect of the research process was of great interest to me, as my own worlds were unexpectedly connected and contrasted.

This clay workshop served as the end of a week in which the students created and accomplished a great deal in a short time. Therefore, they were told that, on Monday, they could present their artwork in a special school art show held in their honour. The teacher suggested that I did not inform the children of the art show beforehand as the children could become too excited and would be unable to focus on what they were doing. Also, it would be more likely that children would create with the potential audience in mind, which we felt would disrupt their creative process. In a way, I felt dishonest, as the children, if they really *were* co-researchers, would be involved in these kinds of decisions. Yet, we as an adult educator and researcher exercised our power and withheld the information in order to create a free space that may not have been if the children created their work with a bigger audience in mind. We attempted to balance this by allowing children to, if they should choose, not include a piece of artwork they did not want to share with the school. I also planned for the art to be presented anonymously, as none of the artwork had the children's name on it. In theory, this public show was intended not only to present each child's work, their life stories and emotions as art in a communicative act, but also to validate children's roles as artists and to place them in a socially-recognized position of power and status, while keeping their stories, and themselves, safe.

Class Art Exhibit

Over the weekend, the children's clay artwork had, basically, fallen apart. Luckily, the children did not take this as a sign that their dreams would eventually crumble, so I was quite happy that their grasp

on metaphor was potentially undeveloped. This clay work was also the reason a flat surface was required for the art exhibit at the last minute, for as each piece was placed upon a small plastic tray to harden over the weekend, the trays contained mere bits and pieces by Monday morning. Previously and due to realistic constraints, the teacher and I had decided to hold the exhibit in the children's own classroom, and invite other classes to come in and view their work. By the time I had arrived that afternoon, the children had already set up their artwork on their desks, because these were the only flat surfaces in the classroom, and it was simply practical. For some reason I realized at this point that I had completely overlooked the fact that each desk had the child's name glued to its surface. Therefore, I tried to quickly organize the children against the side of the small classroom in order to create some space between themselves and their artwork. But things got rushed and the first audience group arrived earlier than expected, and, in the chaos of students and teachers attempting to form simultaneous queues, the class artists eventually stepped forward to stand next to their work.

The art exhibit seemed to occur rather quickly—it was fifteen minutes of a constant flow as three other classes slowly marched through. As a whole, the children all expressed a level of excitement and nervousness with exhibiting their artwork. For many children, it seemed that they simply never had people ask them about their life, so they were finding their way in the roles presented as they went along. For example, Pele expressed nerves because he was inundated with questions, as shown in the following:

Hillarie: What do you think about people coming in and looking at your artwork?

Pele: Okay.

Hillarie: Okay? Why?

Pele: Because it's quite nervy. *Every* person, asking all kinds of questions.

Hillarie: So you were asked a lot of questions by different people. What kind of questions did people ask?

Pele: Like stuff. Like...reasons about what difference the art makes to me. What did I do this for.

Hillarie: So people asked you what your art...meant to you and why you did it.

Pele: Yes.

Hillarie: And what did you say?

Pele: I was like...I was feeling this way and wanted just to show it.

Rather than appearing upset, the child seemed a bit taken aback, and grinned while he communicated his story with exaggerated hand motions. As he described it, it was perhaps the shock of never before speaking of his life in a situation in which he himself was the topic of conversation. Other children also felt that the opportunity to own their art, as well as speak and share it with others, served an important purpose, as in the case of Sophie:

Hillarie: How did you feel when others came to look at your art?

Sophie: Ehm, proud...because it was my art. It's important to get (emotions) out because (if you don't) they stay inside and don't go anywhere.

Sophie was proud of her artwork, and therefore was happy to show it off. She also felt that keeping feelings inside was ineffective, but, as she comfortably talked about her happy family life, and only expressed "love and happiness" in her artwork, she did not seem to have any negative feelings she was fighting to keep inside.

There was a wide range of the ways in which individual children utilized the opportunities presented them in the class project, while there were also collective themes which related to a child's relationship with emotional expression with caretakers. For example, children who did not exhibit fear in displaying their negative artwork were also those who claimed they had already shared their stories with caretakers at home, as

Fernando, a child who had expressed negative emotions, responded when asked whether he'd mind if his artwork and stories were widely shared, "I wouldn't mind. I don't mind sharing things...(my parents) wouldn't mind because I tell them (the stories) at home." Similarly, while some children picked sad stories to express, which they did not want to talk about, they still felt it was important to express them regardless, as one child, Mack, stated, "I picked the stories because if you keep it all crumbled up you won't be able to let it go. And if you don't tell anyone, no one can help you."

Yet, while some of the children basked in the attention and were quite passionately engaged in their position of importance at the centre of attention, I noticed that some children—notably those with artwork expressing what I term as "difficult" emotions, namely anger, sadness, loneliness, confusion etc.—were quiet and seemed uncomfortable with the attention placed upon these particular pieces. Their apparent discomfort demonstrated that the ability to own what was expressed could be a more difficult step in the educational process. I assumed that children probably did not want others to see it nor did they want others to know which art was theirs. These fears were later confirmed through my first interview with the individual children, and I was quite upset with myself that the format of the class art show did not provide them with the anonymity they needed to feel safe.

A child's hypothetical ability to access unconscious aspects of self may have revealed areas that were perhaps unknown for a significant reason relating to a child's present notion of self, and, thus, the act of expression could be seen as being outside an individual child's sense of control, and not at all an emancipatory act as designed. A

child's anticipatory fear regarding others' reactions to their artwork could be seen as largely attributable to the responses they had learned to expect, and, as such, the ability to comfortably own their artwork in a public space could have been a practically impossible task. If children had not experienced open communication to be a beneficial endeavour through their early interaction with caregivers, this could have been regarded as an insurmountable demand of them on my part. In addition, my belief in the veiling ability of aesthetics did not seem sufficient for some, as demonstrated in the following two excerpts taken from one interview with Renaldo:

Hillarie: Do you often tell other people stories from your life?

Renaldo: No, not ever...I just keep them to myself.

Hillarie: Did you like telling your stories in school?

Renaldo: It was okay. We don't usually do that.

Hillarie: Do you like using art to express your emotions?

Renaldo: Yeah, it was fun to use. I liked using the art...

Hillarie: ...You don't like having other people know your feelings or stories?

Renaldo: No.

Hillarie: Do you think people can look at your art and know your stories and the way you feel about them?

Renaldo: Yes.

Therefore, while many of the children enjoyed and found a benefit in the art exhibit, some children were made to feel powerless, which defeated the entire point of not only the art exhibit, but the project altogether. I had hoped for the children to create a sense of power in the process, and not to be placed in a position of vulnerability and exposure. I found my research design didn't "work" the way I felt necessary, and some children were put in a position that neither they nor I wanted them to be in. My project was structured in order to help children find their own power and, ironically, an aspect of my project helped them to realize they could not find any power to exercise in a situation. Although

a life lesson, it was one I did not want them to learn on my watch or because of me. Therefore, I had to exercise my own power once again because I had put them in the powerless position; I had to step up and own my effect (Etherington, 2007).

Researcher Sharing Role of Artist

As a result of this unplanned turn of events, I embarked on compensating for the apparent imbalance created through the design and implementation of my research concept, and sought to restore a sense of power to a child's process of creation and their role as artist. Therefore, after the class art exhibit, I took a photograph of each piece of artwork while the children were on break (see Appendix 3.1 for an example). Once again, while I enjoyed the many benefits of my research context, I also came to see a disadvantage of working within a classroom, and felt the pain teachers often experienced as they attempt to fit everything into their schedule in the way they had intended. For I found I had to forge time and space for my research in a schedule that was already established, which, in turn again affected the shape of my research process.

As a result, my research context also brought about a situation where I had fifteen minutes to take and categorize photos of seventy pieces of art. However, I managed to finish just as the children reappeared to overpower me with fascination concerning my digital camera. Yet, I was dissatisfied with the quality of the rushed photography. Subsequently, I later uploaded the photographs onto my computer at home so that I could use Photoshop to edit and "straighten" them, while also brightening the colours and placing each piece against

a frame of bright black (see Appendix 3.2). I later printed these out onto glossy photo paper so that I could bring my re-presentation of their art back to each child for their review and reference in our individual meeting. By playing an active role and using various languages with which to present my interpretation of their experience, I could show rather than simply tell (see Denzin, 1997).

In addition, I saw the photos to be a way in which I could address the imbalance of power which had transpired through the art exhibit's format. Therefore, I took the Photo-shopped artwork images I had created and, with the invaluable help of my husband, constructed a big colourful poster which contained and advertised all of the children's artwork. "(School Name) Primary 5 Artists" was printed at the very top of the poster, with each child's name placed along its border (see Appendix 4). The poster was to be put up in the lobby area of the school building. By creating and exhibiting this poster, I felt each individual child could be publicly recognized as an artist once again, and their life realities and emotions presented as art, but this time they would be able to exercise power in choosing to identify which artwork was theirs. This was my second attempt to present a way that power could be created through children's control as artist over their art's presence.

The children appeared thrilled with the poster and excitedly moved to identify their own work; interestingly, those who had expressed discomfort in owning their artwork in the exhibit seemed to lose their fear of ownership. I felt their response to the poster was due to a few additional reasons; first of all, their work was no longer isolated and directly associated with individual children, but served as part of a larger social creation, and, secondly, the poster was now *my* piece of

art—it was a co-construction with their art placed within my own. At the same time, I actively worked with their artwork and affirmed its value as material worthy of being re-presented. Hence, each child was now one step removed from their artwork. In this space, there was a kind of safety created that potentially allowed them to exercise what I felt to be power through choice regarding ownership and recognition of their represented art.

As seen in the first three chapters, I had carefully designed the creation of an educational space that encouraged social communication of self through an aesthetic language that provided a child with a space of interpretation. Simultaneously, I potentially expanded knowledge of self by supporting each child in assuming the simultaneous role of artist and audience in relation to their expression. Yet, my expressive arts curriculum, inspired by personal experience and supported by philosophy and educational research, was shaped through its implementation and required ongoing work in order to potentially meet the objectives I had assigned to it. As I stood back and watched children enjoy a poster I had not expected to create, I fully realized that the context chosen for research can directly affect participants' experiences; even the most thorough educational plans can require “fixing” in their application. In addition, as I will discuss in the following section, my research experience demonstrates that the ways in which data is collected and created can also cause an effect that extends beyond pedagogical, as shown through the work of others (for example, Denzin, 1989b, 1997; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Etherington, 2001; Richardson, 1992) and demonstrates the complex ways in which home life and personal experiences affect the ways in which both educational

processes and research participation are particularly received and negotiated.

Child as Co-Researcher: First Interview

In approaching my project, I realized that I was to play two roles: an outsider who introduced and facilitated a new expressive arts class project, as well as a researcher who would conduct individual interviews. In order to investigate the children's educational processes and perspectives I entered into a dialogue with them in a distinct individual research space. As I continued to explore my research context through the class implementation, my role within the project came to be refined in great detail; while I had started out as a vague character, someone who created the idea and sat in the back of the classroom to assess its alleged effects, I started to own the fact that the curriculum itself was a product of my experience and beliefs and, to some extent, my interactive presence affected children's use of it. Thus, I combined my conceived role as "assessor" with "participant". In this way, I myself became both subject and object, both artist and audience, as I found my own emotions integrating with those of the children as they explored and found their way in the space I had explicitly created and in the roles I had explicitly assigned. It was now up to them to re/define them and for me to learn how I would be an intimate part of their emotional experience, and exactly how they would become part of my own.

In structuring the interviews ahead of time, I attempted to create a "safe space" and explored the potential of an outsider/insider dynamic, asking the question: "In what ways do degrees of familiarity with participants influence the interview experience?" (Stoudt, 2007, p. 290)

Stoudt (*Ibid*) points out that familiarity is more likely to instil an automatic and ongoing level of comfort and trust into a space; while, on the other hand, familiarity with an interviewer can also cause participants to leave out details as being already known and understood. In my project, I felt I had developed a feeling of trust with most of the individual children, and had achieved a kind of temporal familiarity. Yet, what I was most interested in is how an outsider could also produce an external space through an interview process.

I knew nothing about any of the children beyond what they had shown me in class, and they were aware of this. Or, rather, they had to trust this fact. Thus, it was up to each child to decide in what way they would shape their identity with me through what they chose to reveal and what they chose to keep. I felt this could be regarded as an act of power, a way in which a child could help balance, in a way, our power dynamic. At the same time, I realized that my interpretation of what was given or kept would play an integral role in the identity a child would be assigned in my representation of their experience, as Helling (1988) stated, “There is never a perfect correlation between the sequence of events judged as relevant by the researcher...and the subject’s experience of them.” (cited by Denzin, 1989a, p. 57)

I conducted a short individual interview with each co-researcher in the immediate days following the art exhibit. In this conversation, we briefly discussed their feelings about using art to express emotions and their life realities in an educational context. While I had developed a relationship with most of the children while in the classroom, and even in the playground, as they encircled me on my walk to the school building, I was unhappy with my first round of interviews. In my social

one-on-one conversations with individual children in the class workshops, each child worked on their artwork as they talked with me. However, our first initial interview seemed confrontational and conflicted with the idea that there are various ways in which to communicate self. As the interviews were conducted while the other children were in class in various rooms throughout the days, it would have been too disruptive to have each child interrupt classes to find their artwork. In addition, although I had provided paper and pens, none chose to use them to share their perspectives, and I almost felt as if I was trying to extract data from some of the children. No child seemed uncomfortable, but simply sat there smiling at me while providing limited responses.

The first interview created a new setting—one in which children were alone with me in a distinct space, and asked to share their perspective in a way many of them had not before been asked to do in a research interview. As a result, children were naturally a bit more shy and uncertain. Yet, after the first round of interviews, while there were quality conversations in this period of time, I was still a little defeated. I again felt as if I had created the kind of unbalanced situation I had hoped to deconstruct entirely. Unlike the interview transcripts I'd anticipated creating—pages of children's words with my short interjections as interviewer—the transcripts produced from my individual interviews with the children were somewhat sparse. Worst of all, my words overwhelmed theirs, and the subsequent issue of quantity threatened the quality of data I wanted to produce, further crushing my hope to take a smaller role in relation to that of the children, to bring the children's perspective into the foreground, while I stood in the back. The

transcripts expressed a power imbalance between an adult and child—it translated as a period of questions and abbreviated answers. There was simply no fluidity, as exemplified in the following excerpt from my interview with Fernando:

Hillarie: ...oh so you're used to expressing your emotions and getting them out. How did you feel about people coming to look at your art?

Fernando: I liked it.

Hillarie: What did you like about it?

Fernando: It was fun.

Hillarie: Why do you think it was fun?

Fernando: It was fun to have a show.

Hillarie: Okay, so you liked having people to come in to look at your art. Did they ask you any questions?

Fernando: Not really.

Most of our interviews followed a similar structure—while I had planned for the interviews to be open-ended, with myself playing the role of responsive listener, I found that I was playing the role of subject and agent in that I was actively structuring the interview and becoming an explicit, if not primary, participant in the production of data. I had prepared potential questions, but had not planned nor wanted to utilize my questions so extensively. As discussed in Chapter Three, in a traditional phenomenological endeavour, researchers are to engage in a process of reduction, to search for meanings to emerge, to rise from the pool of words. In contrast, in my own research, I found that I had to *construct* meanings from the relative lengthy interpretations and explanations I created to summarize each interview. I had to engage in a process of production, rather than reduction.

This made me quite uncomfortable, as I felt as if I was speaking for the children—explicitly drawing conclusions from their short responses and painting them a certain way. As this was to be a hermeneutic endeavour, combining both my perspective with those of

the children was always the goal. However, I felt as if I was also constructing their perspective—elongating and fattening it to an extent that seemed more creative and subjective than it should have been. I was unsure about whether I had adequately presented the children's interpretations along with my own, whether the description produced was truly complete and balanced. Nevertheless, I transcribed the interviews, derived what I felt to be each piece of data's essential meaning, as in a phenomenological endeavour, and combined this with layers of field-notes and observations from my interaction with each child and my interpretation of their individual experience, as in a hermeneutic endeavour.

From this constructed text, I created a précis from my epoché, but, corresponding to my methodological design, I then prepared to take back my data analysis and ask each child for their response, their opinion, of my construction and description so that they could then approve and validate my interpretation, formed by our shared interpretations, or disagree and wish to contribute something else. I hoped this would in some way alleviate my fears of incorrectly representing the children's experience. Yet, in order to do this, as with the curriculum, I translated my interpretive analysis into a kind of story that was suitable and accessible to a 9 year-old child.

I also printed out each revised photograph of each child's artwork and placed both the photo and story together in a draft book with each child's name on their respective cover (see Appendix 5.1a and 5.2a). Once again, this act was structured in order to formally help children to exercise authority over their voice and interpretation, which I would then affirm through a reproduction of (my interpretation) of their

perspective; I could, in a way, prove my responsiveness and explicitly recognize their role as co-researcher and author. Their viewpoint was to be the data, and the ways in which they exercised their power to edit and confirm the stories I composed was to be a significant aspect of the research process.

Child as Editor: Second Interview as a Reflective Space

While I was frustrated with the unbalanced interview conversation, children did seem to express a great deal of personal information in their artwork. In fact, the bulk of children's aesthetic stories explored in our second interview space had to do with their family life, in which they were firmly embedded, and, as a result, this inspired much discussion regarding children's home experiences in our reflective space. However, this was not my intention. The point of my research was to gather children's perspectives on the expressive processes, which would help me to see how children used aesthetic life narratives, and whether they could be used in primary school classrooms. While some children in my project bluntly stated they did not discuss "family stuff" with anyone, despite the fact that I had not asked (or expected) them to, as I only planned to focus on their general opinion of the aesthetic process, and not on the personal experiences they were expressing, the children seemed to quickly bring intimate realities of their home life into our space. As a result, an interesting characteristic of my interviews with the children became the ways in which I consciously respected and became very aware of the questions I asked, while formally acknowledging the boundaries each child verbally established, if only to breach them soon after. Our relationship truly

started to take on a therapeutic feel. Family stories and emotions became intertwined in the more generalized conversation, and I found that, rather than addressing the bits and pieces that were disbursed by individual children, I acknowledged that I had received them, but would not take them beyond the original borders instituted by each child.

As my research process progressed, I saw how my role as researcher intersected with the ways in which individual children felt free to “be”. In approaching the second interview, I planned to engage in some reparative work in the second interview with the few children who seemed uncomfortable with the lack of anonymity in the art exhibit. Once again, while I had hoped to help children facilitate power, some were placed in a vulnerable position as they were directly associated with the more difficult stories or images they did not necessarily want to share widely. Yet, through providing children with the opportunity to choose and present what they wanted to reveal in our final interview, I hoped to restore the power dynamic which had been unsettled by children given no choice in whether they owned their artwork in a social space.

Saying this, I approached the second and final interview with some trepidation and hope, as I knew the format would be different this time around. For I would not be conducting a question/answer session as before; I would not be directly asking each child what *they* thought. Rather, I would be asking each child what they thought *about their story and book*—reassigning attention upon the external object, rather than on the child, as was done in the first classroom session with the unknown children’s photos. There was to be a space, a step of removal between a child and their work, between artist and audience, as, once again, the

subject a child was to reflect upon was a co-construction and I was to be an active participant in a child's process. It was not only theirs, but mine. In this way, we were both readers, listeners, interpreters, researchers, artists and authors, reflecting upon a product of our interaction and our time together.

In the second interview, I sat down with each child, and let them open their book to look it over. I then asked if they'd like to read the story out loud, if they'd like me to read the story, or if they'd like to read it silently to themselves. It was actually interesting to see what method of reading each child picked. In any case, the story was read, which we then discussed. I offered them their choice of pens and they then had the opportunity to go through the draft book and cross out or add anything they wanted. I was delighted to find that this went over really well, and the edits the children made were quite interesting, as each made a statement (for example, see Appendix 5.1b and 5.2b). While some children removed or added text, others wanted to add more glitter, put their portrait on the cover, increase the size of a photograph, move photos, or put some of their photos on the back cover, so that they could show their book without having anyone see the photos they did not want to share.

Some children simply looked up at me and said that they couldn't change anything—it was all true. The issue of verisimilitude appeared as a significant point in children's reaction to my interpretation of their narratives, which I took as confirmation that I had interpreted their viewpoint correctly, and, in this way, we shared in a successful exchange and created a shared understanding. In this way, my own role was also affirmed, as I had doubts about whether I had, in fact,

appropriately interpreted their perspective. While the nature of the first interview caused me to engage in an active construction of each child's experience when developing the subject stories, this act could be seen as a constant aspect of narrative research, as the tellings of participants are rarely relayed in the structured chronological forms which often define the researcher's rendition, as Goodson and Sikes (2001) comment:

When someone tells their story to a life historian, they can be seen to be actively involved in constructing a version of their story and of their life; generally a version which is linear and relatively neat and tidy in a way that real life, or rather, lived experiences never is. (p. 46)

As each child reviewed the draft book in our second interview, some were quite happy to find the book was "true", as they were also surprised and delighted to find that I had "made their art into pictures" and reproduced what they felt they verbally communicated to me. For them, I had correctly captured their experience. In other cases, children appreciated that I recognized that they did *not* want to talk about their feelings or emotions, even if it conflicted with the message they were explicitly aware I was sending. In this way, I showed that I was not just hearing what I wanted to hear, but what a child wished to communicate, as demonstrated by my conversation with Mack:

Hillarie: Well, what do you think about all this?

Mack: I like it.

Hillarie: What do you like about it?

Mack: Mm...that you said I don't like to speak to other people or share any of this stuff.

In this way, I affirmed children's ability to disagree with me. On the other hand, some children simply expressed happiness with the book, as demonstrated in the following two responses:

Zoe: I love that story!...It's cool, it's cool (she reads over the story again). I can't change any of that—I just can't. It's so cool.

Hillarie: Okay. What do you think about this?

Yazmin: I like it. The writing...and the picture...and...yeah, yeah...yeah. All of it.

While I felt it to be important to criticize my design in order to “improve” it and to remind myself of how vital ongoing critical reflexivity is while working with children, it was the ways in which children felt proud or happy with the project which seemed to demonstrate the positive potential of this kind of emotional education intervention. The following excerpts illuminate a shared experience of construction, the notion of truth in interpretation, and my intimate role in individual children’s experience of telling:

Hillarie: What do you think of the book?

Yazmin: It’s good.

Hillarie: Okay. What do you think about the story?

Yazmin: Excellent.

Hillarie: What do you like about it (the story)?

Yazmin: Because you said everything that I was saying.

Hillarie: What do you think about the story?

Kayla: I like it. Ehm, it’s exactly what I said.

Hillarie: What do you think?

Harry: It’s just great.

Hillarie: Cool. What do you like about it?

Harry: All of this, all of this. It’s all true.

While assuming a particular form of hermeneutic phenomenology in an effort to uphold my ethical responsibilities to the children involved, it actually did, in a sense, produce a therapeutic exchange. I affirmed their communicative stance, their ability to communicate their experience in a way that I could understand and reproduce. Yet, while I had intended to serve as a source of external affirmation for the children, I found that their response to my own served the same purpose for me. For, as a researcher, I found it incredibly validating to have a child describe my interpretation of their

experience as being accurate. My internal belief that I could, in fact, understand children to some extent was substantiated and extinguished the constant doubt that I was simply getting it wrong. As Etherington (2007) states, “Power permeates every aspect of research relationships” (p. 614). Despite my efforts to empower children in the classroom and research contexts, I found that reflexivity required me to use my power as an adult and accept that the distance I had idealized was impossible and dishonest. The children were an intimate aspect of my learning process as a researcher, as I came to be a subject for them to shape and use in their individual participatory process.

I interpreted children’s openness to be due to, not only the success of being, in their view, correctly and truthfully understood by an adult, but also because the children were not accustomed to having themselves be the focus of an adult’s time and energy, and directly engaged in the process, as expressed in the following:

Lauren: Ehm, I’m quite happy... (a minute passes) Actually, ehm, yes. I’ve not ever had anything done like this to my artwork or anything. This is the first time.

Lauren’s response provided me with the reassurance that, despite the instances in which my research design had, in my opinion, failed its purpose when it came to anonymity, it still created a structure in which the project could serve as a kind of resource for the children. Most had never been asked to share their life stories, and it did not seem as if they had ever had an adult affirm their perspective, their active role as creator, in that way. Their artwork was further confirmed to be art through its re-presentation—not only was their verbal testimony confirmed through its re-telling in the story, but their visual expression was also validated. Although they had played the role of artist and

author, it was the external validation of their roles in which they may have found power and, conversely, through the success of this interaction, the validation of my own roles in the project.

In my research, I subscribed to the belief that a child's educational experience could potentially support or diminish the effects of a child's home life—minimally, it could provide a new social space, which they could use to continuously integrate their worlds and define themselves. Yet, through my individual interviews with each child, I found that the educational space I sought to create extended beyond the classroom curriculum and into a new space. My research built a context disconnected from a child's home space, the everyday social educational space and the familiar figures which inhabited both. Therefore, I questioned the potential of a new additional realm introduced to them by a responsive stranger—a reflective space.

In order to fully participate in this extra space, some children seemed to attempt to balance the ways in which they usually were with a new way of being. At the same time, the roles the children chose for me also seemed to assist them in this complex facilitation, and, in a way, through my open engagement with these assigned roles—acting how I was supposed to act, as they intended—allowed the children to wield a power that I had not anticipated. Rules were established by the child, and subsequently broken. Roles were assigned and subsequently tested. There was an unspoken system in place that was constructed through our interaction, which regulated our relationship in this brief reflective space.

In our space, they were, ideally, offered a kind of momentary liberation from their worlds and their identities within them, and found

some semblance of a “blank slate” with a stranger who emphasized their worth and validated their intentional stance. Whether or not a child could easily and clearly explore this opportunity, or felt free to extend it into their other contexts, was an entirely different matter, for the rules assigned to our space may not be those easily applied to their other areas of life. Regardless, while I set out to gather children’s opinions of a therapeutic expressive arts process, which was intended to reveal inner realities for their own deciphering and consumption, children also wished to discuss their personal discoveries, as well as their emotional life, with someone who could inflict no consequences upon their life as they knew it, even if they were half-consciously opposed to the general idea of doing so. As I sat on the bus on my way home after the last interview, I reflected back upon my experience and how the children had used me and how they had shaped and moulded the interview space we shared. At the time, I could not help but think it was too good of an opportunity for some of them to pass up.

Research Book: Final Product

After the second interview, I took each draft book home and implemented the changes each child specified. Afterwards, the edited sheets were printed and bound into books for each child. Each book had a child’s name printed on its cover, and its pages were arranged and presented in the ways individual children chose (see Appendix 5.1c and 5.2c). By doing this, I intended to emphasize my affirmation of their perspective, by creating permanent blueprints of a child’s experience, as described, discussed and verified by each child. In this way, their viewpoint was “real” enough to be reproduced in an official way. While

the book was to serve as a way in which I could demonstrate my responsive affirmation, and to explicitly emphasize their role as co-researcher, artist and author, I also wanted to thank each child for their participation in my project. Once again, I felt this book was a way in which the children could also benefit from the research, and to receive data produced from our interaction (see Appendix 5.3 and 5.4). In addition to the co-researchers, the five children who had not taken part in the research were also given a book to thank them for their participation in my educational intervention.

While I as the researcher walked away with physical material, data produced from our interaction, I felt it fair for the children also to receive a tangible record of our time together. The book was to serve as an embodied moment in time, the temporal experience of a child. At the same time, I told children that they could change the book in any way they should choose—it was *their* storybook. For the co-researcher children, it represents their interactive research experience as they interpreted it. In this dissertation, especially in the case studies that will follow in Chapter Five, I present my interpretation of our relationships. In this way, while the expressive arts intervention was, in fact, “my” research and my learning process, it also served as an opportunity for children to do their own exploration of relational self. Each of us involved in the project used it in different ways, and left with a record of the interactive interpretation we had assigned to it. For, enclosing a child’s experience in the form of an aesthetic narrative produced an “exterior form of an interior form” that could otherwise be a “momentary flash” (Ricoeur, 1974, p. 215), and not a historical record

upon which they could reflect, share and hide beyond the classroom and research space.

As I told various educators about this aspect of the project—namely, the fact that each child was to receive a book with their stories and artwork as a research memento—they were delighted. They felt it would help the children to feel like true co-researchers, and that they'd surely remember the project for a long time. In the same way I had envisioned children fully assuming ownership of their creative power in the art exhibition, I imagined the book to serve as another way in which a child could exercise power and freedom. At the same time, I later recognized that perhaps the book inflicted a kind of burden upon them—the unintended obligation to bring our detached, enclosed space physically with them into their other worlds. In this way, once again, my attempt to empower could only be actualized through a child's interpretation of the opportunity presented to them, which was, in turn, based on their historical experiences of relationships and their intimate life realities, experiences and memories.

Reflexive Aftermath: Explaining Interpretation

In this chapter, I have shared the story of what happened when I implemented the research concept, developed through the narrative and arts-based literature and educational philosophy in Chapter Two, in a short-term intervention as an example of an ABER project. My methodological approach was based on the philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology, and informed by innovative research approaches defined by educational (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990; Clough, 2002;

Goodson and Sikes, 2001), narrative (Denzin, 1990, 1992) ethnographic (Denzin, 1997; Ellis, 1997; Ellis and Bochner, 2000) and practice-based (Etherington, 2001; McLeod, 2004a; Speedy, 2000a, 200b, 2004) research endeavours. Yet, I still did not anticipate the *extent* to which my research relationship with children would affect their expressive processes. After all, I did not know any of them. And the classroom implementation only lasted a week, while the two interviews intended to assess the therapeutic effects of the expressive processes added up to, at a maximum, a half-hour of time with each child. I simply did not feel there was enough time for me to have an effect, but I firmly believed that the expressive educational processes I introduced could last a lifetime.

Granted, I could not explore a lifetime's effect in my project. Instead, I intended to explore the use and value of aesthetic life narratives through the present-day perspectives of the young students who utilized them in both the class and research spaces. I expected the children to explore and expand their horizons of self through their interaction with their artwork and the sharing of their aesthetic stories with their peers as an arts-based interpretation of Freire's dialogic communication. In approaching my research, I intentionally did not have knowledge of each child's life in their contexts, as I wanted our space to be, in a sense, free from the identities they embodied in their other ongoing worlds. At the same time, each co-researcher naturally brought their other roles with them into our space all on their own—my attempt to exclude them was a meaningless act. Roles, identities and experiences are embodied realities, layers within our construct of being, within the network composing our working models, and, subsequently, they could

not be left behind, but would be very much present in whatever space a child, or researcher, inhabited. As a result, my attempt to start fresh with a new population and context caused me to crash into contradictions.

Ellis (1991) called for sociologic work that shows how emotions are experienced from a subjectively situated viewpoint in order to understand how everyday processes are experienced in the lives of real people. In this chapter, I share my thoughts and feelings as researcher and participant because my relationship with each child produced a co-constructed emotional experience that came to be an integral aspect of my research. In my experience, I saw that the project intervention seemed to help children communicate their stories and the emotions they assigned to these in ways they had not done before. For them, it was new. It was cool. Many seemed to learn more about themselves through these processes. And their exploration of self continued in our interview space. In this way, I was very involved in what I had theorized to be a private and social educational process that only involved a child and their peers in the classroom context.

My research implementation showed that individual children used educational and philosophical processes differently. Yet, I could not utilize the same education and philosophy literature I had used to create the research concept and idealize its effects to explain or explore the potential reasons individual children made use of the same processes, as well as their particular use of me, in different ways. For the literature that inspired me discussed universal realities. *The life of a Person. The world of a Child.* It did not help me to differentiate between the intimate details behind each child's ways of being; the breath, skin and beating heart of their own significant personal existence.

As I explained in Chapter One, I used psychological literature to help explore the personal negotiation between home life and school life, as well as the particular nature of our research relationship. But, as I did so, I merged it with my personal experiences as I attempted to make sense of what happened. To paraphrase Etherington (2004), I found that, in fact, the beginning was in my ending. My research concept was inspired by my personal experience with American street kids, and, not only did this experience affect my expectations of what would occur through its Scottish primary school implementation, it provided my co-researchers with a new subject to negotiate in their subjective participation in the project intervention.

The project implementation revealed how children both communicated and expressed their emotional life and, in research interviews, how they also engaged reflexively with their emotional expression as they shared a momentary relationship with a researcher in a reflective space. Attachment theory helped me to further describe and explore how my past beliefs merged and were negotiated with a new perspective concerning the complexity of interaction and relationships. I saw that my definition of freedom *from* other realities was matched by some children's ability to feel free *to* involve and bring them into in our small research space. We had defined liberation differently, but the children's own definition had been made in reaction to the one I had presented to them. I wished to create a safe space, and, for some children, the space was safe enough to allow them to explore their lives in ways they had not before done, and I was a "safe enough" audience for their disclosure, despite my original desire that they act independent of me and communicate all their emotional realities and stories through

their artwork. I had not intended our time to serve as a counselling space. Yet, what seemed to be an incredibly quick attachment developed in a very short time, and I found myself balancing children's ways of being in a way I had not expected.

In my project, I found that children had, in a way, invited me into their heads as a result of the "way I was", and, no matter how hard I tried to not "move anything around" or "bump and knock something over", I became an intimate part of a child's immediate world for a short time, occupying some of the space between inside and outside, with only our communicative exchanges maintaining the connective bridge. My failure to fully comprehend the intersection, the potential merging, of a child's home life, with a child's school life and, in addition, a reflective external space introduced in my project, brought about a storm of post-project reflexivity and re-evaluation encapsulated in an outbreak of questions. For instance, I wondered whether I had inadequately taken into consideration the children's own world. Did I put the children in an awkward position in relation to their parents? I wondered if perhaps I had been presumptuous of their ability or willingness to take part, the accessibility of the ideas I was introducing: "Situated activities pre-suppose; they pre-suppose relationships between situations; they presuppose sets of situations." (Bernstein, 1975, p. 166) Had I pre-supposed? Had I focused too much on the individual's sense of meaning-making without incorporating their established and yet ongoing negotiation with home life? Had I insufficiently engaged in a critical look at how I perceived and idealized the children themselves; had I neatly substituted my expectations learned through my experience with other populations to this research population?

The last question I asked myself brought about a small epiphany that had escaped my reflexive examination of self, and I once again found connective contrast between my past and present experiences. The children who originally inspired my project were young people living on the street. Although I had talked of how these other children inspired the project, I did not fully realize that I also adapted their use of aesthetic expression to form my expectations about how the project children would also experience the processes and roles introduced. The street kids had formally disassociated themselves from their home-life, out of mortal fear or simply to avoid, as I remember one boy saying, “losing himself entirely”. The population who inspired the project defined themselves in opposition to their former home environment in order to reconfigure, at a basic level, who they were and who they were not. Most were engaged in a desperate attempt to re-build a fresh liberated independent presentation of self. Their entire world was based on their own definition of freedom. They had rejected the social norms to which they had been assigned and negotiated a new sense of being with the old. They had escaped.

However, in comparison, the children I worked with in my research were not only younger, but were inextricably associated with their home-life—physically, mentally and emotionally—and their ongoing home context contributed primarily to their evolving conception of situated and relational self. My own disappointment and anger with parents, developed through my exposure to child abuse and neglect in home contexts, had prevented me from fully recognizing their influence—both negative *and* positive—in my project children’s present life. At the same time, while I had not dismissed the reality of parental

influence upon a child in my research, I simply did not plan on bringing it up. In a way, strangely, I felt that it I could easily limit our shared horizon to the immediate educational space, and detach both the children and myself from our past and ongoing lives for a short while.

Practically, this was brilliant convenience. Philosophically, theoretically and therapeutically, it was an impossibility.

As the project unfolded, I realized that this exercise of power, the autonomous agency, the assumption of roles meant to create power, were managed, in a sense, differently by individual children in relation to their emotions and ability to disclose. My concept of “effect” and “affect” was necessarily broadened further, as I witnessed children utilizing our time together, producing a kind of emotionality, in ways that surprised me. While I had sought to recognize and affirm the power of children, I myself did not fully own the power of authority that I could not simply detach from.

Psychological theorizations found in attachment theory helped me to explain the individual differences in the ways in which our research relationship affected children’s use of aesthetic and emotional expression of self. Yet, before I turn to the Chapter Five case studies in which I engage in a kind of psychological analysis of my relationship with children, it is necessary to point out that I have selectively chosen ideas from attachment literature, rather than adopting the theory as a whole. I have explicitly witnessed the vital importance of relationships, communication and context in a child’s development and perception of self in my personal life and professional work. At the same time, as I hold the belief that we are engaged in a continuous negotiation with self, I also believe that the ways in which children react and behave in

response to a caretaker's own behaviour cannot be confidently predicted.

In this way, while I adhere to the conceptual tenets of attachment theory, I focus more generally upon the ways in which family relationships develop a child's ability to engage in social interaction and exploration of self. In doing so, I do not utilize the classification types upon which early attachment theory was developed; for example, "secure" and "insecure". Yet, as I designed my project under the presumption that every child could assume and exercise power within the communicative roles I introduced, I did assign labels to children, based on my own experiences. I did not define secure as being securely attached in the sense Bowlby and others intended but, based on my past experiences, I somehow imagined each child in my project to behave in the way I expected, in the way I had previously observed. While I regarded each child to be an expert on their own life, as well as an active agent, I did not anticipate the intense variety of participatory experiences I was to be presented with.

Attachment theory provided a perspective on children's development of self through figures with whom they interacted. As I myself unexpectedly became an interactive figure in individual children's life, I was now a part of their life. Yet, my role was partly defined by the roles other adults had played in their life. The therapeutic effect I was interested in was a negotiated interpretation of who I was and what I represented in comparison with a child's attachment figures. In applying a set of ideas found in formal therapeutic work to a project based in the social sciences I found that my philosophical and epistemological beliefs did not conflict, but worked in unison with the

notions of attachment theory and other ideas situated in child development literature and provided me with a framework for further analysis of my research. I began to explore the ways in which Bowlby's internal working model (see Bretherton and Munholland, 2008) resonated with the beliefs and concepts which inspired my research design and expectations. I came to believe that, despite my short-sightedness, and perhaps because of it, I was part of individual children's venture beyond their everyday contexts into a new exploratory and temporal space in which they could step outside ongoing identities and "try out" new ways of being, interpreted and performed in their individual ways and based on their historical experiences.

In my research implementation, the children blew apart my expectations and my neatly laid plans. I was shocked, surprised, delighted and painfully involved in the ways I saw children take their memories and realities and use them, or shape them, to participate in our space. In this way, a primary finding of my research journey was explicitly personal and demanded that I engage in a change of perspective regarding both the part of child participants and myself as the adult participant in the processes we shared. While I hoped to help children learn more about themselves, the lesson I in fact learned from the children became the gem of my research experience: "Hey, we're going to find our own way." In other words, children will continue on their "pathway of development" (Ainsworth, 1985), even if they often must construct their path themselves.

Implementation Chapter Summary

My methodological design was based upon the philosophies of hermeneutic and phenomenological thought in which knowledge is constructed through interpretive communication. As a result, in order to explore children's feelings about using aesthetic life narratives in a classroom context I implemented a short-term curricular intervention in which I gathered data through negotiating my interpretation with those of individual children in social space and in two individual interviews. While my creation of a reflective interview space was intended to help children create power through the roles of editor and co-researcher, and to ensure that I had interpreted their perspectives correctly, I found that it provided them with a new space in which they could explore their own sense of being.

The particular relationship I shared with individual children produced an informally therapeutic effect that extended beyond the effect I had hoped to facilitate through the aesthetic processes of processing, expressing and sharing emotional life stories. In the next chapter, I use the psychological theory introduced in Chapter Two to present four case studies which show how individual children used and found freedom in our interview space in quite different ways. Fernando, Abby, Aaron and Jeff represent the complex range of individual experiences with using aesthetic life narratives that was demonstrated by a classroom of my young co-researchers. For while some children verbally shared coping strategies they used in relation to their emotional self in everyday contexts and did not express them through aesthetic means, other children actively explained and applied new coping

strategies in our research space, but could not immediately extend these beyond our space into their school or home world. And, in a few cases, children assumed new ways of being which they carried back with them into the other world. While I had intended to gather children's perspectives of the substance of my research project—aesthetic life stories—my research implementation also illuminated that the structure and shape of the research process itself, as well as my interactive external presence, played a significant role in shaping the children's experience with the short-term expressive arts intervention.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five: Case Studies as Findings

A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space. (Bachelard, 1964/1958, p. 47)

Introduction

In *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard (1964/1958) argued that aesthetic language can help to reveal the psychological experience we have assigned to our subjective spaces—like the space we call Home. Our relationship with our spaces is what makes us who we are. Home is not a physical conception, but a living experience that we wear inside us. It bends and sways. It lapses thousands of miles. It is composed of many different realities, which each hold their own meaning and texture and purpose, like a map we use to navigate life within and beyond. In my project, it was children's relationship with their home space that came to be the focus of their aesthetic narratives, as well as that which shaped the particular ways they utilized the expressive processes introduced by the curricular implementation and the reflective research space.

My research concept was inspired by philosophy. I hoped to show children that coming to know and understand their relationship with their realities could help them to expand their knowledge of self; I believed that the arts could provide a child with the language to speak unknown stories, to reveal the bones of their emotions and the skeleton of their self. At the same time, my research experience has demonstrated

that children can access their universe of home and the experiences which orchestrate its form through art, but their willingness or ability to negotiate this knowledge in their life is intimately wrapped up with the lives they have lived. Some cannot know. Some cannot use new knowledge of self. Some don't want to know. Understanding more about ourselves and the reasons why we do or feel or are the way we are is simply not as easy as revealing internal realities.

In my research, I set out to argue that a child's personal experience with their world can be processed, expressed and shared through art media, while expanding their understanding of self in a social educational context. The case studies of Fernando, Abby, Aaron and Jeff demonstrate that the "success" of a project seeking to address the whole child is relative to a child's ability to apply this coherent conception to self. I focused upon these four children because they exhibited the true variety in experiences a student can have when faced with a similar educational agenda. Each child's home experiences differed and these differences can be seen to illuminate the divergent ways in which they used the research space and my presence. For some, the space opened by positive external regard is familiar and comfortable. For others, this was a new area to explore, and one requiring negotiation, make-believe and a redefinition of established assumptions. While using attachment theory as an analytical tool, the following case studies are not organized by attachment classification, but as individual interactions which took on their own form, shape, meaning and results. Specifically, I used the stories each child brought into the research space, in which they described their relationship with parental figures and their overall domestic situation, in order to further elaborate upon the possible

reasons each child used the educational and research spaces in very different ways.

Each study reflects the distinctness of each relationship, and what was produced in my time with the individual child. While I contemplated producing a more standardized presentation of the encounters, I felt it contradictory to the general finding of the project: each child is different, and each child will make use of any space in their own way. As Clough (2002) points out, each story will inevitably speak for itself. As a result, the following case studies differ in voice, length and detail, reflecting, simply, an unintended diversity of my experience with each child. At the same time, I feel each case communicates the reality that each child's experience is a collaborative construction—each child is an active agent, but the versatility and critical reflexivity of the roles we as adults play in relation to individual children is a vital aspect of the therapeutic, ethical and progressive nature of the educational exchange.

I also feel it important to explain the reasoning behind the analytical approach I used in the following case studies. As I began to explore the relationship that developed between myself and each child, I tried to maintain what I felt to be an ethical distance from a more in-depth conceptual analysis. While attempting to honestly present my personal interpretations of a child's descriptions, I remained uncomfortable with examining children's artwork and positing more elaborate interpretations as to the signifying elements which the artwork seemed to embody. The reason for this is, despite my use of a therapeutic theory in my analysis, as an educational researcher, and a co-researcher at that, I was not assuming the role of therapist or counsellor

in my project, I did not have contact with children's home environment, and I was not comfortable with detailed conjecture, or what I see as a "picking apart" of a child or their artwork.

While it is impossible to not derive wider implications from a child's stories, actions and expressions, I attempted to balance this while also maintaining my focus upon the active *process* of a child's interpreting, describing and communicating, rather than upon the products created. In other words, it was not my intention to further analyze each child's artwork or construct meaning beyond the child's frame of reference and the meaning they themselves assigned to the work they created. At the same time, I recognized that artwork does, in fact, have its own voice which should be seen rather than presented solely through discursive analysis and textual meaning-making, and I have therefore included examples of individual children's work partially in the text, and in the appendices as reference (see Appendix 5 and 6). I truly wished to take what the child gave me as a way of upholding their understanding of why I was there: I wanted to see how they felt about the process of aesthetic expression and the potentially empowering roles I introduced to them in their educational context. It was incredibly easy to fall into the life of each child, as their experience in the project was inextricably entwined with their lifelong experiences, but I attempted to provide a thoughtful, yet tentative, analysis of the children's experience with me and the project. While I have attempted to analyze the approach each child used in expressing who they are, I also made a sincere effort to retain what they themselves gave, keeping in mind the "research bargain" between myself and each child, or the "understanding between the researcher and the informant about what the nature of their

relationship is and what each can expect from their mutual participation.” (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 26)

In inviting children to be co-researchers as experts of their own life, it was necessary to engage in a significant amount of reciprocity (Oakley, 1981; Munro, 1998) in order to maintain or, rather, create a sense of equality in our research relationship. For instance, I answered their more personal questions about me, as they answered my questions about their educational experience throughout the research process. At the same time, the analyses that follow take place beyond the boundaries of my individual relationship with each child. Yet, as agreed in the research bargain, I have represented each child’s perspective while simultaneously offering my interpretation, which each child is also free to do in their other worlds. In this way, each case study reflects the “give and take” nature of our relationship, and my explicit role, not as an academic expert, but as a mutual observer of, and participant in, a shared phenomenon.

Each case study tells the story of an individual child’s involvement in the various steps of the educational project through my personal reflections involving my research relationship with each child. I draw from attachment ideas to further explore the ways in which each child’s family life, as presented by them through the stories they chose to tell me, affected their educational/research experience and the relationship I had with each child. As with my reflexive narrative, the telling of my research experience embodies the literature regarding emotional communication and the exercise of power in educational spaces, as discussed in Chapter Two, and offers a more detailed analysis of not only what happened, but potentially *why* it happened, based on

not only the stories shared, but on how this looked, sounded and felt—not just through the ideas and material found in the many books and articles to which I referred in developing my process, but through the actual living encounter between myself and each child.

Fernando

While the majority of children who expressed sadness, anger or loneliness in their art then experienced discomfort with its exhibition, Fernando stood in stark contrast to his classmates. He was a child for whom the project appeared to make little difference, in a way, but for very different reasons than I had theorized when designing the curriculum. In this way, he fits nicely in my initial conceptualization of the child—the child who is able to assume and own negative emotions and expressive roles, and find value in the communicative process. The artwork he created was intense and emotionally evocative.



As demonstrated in the photograph above, in our interview time Fernando shared how he had expressed sadness and fear; he communicated the painful absence of his father and conveyed an explicit sense of vulnerability in light of his life realities. At the same time, while the other children who expressed similar feelings in their art spoke of being uncomfortable with public ownership and engaging in verbal discussion concerning their artwork, Fernando appeared to have no issue with not only visually sharing his artwork with his peers, but was also at ease with discussing it with both myself and others, despite what appeared to be its intense emotional substance.

only do but to *feel* and *be*. For my goals spread far beyond a class exercise—it was meant to stretch into the breadth of their life and impact their core of coping. Fernando seemed able to read me. His perception expanded beyond this foreign stranger who had shown up in his world for he also exhibited an intimate relationship with his peers, and was able to empathize and engage with them in what I felt to be impressively subtle ways. For instance, when I was faced with a child who was worked up and speaking rather frantically about something, lost in their excitement, Fernando unobtrusively “translated” what the child was attempting to communicate. He did so in a gentle and calm manner that did not seem authoritarian or condescending, as if he was annoyed I couldn’t figure it out on my own or was excited to show off his skill, but seemed careful to ensure that all those involved felt fairly represented and that his role was understated.

As I was quite fond of and intrigued by this child, I was rather sad to find our two interviews did not last long. Yet, the relatively short time we spent was composed of his personal insights, which came naturally and in a quite thoughtful manner. He talked a bit about the dangerous neighbourhood he lived in, and how the aesthetic expression of his father’s absence made him feel “closer” to his father, as if he was right there. He stated that thinking of his father made him sad, but, when he was in the process of expressing his sadness through the art, he found that he could, in his words “see” his father “in his head”, which made him happy.

He was also quick to ask me questions in turn. Fernando liked the draft book I created for his review, and, when asked what his mom and step-dad would think of it, if he chose to share it, he simply stated

that they'd "probably already know". He did not remove any text, but, after some thought, decided to move the photographs around, which he expressed by drawing arrows on the page. His confident use of the pen provided also proved to be significant to me. Most of the other children waited to be encouraged to make the physical edits, or simply directed me to make the changes for them, despite my initial invitation. Fernando trusted my invitation and accepted it without requiring further reassurance.

Fernando described a different kind of relationship with his caretakers than the other children who expressed sadness, anger, loneliness and confusion. Fernando seemed to demonstrate what Main (1991) described as a "secure state of mind" in relation to his conception of attachment (Slade, 2008, p. 764). He expressed sadness about his loss of proximity with his biological father, whom he seemed to regard as an important attachment figure. However, while acknowledging this attachment with his father could cause a kind of crisis, as this paternal figure was no longer present, Fernando appeared able to securely manage his attachment relationship, the simultaneous absence he could not control and the conflicting emotions he felt as a result. He did not seem to engage in any deactivating strategies, but recognized, expressed and owned his emotions and realities without apparent fear of any negative response from others. His ability to do so supports the idea that the individuals who score low on attachment anxiety and avoidance are also more comfortable with the acknowledgement and disclosure of emotions (Kahn and Harrison, 2009).

Fernando was able to predict how his family would react to his artwork, stating they already knew how he felt about the particular

stories he expressed in our time together. Despite his expressed distress over his father's absence, Fernando seemed to also engage in effective co-regulation with his attachment figures at home (mother and stepfather). His attachment figures served as ongoing responsive containers for his difficult life realities, and as such he did not feel it necessary to hide his emotions from them and, as a result, from anyone else, including himself. For, if a child has had a supportive attachment figure who continues to help him to "make sense" of a situation and the emotional effects it has caused, he can potentially also sort through and address conflicting realities and the confusion these can cause. In Fernando's case, his communicative relationship with his mother and stepfather seemed to help him manage the various emotions he felt in response to his father's absence.

It appeared that living in this kind of home environment allowed Fernando to internalize their unconditional support of his feelings and communication, and helped him to develop healthy self-regulation. He was able to internalize these attachment figures and the positive regard they produced, which enabled him to grow into a confident and empathetic individual, allowing him to assume positive coping strategies that have facilitated a kind of autonomy and self-actualization (Mikulincer, et al., 2003, p. 84). Fernando was also able to ascertain the potential effect of his actions upon those around him, indicating the presence of what Fonagy et al. (2004/2002) term as reflective functioning. He volunteered to assist in the communicative process between others, able to assume the perspective of both parties and respond accordingly. He could fully involve himself in the project—

expressing, sharing and communicating his difficult emotions without apparently having to reorder his way of being.

In the same way in which our interviews did not last long, I find that I cannot write much about Fernando because, as Dunlop (1984) pointed out, there is much more to talk about in terms of “deficiency” or “distortion” when discussing emotions or psychopathology. The literature is devoted to the ways in which children’s “dysfunction” is the result of familial structure, personal realities and dispositions. Our interviews were quite short and to the point because Fernando had no issue with verbal discussion and had already engaged in conscious reflection concerning his life realities and the emotions they involved. There were no surprises or epiphanies. He was straight to the point, but was not abrupt. While other children spent time removing emotional text, speaking about other things to compensate for their inability to speak about certain things, or hiding their visual realities, Fernando simply had nothing to hide from his attachment figures, peers, himself or me. He did not extend our time together through various measures, because he did not seem to “need” me in any way; I did not serve a real purpose for him, or fill a role that he necessarily lacked. He was experiencing difficult life realities, but he had apparently learned effective and healthy management strategies through his secure relationship with his attachment figures at home.

Communication seemed to be at the heart of his parent relationship. As a result, he seemed “equipped” to engage in emotional communication in an educational project. While I had provided the children with his draft book as an example of the books I was going to create, Fernando’s clear method of participation truly represented a

model of the ideal way in which children could freely communicate and express themselves. While for some children the project offered new ways of thinking and acting, it could only provide Fernando with affirmation, for he was already accustomed to and comfortable with communicating self. The apparent ease with which he participated stood in contrast to the apparent discomfort and surprise some of the other children exhibited, but, while the length of our interviews was quite short, since the communicative space created was one he already shared with his parent figures, he fully utilized the expressive workshops in class and produced intense and introspective work. The difference lay in the fact that he had simply done it before.

Abby

Out of all the children I worked with, Abby seemed to involve herself to the greatest extent in her roles and identities within the research process. My relationship with her developed quickly during our first two days together in the classroom arts workshop, as she barraged me with information and questions, personal judgments and perspectives. For, in contrast to her demonstrated confidence and, to some extent, apparent sweet self-centeredness, she would go to any length to distract from herself while simultaneously keeping herself at the centre of attention. Which is why I felt that a colourful American researcher came to be an appealing distraction for her, and the reason I had her undivided attention from day one.

In some way, perhaps Abby felt that I could create a new kind of space she had not yet conceptualized and created rules for. I spent the most amount of time with her, as she made it apparent that my presence

was something she could use and, in a way, required. As a result, there was an intense emotionality to our relationship from the start. Because of this, my case study with Abby incorporates a level of detail I could not provide with the other children, for I found that I myself was a part of each step Abby took, which caused me to have intimate knowledge of her entire process of participation. The dynamic aspect of our specific interaction and the dependent responsiveness we both came to require from one another soon became the primary factor in the form Abby's participation assumed and, for me, defined the unique effect an individual project could have on an individual child (and researcher).

When transcribing and typing up my field notes from my time with the children, I found that I had a great deal of information about Abby. This was mostly due to the fact that she positioned herself in my path from the first moment she set eyes on me. As a result, I had a different issue with Abby's interview—my interviews with the children were largely composed of their short and limited responses to my questions. Therefore, rather than reducing the data as performed in the phenomenological tradition, I found myself constructing data about each child, as previously discussed. However, as I began to write Abby's story I found that I did not have to stretch very far to discover links and draw conclusions, due to the amount of time I spent with Abby, and her willingness to interact with me. It was ironic that the girl who declared her detachment was the one who provided me with so many possible connections.

When I first knelt down by her desk to watch her paint, Abby opened up by saying she did not share her family stories. I replied that this was fine, and it was up to her to express and share what she wished.

Yet, in response, she summarily disclosed how she and her mother had recently moved out of their family home, as her parents were going through a difficult divorce.



In the picture above, Abby expressed sadness when painting the home she'd recently had to leave behind. While she worked in the classroom time, she narrated her painting and freely offered details about her family life to me in a rather matter-of-fact way. Yet, while Abby had chosen "sadness" to be the emotion she was attempting to express with her story, she seemed shocked to discover that she also felt simultaneous "anger" while painting her story. At this time, I felt she realized that she herself actually discovered something. In the process of expressing a story she had classified as sad, Abby encountered an unexpected internal reaction, "Is it possible to feel two ways at once?" she asked without looking up. Abby reflected upon this revelation for a little while, and then decided to create another painting, in order to express the anger she was simultaneously experiencing. She began to paint something in quite a different style from her first piece in that she began to splatter different coloured paint on the paper, as seen on the next page.



The way in which she threw down the paint seemed both precise and passionate. While Denzin (1989b) spoke of the constant distance between our written account and the “raw” emotion it is communicating, watching Abby work with her visual medium seemed to shrink the space. For it was not the end-product, the painting, but the way in which she painted that seemed incredibly expressive and true to the emotion she was communicating. Her use of the paint even inspired another student to enthusiastically use the same method to express his own anger. She later stated that she began to splatter the paint because “this mad feeling came out of my head”. When asked how that felt, Abby emphatically stated that she *loved* it and that it had gotten the anger “out of her”. As she expressed her anger through the paint, Abby later stated that she was “feeling sad and happy and angry at that paint because (she) was thinking about (her) mom”, but claimed that finishing it had made her feel better.

Through expressing her story aesthetically, she became able to see internal aspects that before had been kept at an unconscious level.

Abby's unintentional exploration of self through expression broadened her understanding of her own perspectives through unconsciously negotiating her emotional management with her desired system of action. This supports Bowlby's (1982/1969) belief that the "dynamic interplay" between the behavioural system of her attachment system, the affect regulation working within her internal working model, and the exploration behavioural system could reveal new possibilities of being (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2008, p. 513). In the same way, Winnicott (1971) stated, "It is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self." (p. 54) Through her participation in the project, Abby uncovered a previously "hidden" emotion of which she had not been aware.

However, for a child existing in a tumultuous family environment, coming upon an unrealized emotion like anger can also be stressful, as, for example, children of divorced parents can feel that anger is a "dangerous emotion", which is to be hidden or displaced (Kroll, 1994). A primary way to cope with emotions like anger in a divorce situation is for parents to openly talk with children and to help sort through their child's reactions. Yet, if a communicative space established by attachment figures does not occur, a child experiencing divorce may instead seek to disavow herself from such emotions as she has been given no way to safely share them (Krementz, 1984). At the same time, her parents' individual invitation to engage in a discussion of emotion could interfere with Abby's developing need to hide her emotion, a tendency that she felt continued to be maintained throughout their ongoing marital conflict.

At the end of the first morning, Abby quickly created an extra piece of art with my initials drawn on it, and called me her BFF (best friend forever). I realized the difficult balance I would have to maintain as a momentary but emotionally responsive adult figure in her world. I was taken off guard with Abby's intense regard. She invented fantastic stories about me, and shared them with the rest of the class. As I worked with other tables, I noticed Abby's eyes furtively glance up, as if to keep physical track of me. I was concerned about the brevity of my presence and what effect this could have upon her. I had not planned to be a significant part of any child's process. I had intended to play a subtle role, in order to avoid this kind of situation, as if such a plan would be sufficient to counter any attachment formed in a relatively brief time period. In their conceptualization of Winnicott's facilitating space, Barrett and Trevitt (1991) proposed the goal of becoming and serving as an attachment figure for school children in the role of educational therapist. However, while I had previously experienced the role of "good enough" mother in my professional role as a counsellor, I had not expected that I would temporarily assume such a role in my brief presence as a researcher.

On the second day, Abby seemed more distracted and irritable. She seemed upset with me. I felt this was because she had offered a great deal of information about herself in a very short period of time, despite her repeated statements about how she did not talk about her home life. She chose to express the same family situation on the second day, but struggled with it. Abby stopped expressing her story and instead devoted time to making me a bookmark. She approached me with the gift and a huge smile. I accepted it and thanked her, but asked

how her artwork was coming along. Her smile disappeared—I felt she seemed a bit annoyed that her gift had not distracted me from the task she had been assigned. I followed her back to her seat, and kneeled on the floor next to her with my arms and chin on her desk, as I felt her frustration and pain with the task quite intensely. Abby seemed comfortable throughout the first day, through the painting workshop, but it seemed that a lot of emotions got stirred up when she again was asked to process and express her chosen story and the emotions it embodied.

She sat at her desk and crossly asked me “what the point was” as she drew red sad faces with tears in the right-hand corner of her paper. Without waiting for a response, Abby looked up and stated in a very serious way that she did whatever she could to hide her emotions. She most certainly did not want to express them. In fact, she did not want them at all. I could see how, in the project, it was becoming more difficult to detach herself from the physical externalized representation of the realities and emotions she was trying to avoid, for they were now solidified and present in paint and ink.

“Is that how you feel?” I pointed to the sad faces she had drawn.

“Yes.”

“Do you feel it’s healthy to keep emotions like that inside?”

She looked up. “No. But I need to hide it.”

I did not continue this line of conversation, because Abby seemed incredibly uncomfortable with it. I bit my tongue, as I contemplated the meaning of the word “health” and how Abby may define it in contrast with my own definition. Her method of hiding could have been, for her, an adaptive defence, a way in which to preserve and protect herself, to keep her safe. For the time being, excluding awareness of the full extent

of her emotions could have been regarded to be, for her in this moment, a healthful act. Winnicott (1971) defined “living creatively” as being a “healthy state”, and I realized the vastness of the area such a definition created, in comparison with the definition I had adopted for further transmission. Every stage we occupy is a layer of the person we have yet to become, and a moment, although significant, is not sufficient to be classified with the definition of health I had envisioned. I then recalled Winnicott’s (1958) early concept of “being alone in the presence of someone”, and continued to quietly kneel at her side, as if to witness and attend to her process.

At this time, I wondered if the classroom was an appropriate forum for this kind of emotional expression, despite my belief that communicating with peers was essential and art was a safe language to use in this way. Yet, I reminded myself that the point of using art media was to explore non-verbal ways of communicating, and it was up to her to express it through her art and, if she chose to, through further conversation with me. Abby seemed conscious of her avoidance and the potential consequence it could have on her. And, suddenly, she was facing an unexpected aesthetic actualization of her internal processes, and was explicitly connected to it as its creator, while struggling with her internal reaction to the relationship between herself and her artwork. She seemed to feel that the art was a safe way to speak, as she later put it, “It’s like you’re going to say something, but then you don’t.” At the same time, Abby began to talk about how she would do more paintings if I would come back, as if I was now a necessary component to her process of creating artwork.

As she continued to work on her word art on the second day, I noticed her body began to slump in her chair, she drew her arms and legs in, she became disagreeable, sullen, and was no longer talkative—it was as if the artwork before her was sapping her energy. Then, abruptly, Abby approached me and announced, “I know! I’ll do *another* story!” She began to excitedly chatter about this new story—a happy story about something her parents had bought her. Although I felt it important that she did not abandon the story she had been working on, I did not want to push her. I instead nodded and said that she had already put a good deal of work into the story she had previously chosen, but it was her decision to choose a story to express...and left it at that. I stood up and walked over to another table to allow her some time to think it over. Conscious of my own objectives for this project, what I wanted each child to do, I attempted to fully own my authority, my effect upon her process, and my efforts to “make” her do what I felt she should do. If she was to exercise power in the Foucauldian sense, she would have to feel free to make her own decisions, or as free as she could feel in the context of our power dynamics and the potential intimidation she experienced as she sat in the midst of peers.

Therefore, when I later returned, I half-expected to see another story produced, as I noticed from a distance that her body language had seemed to change as she went back to working. However, I discovered that she had, in fact, continued the family story she started to express, which had caused her distress, and actually seemed a bit more positive and excited about how it was turning out. I wondered if I had provided a small validation for her, and whether she needed an external figure to affirm that the story she had originally chosen had value and was worth

further investment. When I returned, I saw that she finished her artwork by creating the word “mad” with text, as shown below. Her textual artwork displays the emotions she had not only intended to attach to the story, but also the emotions she seemed to experience as she expressed her chosen story.



Abby seemed to be in her element during the class art show. Students from other classes gathered around her as she went into great detail as she explained her clay piece, which represented the Christmas gift she hoped to receive. Yet, she did not discuss her painting or writing

piece. She later expressed that she was quite nervous about others coming to see her artwork because the arms and legs of her clay piece kept coming off. She never brought up her fear of others seeing her family stories aesthetically expressed through the paint and text mediums.

In our first interview, Abby continued her disconnected method of discussing her family life and emotions. She would begin a story and then move to another, seamlessly transitioning between them, weaving an intimate tale through a patchwork system. I consciously allowed her to communicate this way in that I did not address or disrupt her, and instead waited for her to come back to finish the stories she previously began, if she chose to do so. It seemed as if she desperately wanted to talk about her parents' divorce. She would introduce the reality, but then she would pull away, if only to later come back to it. She set the pace and the conversation unfolded in a non-chronological fashion, bits at a time. I refer to Abby's verbal narrative telling as being non-chronological, in the sense that, while multiple stories were being told at once, they were presented as unorganized and disconnected bits without temporal order. I felt this was because, as she had not apparently developed effective emotion regulation, she would tell a story until it triggered an emotion, which then caused her to start, or return to restart, another story.

An "unorganized" expression of self could denote trauma or a defective core consciousness, but, as Sartre argued, it is impossible for life to be communicated as logical stories are presented, as life is constant, ongoing and under continuous re/construction. I felt that Abby had not before shared her life stories verbally and her method of doing

so was, in a way, a means by which she attempted to assert influence over emotions she had not learned to effectively manage. Perhaps it was unconscious, a natural outcome of an attempt to express life, but she seemed to maintain a level of control over its release to my temporary custody in our interactive exchange. What was interesting to me is how she repeatedly stated that she did not like to discuss her family, but they were largely the main subject of the many stories she shared.

Abby would interestingly assign an “emotional” story of her family to what could be regarded as a non-emotive subject, like, in one case, soup. In this way, she was honouring both the part of her that may have told her to repress her realities in order to keep her safe and untouched, which came through in her occasional verbal declarations, as well as the part of her that desperately wanted to “get it out” through aesthetically and verbally expressing her emotions and perspectives. She said one thing, but did another. I did not contradict her or draw attention to the conflict in her behaviour and actions, for that would have betrayed a kind of understanding that defined our space. She instead offered fragments, and skipped from one to another, tracing the emotions that threatened to face her if she lingered on one story for too long.

As with the other children, I noticed that Abby’s familial stories did not only serve as the subject for her work, but her art seemed to be developed through her changing relationship with her parents as a result of the family situation expressed, and the roles she assumed within it. My discomfort in developing interpretations of her home life and profiling her parents was countered by the ways in which her own interpretation of her individual world affected the way in which she participated in the project. She worked to manage the seeming conflict

between the way in which she had come to organize her evolving everyday life and what she was being asked to do and be in our time together. As Winnicott (1971) stated, “A description of the individual cannot be made entirely in terms of the individual, but that in certain areas, and this is one of them, perhaps the main one, the behaviour of the environment is part of the individual’s own personal development and must therefore be included.” (p. 53) Abby’s family context structured her way of participating in my research and, thus, I could not possibly discuss her being in one context without attempting to address the others she was part of and also shared with me. Thus, I found myself taking the narrative fragments she offered and making connections between our relationship and those she had with her mother and father.

There is little research focusing on the year or so after the divorce, when the relationships between the two parents, and hence with their children, are likely to be most strained (Cohen & Finzi-Dottan, 2005, p. 83) Yet, it is widely recognized that even “good” attentive and responsive parents may become less physically and emotionally available to their children, especially in the first year as they struggle to cope with the various complex changes in their everyday world (Booth & Amato, 1992). As a result, Abby’s parents’ preoccupation with the reconfiguration or deconstruction of their own relationship could mean that their relationship with Abby had changed form. Abby appeared to currently be in this difficult period, and she seemed to not have yet addressed the emotional effects of her parents’ relationship issues, and was aware of this; she seemed actively conscious that she kept them inside and did not address them because she was perhaps fearful of what she’d find and the potential effect of these discoveries upon her personal

relationships with her parents. From the stories she told, Abby felt that her mother in particular was quite emotionally damaged and hurt by the divorce, and Abby seemed to take responsibility for this, as she could regard this to be a way to regain order by assuming a position of control and accountability (Wallerstein, 1983). Abby apparently assumed her mother's "side", her perspective, and stated that she had to be strong for her. In that way, she perhaps felt that she had to hide her emotions, because they would contribute to her mother's burden.

Abby did mention that her artwork was on her mother's wall, and, when later asked what her mother would think of her book, Abby stated that her mom would like it "because she feels the same way". Through such statements, it began to seem as if Abby had also adopted her mother's emotions as her own. At the same time, Abby exhibited anger and resentment towards her father, and this could be due to the fact that Abby's mother did not feel supported by Abby's father, which then affected Abby's relationship with her father, as she had potentially assumed her mother's side. While she talked about sharing her artwork with her mother, she seemed somewhat pleased that, upon reading the book, her father would be shocked and upset that she had not also shared her emotions with him. When asked what she felt her father's reaction to her book would be, Abby quickly responded that he would, in fact, want to talk about it. In fact, Abby showed that she had envisioned his frustration and hurt upon realizing what she had done by acting out the reaction she anticipated he would have: using an angry masculine voice, he'd dramatically state, "Why would you...*why haven't you told me?*" to which she'd then respond, "I forgot!" .

Talbot and McHale (2003) argue that, in cases where parents do not support one another after separation and their relationship issues affect their ability to parent, children may “fall prey to the painful conviction that their only options within the family are to side with one parent, intervene to resolve their parent’s conflict, or withdraw from the family triad altogether.” (p. 51) From her comments, Abby had apparently sided with her mother, while suppressing and “tailoring” her own emotions in order to further minimize the felt effects of the divorce for her and that parent. Perhaps she now felt responsible for her mother and did not know how to change the dynamic of the relationship. She did not know how to “get over” or healthfully express her anger with her father except through emotional exclusion or denial. The most important part of this situation was the possibility that her parents had no idea. Or, if they did, they had no idea how to change it, since she refused to talk about it with them or to face it herself.

In the material Abby chose to disclose, her relationship with her father seemed to be especially complex. While her mother seemed to already know a bit about everything—she liked to hear about Abby’s school activities and she was pleased with the project, which Abby had told her about in detail—Abby felt anger towards her father, and had not yet seemed to allow him back into her world, for he was also the character who had hurt her mother and, in Abby’s view, brought about the divorce. As a result, he played a complicated role in her world, and she was still attempting to define her relative role to him. Consequently, her development of self and the strategies she used to cope with life also seemed to be affected, which provided a difficult dilemma, as expressed by Bretherton (1984) in the following:

What happens to the internal working model of the self when a child feels secure in the relationship with one parent and not with the others? Which of these relationships is the one carried forward into other relationships, or are both carried forward in different types of relationships? Or are these the wrong questions to ask? (p. 29)

While I do not have a clear idea of Abby's home situation, especially since my purpose was not to evaluate and explore the stories a child told, I imagine that she was constantly attempting to negotiate her place in the middle of a domestic war that had recently caused her home environment to become fragmented. As a result, this negotiation spilled into our space for no other reason but she perhaps had nowhere else to go with it; she did not have another space with the same kind of freedom our space offered.

Abby's personal struggle to manage her emotions in the context of her family situation could certainly be seen to affect her ability to interact with others. In the same way, my invitation for her to communicate her realities and emotions were simply not enough to instigate her disclosure; however, the role I unexpectedly played in her process did, in a sense, provide her with an "excuse" to explore a new way of being—one in which she was able to address her own needs, and explore and share her negative emotions with someone else, as well as with herself. For I did not bring her history with me, she was not responsible for me, and I was to be eternally distinct from her immediate world.

In this way, it was not simply the invitation to take part in a forum where she could explore and communicate herself in the educational space she inhabited, but the unique relationship between the child and myself, the circumstances we shared, and the ways in which

she could make sense of and use our time in relation to her familial realities. I possibly provided an opportunity for her to explore aspects of self that she had previously avoided, while she also recalled that she had avoided these emotions for a reason. Abby seemed to have dedicated a great deal of work keeping everyone at arm's length, and she was suddenly facing emotions she was not aware of in the company of an outsider. Abby also seemed quite clear that she knew she was not being honest with herself. At the same time, she had not found a way or a space in which she could safely explore herself without deconstructing the roles and methods she had created

As time passed, I found I was quite personally invested in Abby's process. As a result, when it came time to reveal the draft books for their review, while I was nervous about each child's reaction, I especially held Abby's opinion in high regard and was quite worried about how she'd respond to my raw interpretative construction—was it directive? Did my need to show her I understood her supersede Abby's own need to know? She had shared that she kept her family stories and emotions inside and did not share them with anyone. At the same time, she discussed both at length in our time together. As a result, I was uncertain of how Abby would react seeing her previously undisclosed realities documented on the pages before her. I had listened and presented the words she provided, but did not obey the rules she had verbally established. For, according to the story in her book, she did, in fact, talk a great deal about her family life.

As we sat down for our second interview, I explained to Abby what I had done with her artwork and our previous conversation, and opened the book for her to review. She did not immediately explore the

book as the other children did, but instead smiled, turned to me and said, “I’m scared.” Her statement took me off guard; I nodded and asked her what I could do to allay her fear. But she just continued to smile and turned back to point at the photos of her artwork, calmly directing the attention away from herself. “I don’t know”, she stated in response to my question. “I’ve still got them in my house.” Abby explained that her artwork was displayed at both her mom and dad’s house, and it caused them both to feel happy, “mad” and sad. Simultaneously, as the subject of fear had been dropped from our discussion, her initial declaration expressed something that continued to hang in the air.

Once again, I felt that Abby’s fear could be attributed to her conscious awareness about what this book could reveal—while the artwork could communicate her realities in a way that did not require her to speak or explain, the addition of the story filled in any interpretative blanks. As a result, I was also a little scared of the permanence of Abby’s experience firmly laid out and presented on the pages. Abby had spent so much time talking about keeping her emotions buried that to now display them clearly, fixed in the moment they were experienced, seemed quite brave. When I asked what she liked about the book, Abby coyly responded she enjoyed how I wrote that she preferred to keep her feelings in, and that she didn’t like to talk about her family much. At the same time, the entire book was largely focused upon her family. In addition, when I invited Abby to make any changes to the book, she, after spending a significant amount of time carefully re-reading the story, claimed that she did not want anything removed. Abby also dedicated some intense reflection to the placement of her photos, but, again, did not make any changes. While she seemed to have

gone to great ends to keep her family stories, and the emotions they caused, to herself, she confirmed their reality in validating their visual and public existence in the storybook.

Abby was not required to show her parents the book with her story and photos. If she had truly wanted to keep her feelings private, she could have kept the book to herself as well. However, when asked how her parents would respond if they should read the story, Abby stated that that they would refer to me as a “nice lady” because, to paraphrase her words, I was talking about the things Abby had talked to me about while she created her artwork—stories which she had never shared with anyone before. While Abby had already communicated her stories and emotions through her artwork, which she had subsequently shared with her parents, she had not yet participated in a verbal dialogue concerning these issues with them. As the art did not clearly communicate the details of her feelings, fulfilling its role as a masked communicative language, she had not yet fully revealed herself. For Abby, future sharing of her project book could be seen to serve as a vehicle for a family discussion between her and her parents that had not yet occurred.

Through her time with me, Abby may have gained some validity for her stories and emotions—it was a test run, perhaps rehearsal for a time when she could reveal her stories in “known” company. In this way, I provided Abby with an excuse. If someone else was encouraging her to share, if it was part of “school”, then she did not have a “choice”. Or that’s what she could tell herself and her parents. *I had to*. This was not her individual decision, but one supported and, in this case, introduced by an external party. Through this project, Abby seemed able

to present her emotions and perspectives to her parents through a mediator. It was as if she needed someone else to step in and deem them important and valid. Someone else recognized their significance and, necessarily, her significance. Thus, she perhaps felt that they were worthy to be shown to her parents, and that her emotions and experiences were important. Through external recognition, Abby possibly found a valid reason, an excuse, to share her feelings with her parents.

When she realized that I was drawing the final interview to a close, Abby became desperate and stated, “Don’t ask any questions about my life life life life life life life.” Yet, when I immediately responded that I would not ask her questions about her life, she immediately stated, “You can! I don’t mind.” She smiled. She then asked whether I had kept the note she had given me. Previously, when I had returned to the school to present the poster to the class before returning for the second interview, Abby gave me a note stating, “I will miss you”, with a teary sad face drawn next to the words. When I responded that it was on my fridge at home, she seemed extremely pleased and returned to look at the book with a small smile. Perhaps it was an affirmation that she had also impacted my own life, and her presence in my world would continue on after our time had ended. It extended the temporality of our relationship. Strangely, as we got up to return to the classroom, it did not feel like a sad ending, but, rather, one that somehow felt complete. The final five minutes of our last interview had incorporated the entire emotional journey we had shared in our time together.

For Abby, as with the other children, it was not as simple as “participating” in the project—there was an embodiment of a complex engagement, which incorporated her past, present and a possible future. However, more than any of the other children, I felt that Abby “successfully” achieved a broadened sense of self which could actually expand the possibilities accessible to her in relation to her home life. The emotional connection she felt to and within the temporal identities she took up in the project could help her to assign credibility to her perspectives and feelings, which could then affect the way in which she conceptualized her constant communicative role in her family. For, while assuming the identity of artist, author and co-researcher, Abby expressed things she had not yet discussed with her mom or dad. As an artist, she explored a non-verbal way with which to communicate and share her emotions and stories.

Through the aesthetic process, Abby also discovered other emotions of which she had not been conscious, which had not been accessible. As an author, Abby found that she had the power to approve and validate her literary construction. Her opinion was vital to its affirmation. Both her story and her artwork could be seen to speak for her—focus had been assigned to an object, and not upon the child who could still maintain a safe distance from the feelings expressed; in other words, she did not necessarily have to own them if she was not ready. Yet, through the project book, Abby now had a new way in which she could share her feelings with her parents without having to structure and verbally reproduce them on her own. Through her brave and complex participation, the project may offer Abby choices, methods and possibilities of communication that did not before seem available to her.

Through her adapted roles in this project, Abby could potentially internalize the external affirmations of her stories and feelings which could then lead her to assume a different perspective of them and their worth and value in the future.

Yet, what surprised me was how her assigned role as co-researcher in relation to my own seemed to play an essential facilitating function in her process. For Abby, it perhaps obliged her, to an extent, to uphold her end of our agreement to express her emotional self. While my own notion of self and the independent self-empowerment of each individual child had inspired the project, it was the self in relation that seemed to create the emotional mobility and “broadening” Abby experienced. In the project, her opinions, feelings, interpretations and perspectives were regarded to be as important as my own, as we engaged in a negotiation of perspectives and actions. She was provided an excuse for participating in the way she did, in a way she had not permitted herself to “be” before. In this way, I exercised my own power upon her, in my creation of the class and the assigning of roles, while recognizing that my own sense of power-making was dependent upon that of my young co-researcher. As a result, what was created could be seen as a kind of constructed freedom explored, built upon a power dynamic between an adult figure and child.

Abby demonstrated that an educational space in which children are encouraged to express their emotions and realities through art media can be seen as a safer method of communication that involves creativity and exploration. As a result, a child may come to realize unknown or inaccessible aspects of self. However, each individual child’s participation is necessarily tempered by the perceived emotional risk and

cost in participating, which often involves their relationships with figures not present in a classroom, as well as their ability to navigate in a way that allows them to maintain the systems which sustain them, while incorporating new ways of being. Most importantly, the effect of an adult's role in a child's process can bring entirely new factors into the regularly conceived equation. While I believe that Abby would have benefited from the class curriculum alone, it was her negotiated relationship with an external and brief figure, and the nature of our interaction, that further shaped and developed her individual participation.

Aaron

Aaron seemed to be the child most excited about creating and displaying a range of emotions in his artwork. In class, he produced the most numerous, and arguably the most evocative, artwork of all the children, creating three paintings and two writing pieces that communicated different emotions. He was also one of the only children who claimed to have used art to express his emotions regarding life events before, and often did so in his own private space. As such, Aaron had already assumed the role of artist in his life, and claimed to feel an external audience to be an essential aspect of the process of creating art. Aaron's participation in the class process and in our reflective space revealed the ways in which a child had turned to art in order to help him emotionally express difficult life realities which he did not disclose with his parents, but felt confident creating and exhibiting in a social space. However, Aaron's use of spoken narrative and his evolving method of

verbally communicating his stories, which seemed to change through their various rounds of telling, summoned a vast assortment of issues of seeming significance that present themselves in narrative inquiry and also within narrative therapy. For example, his mode of storytelling revealed issues with verisimilitude and fixed realities, memory and consciousness, past being and present being, trauma and recovery, introspection and reinvention, external and psychic states. In our time together, I came to see Aaron as being already fully engaged in a kind of self-construction, and I felt that I began to serve as an unintentional source of external validation, allowing him the time to explain, describe and “try out” his life roles in a way he did not permit himself to do with others. In our time together, I came to feel like a single witness to a child who was creatively taking on his internal world, shaped by intense realities he had experienced, largely on his own.

Aaron presented himself as an extremely self-assured child, and he frequently declared and listed his many talents and skills, but he did not seem to require my confirmation; rather, the declarations seemed to be for his own benefit. Perhaps he saw me as a new audience, but Aaron did not work to attract my attention, as Abby did. He had a confident way about him—he seemed certain of his behaviours and the products he presented. He was quite proud to be a visible artist and happy to let the art speak for him. In the art exhibit, he claimed that he did not mind having the other children look at his sad painting. He simply owned his painting; he was proud of his work as an artist and the independent way in which it told his story for him. In fact, he found it strange that someone would choose to be an anonymous artist for, if people didn't know which artwork was whose, in his words, “You couldn't get

famous!” Aaron wanted credit for the production and presentation of his many skills and talents, including his ability to engage in emotive aesthetic expression.

Yet, while he wanted to visually exhibit all of his work in a social space with his peers, he did not want to verbally discuss the work expressing sadness or pain. Also, unlike other children who felt more comfortable sharing their sad artwork with a family member rather than peers, Aaron preferred that his parents did not see his negative artwork. He seemed to use art to cope with difficult life realities, but did not share “that” kind of art with his parents. It was as if he needed to address a powerful emotional experience, while also feeling that others could not understand or help. As a result, he looked to himself to arrange, compose and reform the materials and emotions of his experiences—he did not seem to engage in a process of denial or repression, but, rather, I felt he was attempting to address and integrate his realities on his own and in his own way.

At the same time, Aaron was quite verbally articulate about his process in our interviews; he actively engaged in sharing his evolving considerations of the process. By our final interview, his use of our space truly seemed to be one of exploration as he tried out different roles and methods. Despite his statements about not wanting to talk about his sad artwork, he eagerly, seriously, presented it to me, as if he was both actively constructing his experience while he talked, and as if he was assured of his constructions, having thought about them before. Since he claimed he did not discuss them with others, I noted that his thoughtful conclusions could potentially be the result of his own self-reflections and private introspection, which he then elaborated in our space.

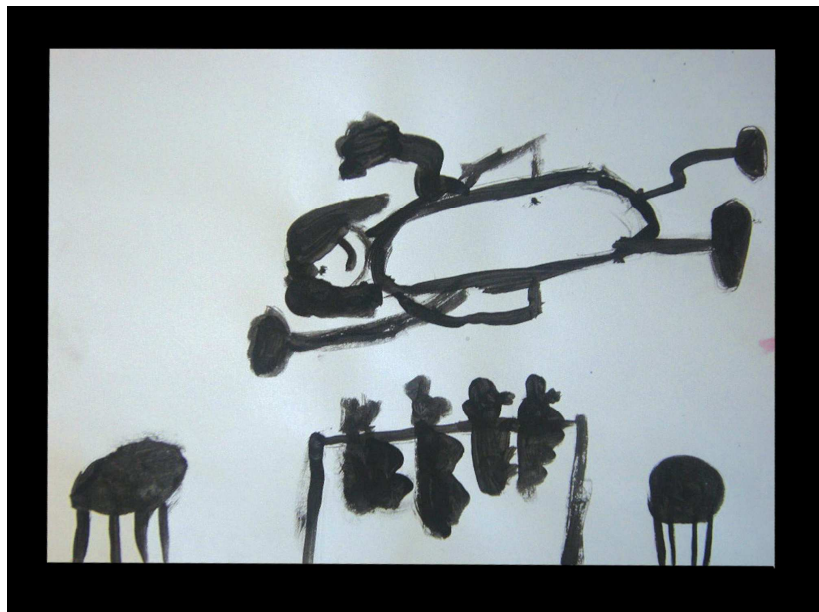
Aaron mentioned a few times in which he had used art as a kind of coping method following traumatic experiences. The first painting Aaron created was what I felt to be quite visceral, which he was proud to show as I came over to his table. What came to be most interesting about this painting was that the story it expressed continuously changed through its verbal telling; the painting portrayed a non-gender specific person with their arms outstretched, red drops of blood falling from their wrist, and a shocked look upon the person's face, as the following image illustrates.



Aaron described the painting as his take on what his brother looked like when he was “killed in the war”. When asked if he wanted to talk about any of his four pieces, Aaron immediately verbally volunteered the “really sad moment” behind this painting. He spoke of how “army people” came to his house to tell his family that his brother had died. In the second instance he mentioned he used art in an emotionally responsive way, he talked of hearing about a friend’s death, which immediately caused him to run up to his room to draw his friend, as if to, in a way, capture and hold him in the world. He stated that

expressing his sadness through that piece of artwork had made him feel better, but he did not show it to anyone, and he did not talk about it with anyone.

Aaron's artwork was evocative. At the same time, Aaron was comfortable explaining them to me. In his other painting, Aaron portrayed a girl, who seems to be a kind of superhero, flying over what he identified as sharks and alligators.

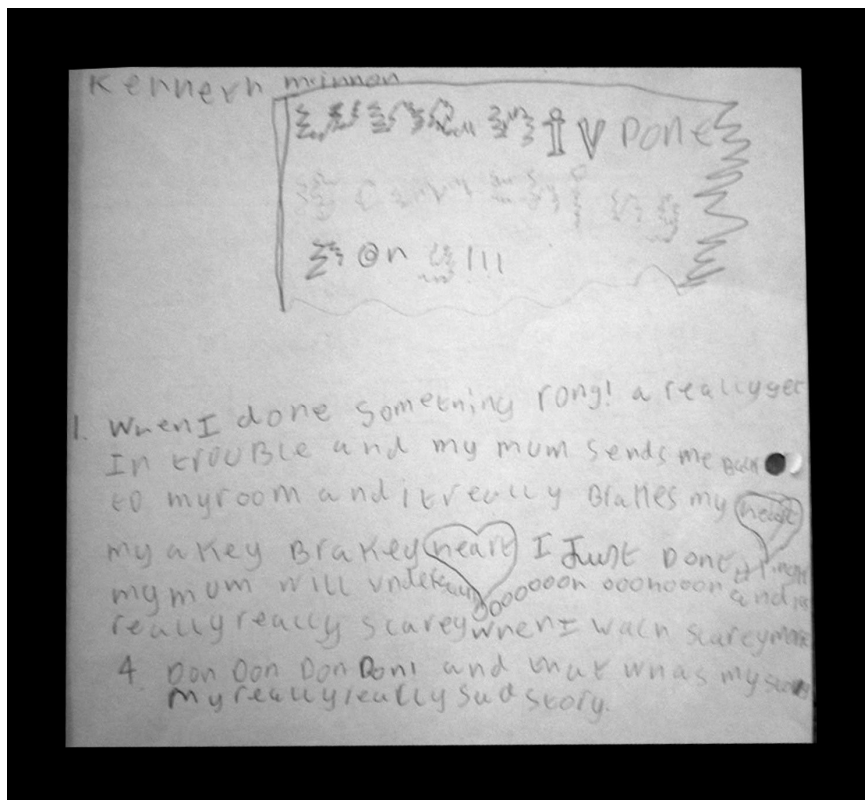


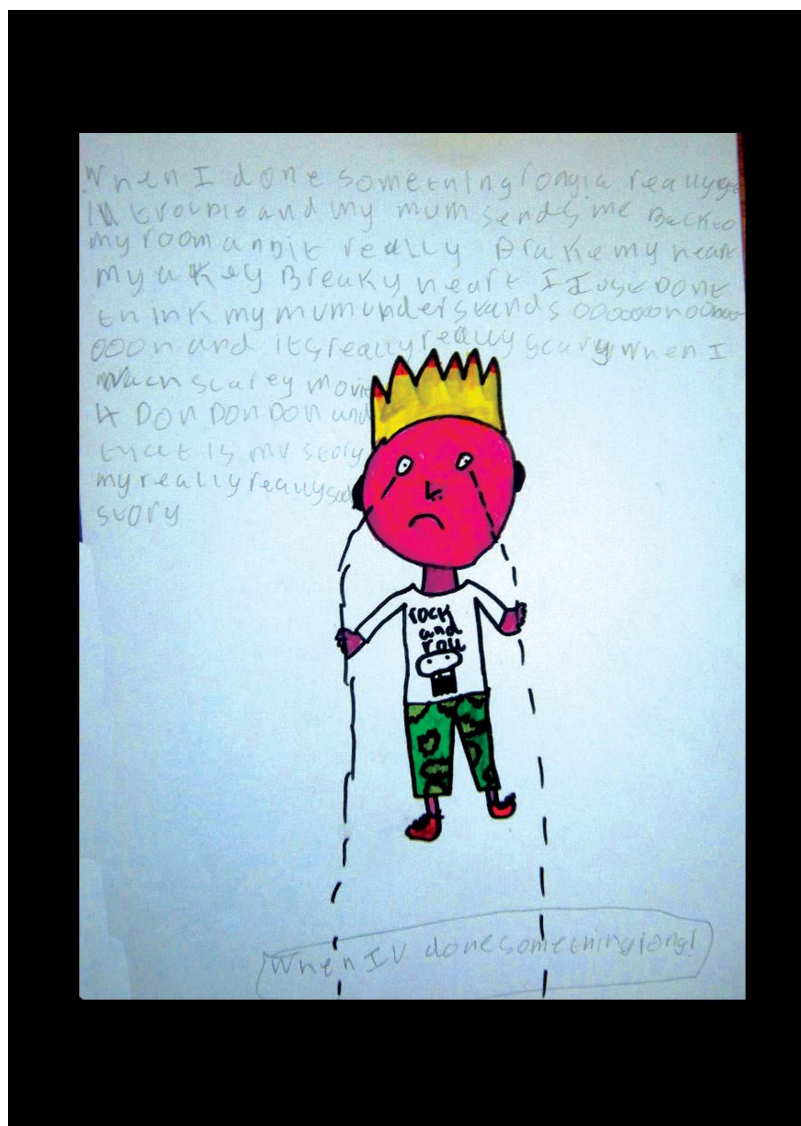
I felt that his painting could be seen as his way of presenting himself as a brave isolated figure—one with secret identities, and the incredible skill to manoeuvre his way around things that could hurt him or cause him pain. Yet, while his work seemed symbolically significant, as I explained in the introduction to this section, I did not want to engage in an external analysis of this child's artwork—if he was not present, if he was not affirming my interpretation of the data I gathered from him, I felt I could only go so far, or else would violate our research bargain. As he shared his interpretations of his artwork and the processes introduced to him, I became most interested with Aaron's private method of

expressing trauma through art on his own, and concerned with the way in which he was independently coping with and interpreting his life realities.

At the same time, I focused on my role as a brief interactive presence, for, although he stated that he did not speak about his feelings or stories behind his sad artwork, he, like Abby, quickly introduced the subjects into our discussions. Based on what he said, I would be the only person with whom he verbally shared such things, since he claimed he did not talk about his sad artwork with either friends or family. As with Abby, this could be because I was a temporary resource in his world—I could listen and appreciate his skills, and then I would eradicate any reflection of the stories, artwork and emotions he expressed—a container that removed itself and all it had been filled with. My role was not to verify or hold him and his communications to account, but to accept his contributions as his perspective in the moment we shared. He knew that I did not have any connection with his family, and trusted that I would keep what he told me. Perhaps he also felt I was a respectful audience, a good listener, or simply someone he felt he needed to impress. In any case, although I belonged to an external world, I felt as if I somehow served as an extra figure who was not included on his list of life characters, perhaps even as an embodied extension of Aaron and his reflections. I invited Aaron into a distinct space in which he was temporarily free to behave without worry of the potential consequences of our interaction upon his family relations, at least, any consequence that would be administered by me. Of course, in order to accept this invitation as valid, he would have to trust me to stay where I was.

Aaron was happy to share the other pieces of artwork with his parents, and described them as being created “just for a laugh”, which he felt that his parents would enjoy, as seen in the following illustrations.





As he excluded the sad painting from the art he would share with his parents, but not from that he would share with his peers, it seemed that he was particularly protecting them from specific emotions he felt driven to express, or protecting himself from his parents' response to his more troubling artwork. He described earlier family conflict, but did not seem to want to engage his family in his process of sorting through it. Yet, while worried that he did not allow his parents to be involved in his coping, I was comforted by the fact he was engaged in ongoing expression and aesthetic communication. Dallos (2007) postulates that it

is possible that children who have been caught up in family conflicts may come to believe that such conflict will “spread and engulf everyone” (p. 58), so the child will attempt to play an active role in keeping peace amongst other people around him and, perhaps, take on the role of peacemaker within his own family.

In this way, Aaron, by providing “funny” artwork for his parents, while retaining that which expressed pain and sadness, perhaps felt as if he was sparing his parents any pain they could feel, or was shielding himself from any negative reaction they could perform upon him. At the same time, perhaps Aaron convinced himself that the sad memories were his, and did not belong to his parents, despite the possibility that they may have been a cause of or involved in what seemed to be a trauma he had experienced. In our first interview, Aaron briefly mentioned his parents’ divorce. If his parents were involved in a stressful divorce, for instance, which eventually gave way to a better time in which his domestic life seemed peaceful, their behaviour most likely changed as their unhappy situation unravelled and potentially resolved. Bowlby (1973) proposed that inconsistency in the behaviour of an attachment figure could lead to “defensive exclusion”, causing a child to ignore or prevent a characteristic or behaviour from “contaminating” his conception of a figure (Dallos, 2007, p. 67). In order to continue recognizing his parents in the positive light he seemed to hold them in, Aaron may have continuously attempted to keep his memories disconnected from them, so that these memories did not, in a way, disrupt who his parents now were, so they were not, in a sense, held responsible for their past behaviour and its effect upon him.

Bretherton (1984) described storytelling as an act not constrained to a particular action or “state of being”, but instead one that “allows players to abstract from the immediacy of the here and now...storytelling is a means of communicating transformations rather than (being) a tool for negotiating about them.” (p. 85) As a player, an interactive member of his audience, I felt my role was not to dispute or disagree, but to maintain the communicative space and facilitate Aaron’s act. Yet, as time went on, our interviews soon developed a history with its own past and present; it soon became apparent that Aaron exhibited inconsistencies in his life storytelling. When initially asked about his aesthetic communicative process in general, Aaron immediately responded with a story of loss. He spoke of the traumatic death of his brother, cousin and friend, and I began to wonder if these figures were really the same person or even “fictional” and representative of another event or identity of self.

He also professed a memory lapse when discussing his age (or existence) when his parents’ relationship came to an end; he could not recall whether he was four years old at the time, or if it had occurred before he was born. He spoke of step-brothers and new wives and husbands—the realities which have followed what came before in what can be seen as a new family situation—but details of the past domestic relationship between his parents remained unclear. In any case, Aaron was quite young when the divorce occurred. While children’s ability to determine the source of information in their lives is seen as important, it is also regarded to be more possible at a later age (Main, 1991). For children three years and under, it is difficult to separate what is their own memory, based on their experience, and what is told to them by a

parent or adult figure. This can cause the development of a contradictory multi-model, and a child may be unable to resolve contradictions between them.

Yet, at nine years old, Aaron could be seen to demonstrate an “unresolved” attachment, as his confusion with early memories unfolded with the narratives they were embodied within (Fonagy et al., 2004/2002, p. 39). Furthermore, his inability to express narrative coherence may come down to his lack of reflective functioning at this point in time, but it could also be a structured way of coping, considering the dysfunctional nature of the familial context he may possibly have been exposed to (Crittenden, 1997). Pedzek and Taylor (2002) indicate that the emotional content of stressful experiences may cause memories to be stored and retrieved differently than other types of events. In addition, Moradi et al., (2000) argued that, as exhibited by the characteristic behaviour of an individual experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder, unavoidable or unexpected stress may overcome a child’s coping mechanism and produce memory distortion concerning the negative events which caused the stress, bringing about inaccurate memory accounts. If Aaron experienced a traumatic family event, such as marital difficulties, early in his life, which later resolved, I felt that he could be left with memories that no longer bore reference to the present world he inhabited. In a way, he could see this as another life, which, as with past events nurtured by memory, can carry a fictive quality and perhaps also maintain a kind of “liberation” or distinction from fixed realities.

Several of Aaron’s narratives seemed confused and disjointed, as if he could not assign a single identity or time period to each of them.

Ricoeur (1974) argued that there is no identity beyond narrative; the way we speak about and structure our realities through our chosen languages is the work we are performing on ourselves, and on who we are. In this way, we are creating our life through its telling—it is not something that “is” being expressed; rather, it is being further developed through its expression. I regarded Aaron’s storytelling to symbolize the fact that he was actively constructing his notion of self, which was not yet coherent, or whole, in its presentation—it remained, in a sense, under renovation.

Our narratives may assume a different face and shape than the realities we have experienced visibly, and their imprints and shadows left upon our internal materials, recorded and stored, as Hample (1996) stated:

We only store in memory images of value. The value may be lost over the passage of time...but that’s the implacable judgment of feeling; this we say somewhere deep within us, is something I am hanging on to. (cited in Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 45)

Aaron’s narratives seemed incoherent to me, but they were placed in their position and in the form they assumed for a reason and purpose known to Aaron, if unconsciously. Similarly, Bakhtin (1981) pointed out that language, inherently, is wrought with contradictions as it simultaneously combines and incorporates identities from various stages of our lives that may bear little resemblance to one another, but co-exist and interact in complex ways (p. 291-2). Aaron was still attempting to gain a conscious understanding of his internal organization, but, for him, this organization had meaning, and I feel it was personally coherent in some facet because of that fact.

I had a few theories regarding Aaron's behaviour as discussed above. However, in our final interview, along with a reasonable amount of singing and elaborate storytelling on his part, as well as further declarations of how he was a "bright boy", I started to learn a little bit about why he constantly talked about himself in the way he did. He told a short story about how, when he was in nursery school, he did not engage with the other children. He briefly described himself as an introverted child, who lived within his own shell. There was now no visible shadow of the boy he described, but he still seemed driven to separate himself from the person he once was. He was now recognized to be quite brilliant and sociable. He could do anything. He wasn't like that other kid anymore. Ask anyone.

I felt that his "happy art" corresponded nicely with who he now seemed to be—with the newer identity he had constructed. He was now recognized to be well-adjusted, enthusiastic, confident and bright. Perhaps his sad painting would have caused his parents to doubt his new self; perhaps it would remind them of who he used to be, and who he still was. Unlike Abby, Aaron claimed to often acknowledge and express his negative life stories and emotions through art and, at the same time, seemed to be consciously sorting through negative emotions and his past without external support. I felt that, while Aaron's self was created in response to what he possibly felt to be his parents' expectations, it also seemed that his older "introverted" self would eventually achieve liberation. I posture this claim because, while his own expectations cannot be certainly seen as distinct from those assigned to his parents, Aaron seemed truly driven to make his new self, in fact, "real," and not just because he perhaps felt his parents now

expected it—it seemed that Aaron expected it of himself. He wanted to be outgoing because, in a way, this was his potential—the potential he would have achieved earlier if he had not experienced traumatic family events. While our experiences shape us and, arguably, Aaron’s potential was only shaped *through* these early relationships, perhaps he felt this new child, the child he now strove to be, was, in fact, his unfettered destiny.

Aaron exhibited uncertainty in assigning his life events to a fixed period of time. For example, he stated that his parents divorced both when he was four years-old and also before he was born. In his telling, the end of Aaron’s parents’ relationship seemed to coincide with his expressed introverted behaviour when he was four years old and in nursery school, but he also chose to block it out entirely by also assigning that life event to a point beyond the borders of his conscious memory, back to before his birth when he did not even exist. Yet, in this way, he also revealed a hidden or lost part of himself to me. I was reminded of how we are composed of multiple and simultaneous selves, and how our stories form what Bruner (1990) referred to as “partial autobiographies”. Perhaps Aaron’s idealization of self precluded the presence of a range of emotions; the child expressed by his new self would never feel sad.

While, as Bretherton argues, storytelling serves as an instrument of transformation, which Aaron demonstrated, any narrative is a negotiation of sorts. Bowlby (1980) distinguished between “semantic” memory and that which is autobiographical; past events verbally transmitted to a child by attachment figures, consciously stored in child’s general knowledge base, can conflict with those a child has

himself stored as memories of “traumatic attachment experiences” in his semantic memory system (Bretherton & Mullholland, 2008, p. 106)

Aaron’s own memories concerning his parents’ marital issues, issues that may have caused him to withdraw socially and inwardly, and become a figure he has since attempted to distinguish himself from, could conflict with his parents’ own recollections or with the reality he currently shared with them both. He may simply not want to rock the boat when it was now perhaps sailing so smoothly.

While Aaron hid his negative stories, emotions and artwork from his parents, he verbally shared them with me. There was no indication that I knew of his past, but he allowed me access to the internal machinery that may have driven him to act the way he did, to push him to be the best at things. I now had a more complete understanding of the child before me, based on the stories he offered me. He had been constructing a particular identity throughout our time together—I witnessed what could be seen as his past self; he talked about an older self he built when he felt he needed to years ago. I felt that integration of the old self with the new—both potentially constructed in response to domestic structure and relations—could allow him to create a “healthy” new self. His present outgoing self could be seen to serve a clear purpose; namely, to convince others of the reality of his present being, and to simultaneously cause them to forget about the introverted child he used to be. At the same time, that past child was present in the narratives he shared—Aaron had not forgotten him entirely. Although descriptions of that child seemed blurry, and its context appeared confused, Aaron still identified with him to an extent as being part of him. As a result, through the narratives he shared with

me, I could see the skeleton of a chronological narrative of his past, present and the future he envisioned for himself—an idealized product of his embodied temporal identities. Although there was little if any visual trace of the visibly introverted child he described, I was reminded of the immensity of the layered world within and the complex ways in which they bled into one another, and was convinced of the possible truth of his newer self.

Yet, as with Abby, I was again uncomfortable with making generalizations about Aaron's home environment, while hearing only the child's perspective. At the same time, I was *only* interested in the child's perception of their realities, their identities and their everyday interactive roles, for these were the factors that would theoretically affect the ways in which they participated in the project. It was not my intention to construct a complete description of each child's home context, based on various perspectives, but to explore the potential effects of a child's described and expressed interactive relations with attachment figures upon their embodiment of expressive roles in the project. It was their current subjective experience of their world that shaped our relationship and the interactive roles we both played.

As a result, I remain unclear about how Aaron's context, intentionally or otherwise, drove his attempts to create what I call a new self, and which further strengthened his own resolve to actualize it. As Goodson and Sikes (2001) point out, "In a real sense, social structures may push storylines in particular directions and the stories then legitimate the structures, and so on, in a self-legitimizing circle." (p. 84) As such, the ways in which his stories and constructions were related to his social/family context were uncertain. Aaron fondly spoke of each of

his parents; he talked about how his mother read to him, and how he was proudly “on his way” to being just like his dad. I found it difficult to believe that his affection was not genuine or that his parents were in any way presently inattentive. Rather, I feel that the period following his parent’s separation occurred when he was a young child and he has seemingly spent the following years recovering and sorting through unresolved realities buried in a past that was dead and had no place in the present.

In general, our shared reflective space truly came to be performative, an opportunity for play, and served as a distinct reality outside of those the child was managing and making sense of. At the same time, as with the other children, the space was nevertheless shaped by the various forces, which in turn drove their conception of self and the way in which they communicated and participated within the world at large and inside our space. It became apparent that Aaron possessed the ability to step “outside” his currently known self, and to incorporate aspects of his life he kept hidden from his regular audience. At the same time, I felt that there was a kind of transformative power in creating a space for the exhibition of all Aaron’s worlds, especially those which no longer seemed to exist in the world he presently shared with his parents. Thus, an essential aspect of our space was its distinctness, its separation from his other worlds, and my external status.

When it came time for Aaron to review his storybook, I commented that he had created more artwork than anyone else and, as a result, I had to place some of his work on both the front and back of a page—the writing art on one side, and his paintings on the other. In response, he commented that that had happened before because he liked

“drawing pictures to express (his) feelings”. He again referred to the life events that had caused him to turn to the use of expressive art. Aaron then chose to read his story out loud, and his reading was the most interactive I experienced with any of the children, for he stopped at various points to look over at me and shake his head, or to smile and laugh—he especially enjoyed the bit about him wanting to be a famous artist.

At one point, he fully stopped his reading to turn and smile at me when he read about how he had learned that art is a language and he could use it to talk for him when he didn’t want to talk about his sad stories. I felt that in that pause, that extended look, we shared and enjoyed a particular inconsistency in our relationship, and I was held accountable to him. He had explained to me who he now was, while also sharing who he used to be in the form of both his past and current self. Yet, he had also made it clear that he did not share those stories with others, and, by including them in the draft book, I was creating an image of a child who was not necessarily the boy he wanted to be known as. I had “truthfully” affirmed the stories he told, while also, as in the case of Abby, chose to not apply the message in which the telling occurred: “I don’t share these with others, because this isn’t who I now am.”

When editing his book, Aaron chose to remove text from his story that dealt with his brother’s death or the painting that expressed it, as well as the text stating that he had not had the opportunity to talk about this story and would like to do so. He did, however, leave the text that said how he enjoyed talking about most of his art, and how it is important to express his stories and emotions. Aaron was not sure what his parents would think if they saw his sad painting, and decided that he

would only show them the humorous writing art, which I had presented on one side of his draft book. He felt that his parents wouldn't "want" to see his death painting, so he wouldn't show it to them.

Again, perhaps this was done in order to prevent and protect his parents from witnessing his ongoing attempts to cope with difficult memories, while also preventing and protecting himself from viewing it through his parent's eyes. He would show them the happy art instead, which corresponded with his seeming need to protect his parents from his sadness and to entertain them with his humour and wit. Thus, he chose to keep his paintings on the back of the second page in his storybook, so that he could keep his brother painting hidden from his parents. Aware of his discomfort, I reminded him that he could completely remove any art he did not want his parents to see, but he shook his head and wanted to keep his sad art and the story it expressed present. I was not sure whether it was because he was leaving that communicative door open, or if he was simply so proud of his painting, he could not bear to relieve it of an audience. In any case, his choice to include it seemed significant and contrasted with his customary practice of expressing sad emotions through art and subsequently hiding them from his parents.

In my time with Aaron, he seemed to sincerely value the benefit and importance of expressing emotions inspired by past events. At the same time, he had been unable to share them with those who were directly affected by such events as potentially a way of preserving the present reality and letting the past stay where it was. The stories he chose to tell and the way he needed to arrange and explain his emotions and realities likely served a meaningful purpose for him at this time. Or,

on the other hand, perhaps he had not before verbally attempted to narrate his life and consciously discovered for the first time that there was uncertainty in his memory schema. I felt that combining his conflicting time scenarios and his fluctuating character identities is something that Aaron is likely to address in the future as he engages in further re/formation at his narrative level of his self. Yet, in the time I knew him, he appeared to keep them distinct and balanced as he coped with the traumatic memories that he is perhaps unsure about how to appropriately express and share without betraying his “new and improved” confident and social identity.

When Aaron’s teacher commented that his stories weren’t necessarily “true” or “accurate”, I felt a short flare of indignation as the veracity of our tellings are intimately involved with our coping mechanisms—if others publicly doubted them or deemed them false, it could have devastating consequences on the construction we have built, for we are their creators, their authors and mechanics. While the potential for true emotional health may require us to sort out our inner contradictions someday, I feel it is important to respect our orchestration and allow some time for us to reconstruct it on our own as part of our individual healing process. We can build such things to help us along temporarily. Therefore, while I interpreted Aaron’s simultaneous narratives as indicators of trauma, they also demonstrated an active and ongoing process of managing identities and selves. For, as a creative nine year old, in just five years, Aaron had transformed himself. The consequences, both negative and positive, of his ambitious evolution are evident in the way he told and shared his stories in relation to his distinct

audiences, and yet I could not help but feel that he had done quite an impressive bit of work on his own.

Aaron left the project with a book containing visual remnants of past experiences, a past and “consciously” buried self he did not communicate with his parents. The book also held a map of various directions Aaron could take up with time—he could let his parents turn the page and see his paintings, knowing that a past self would then be exposed. He could, at some point, show all the pages to members of his family himself at a time he later chooses. Or he could leave it up to fate, far from his abilities to control, as Abby seemed to do with her “it’s part of school” reasoning. The book could provide him with options for further communication that he could utilize when he chose to. I was confined to a distinct temporal space, and any act of integration concerning our time and the time he occupied in his other spaces would be left to him. In our time together, Aaron engaged in distinguishing and infiltrating his past and present, trying out various ways of being he had not before performed in the presence of an audience. Whether Aaron expands his audience to include his parents or continues to clarify past experiences independently, I felt that my particular role as audience could have potentially enhanced and broadened his own in his own personal life.

In the class, Aaron shone with confidence, as he seemed to find comfort and pride in his therapeutic expressive use of art and in the role of artist he already fully embodied in his life. He seemed to use such roles to shape his new way of being. Meanwhile, his aesthetic coping strategies did not require him to verbally discuss his negative feelings and stories with others, but still provided him with a wide audience,

excluding his parents, with whom he could communicate and share his world. In our temporary reflective space, he seemed very willing to verbally share his stories with me. I felt that the project gave Aaron an opportunity to communicate in a way that did not threaten his construction of self. It allowed him a space in which he could “try out” new personal narratives. I was given an inside tour of his world in our short time together, a snapshot of his life. He shared his strategies and their reasoning, and I listened and reproduced them. Although he removed portions of text that referred explicitly to his discomfort with talking about or sharing his negative artwork with his parents, the act of representing his words back to him involved a shared and validated discourse. I heard what he had said, and acknowledged it as fact, if fiction. Although his most private mechanisms would not be recorded in the final edited story, he had shared them with me. I had confirmed his roles as artist, author and editor of his own life stories and emotions. This validation, I feel, could play a positive role in his individual quest to sort through his contradictions and imaginings. For, as Goodson and Sikes (2001) state:

...knowing that someone is sufficiently interested in your life to hear your story and work it into a life history can be empowering in that it can enhance one's sense of self-worth. Feeling positive about oneself and knowing that you are valued is, perhaps, one of the most empowering states of being, regardless of any concrete changes which may ensue. (p.101)

Jeff

In introducing the final case study, I find I must start at the end, for, by the time the project implementation was concluding, I found that Jeff was the child for whom I most wanted the project to work in the

way I originally defined the curriculum's objectives. For, more than any of the other children, Jeff seemed like the child most on his own, and most like the children who had originally inspired my research. Thus, the research was, in a way, designed for him, and it was vital for me to see if he could use it. At the same time, he was a painful example of the limits of general education promoting the kind of emotional expression programmes I felt it essential to include, and of the individual ways in which particular children could and could not participate in the structure and timeframe provided.

While Jeff found limitations in his ability to create and exhibit his work, it was the nature of our research interaction which seemed to make more of a difference than the expressive processes I introduced through the curriculum. My relationship with Jeff seemed the most strained, personal and emotional, because I felt that my presence and what I asked of him completely conflicted with everything he had learned and forced himself to remember. At the same time, I felt, while he could not fully utilize our relationship within the short space created, it was the brevity of our dynamic that pushed him to explore and reach out in a small, but extremely dramatic, way.

For this reason, I find that my case study of Jeff has taken the form of a personal account, more so than with the other children. Fernando was clearly supported by his caretakers, and easily assumed the project roles proposed, while also explicitly affirming the value of my research to me—in a way, he facilitated my own sense of worth as he assisted me with coping with the educational context I found myself. In this way, I used him far more than he utilized me, for his emotional needs were addressed and met in his home context. While Abby bravely

negotiated her coping methods and defensive mechanisms, our relationship came to a kind of resolve by the end. I felt that *she* felt that she achieved something personal and significant. In addition, I believed that she explicitly employed me and the power I could exercise in providing her with the challenge she seemed to require in order to find a valid reason to face and share her emotions. There was a kind of closure as our space ended, mostly because I knew that she would transition back into her world, with parents whom, despite their marital difficulties and perhaps inconsistent parental attention, *she knew* loved her.

Aaron, on the other hand, exhibited an incredibly independent process of reconstruction, which he permitted me to witness. Yet, through this witnessing, Aaron uncovered an opportunity to assume various ways of being, to demonstrate his life inconsistencies and attempts to connect the past that drove him with the present and future self he envisioned and worked so hard to embody. He did not use me as explicitly as Abby, but I felt my presence impacted and broadened his perspective of the ongoing processes he participated in, both verifying and recognizing his past and present notion of self. Yet, as with Abby, Aaron's method of coping was based on his conscious awareness that his actions and behaviours were noticed by and could potentially affect his parents. He left our space to return to one in which he played recognized roles. But, unlike Abby and Aaron, Jeff did not seem to balance his being in different contexts. At the same time, unlike Fernando, Jeff had no audience. Basically, I wanted the project to work for Jeff in the way it was written to work because he was the child for whom this kind of project was least likely to work for.

I did not spend much individual time with Jeff in the class environment. He did not have much to say, but worked steadily with his group and did not seem disagreeable or uncomfortable. He seemed to be part of the outgoing group of boys who sat together and who, on the last workshop day, despite their active class engagement, decided not to participate in the interviews. It seemed to be a peer decision, as the group leader felt he had already done something similar to what was being asked of them in the project, and, thus, the others followed suit with a shrug and a smile. Yet, Jeff suddenly changed his mind at the last minute and broke from the group decision. As I was stacking the other children's paperwork, Jeff approached me with his own signed consent form and exclaimed, "I *do* want to do it!" I was somewhat surprised, but naturally delighted to work with him.

In our initial interview, Jeff opened by saying he was quite excited about the project because it gave him the chance to express his emotions. But, minutes later, he stated he was worried about the whole thing because he didn't like his emotions being in his picture. I myself was interested in how the children were going to actualize the project process, as, in theory, the act of expressing stories inherently involved emotion. Yet, when it was presented to them on the introductory morning, emotions were addressed distinctly, as I wanted to explain what I felt to be the objective of expressive art—expressing emotions. In this way, Jeff regarded emotion to be something he could actually extract and simply leave out. It seemed that he felt emotions in general—not necessarily the positive or the negative kinds, but emotions as a living concept—to be a source of danger, a cause of volatility.

In our time together, Jeff remained guarded but would, at the same time, offer fragments of family stories to me, which I unconsciously then stretched into whole pieces, as I wanted to “figure” the kid out. In our verbal conversations, he painted a picture of a home life in which he was isolated, unhappy and emotionally neglected. Jeff did not have art supplies at home. The most poignant thing he said in our first individual conversation was how he did not get to play at home. When he asked to play, he was apparently told to go watch television, play on the computer or go lay in bed. The act of playing, critical in a child’s cognitive and emotional development, is often regarded to be an initial form of social interaction. There is great importance in social play, for it allows a child to utilize and develop imagination and self, integrating fantasy with inner and outer realities (Winnicott, 1971). To confine play as a solitary activity is detrimental to its productiveness. Jeff also talked about people in school abusing the personal information he provided them, so he had learned to not share anything and keep it all inside. He claimed that he did not get the chance to disclose his emotions in any context, and he also did not share his stories. As I sat and listened to Jeff’s beliefs, descriptions and interpretations, I felt that he had little practice with play and was subsequently less able to forge social friendships with others. Rather, he kept his inner world to himself.

If Jeff had internalized his parents’ regard through early interactions with them, he may have developed a set of behaviours which regulated the range of interactions with peers and other encounters in his daily life. From what he shared with me, Jeff anticipated the negative reactions of others, and, in order to avoid what he appraised to be moments of vulnerability, he organized his

behaviours in a way that inhibited such situations to occur entirely. He simply kept his true feelings inside. By doing this, he could be seen as deactivating his attachment system, and the need to be consoled, heard or affirmed. Simultaneously, his method of affect regulation was also deactivated, as Jeff perhaps also eliminated the need to feel, because feeling produced pain. Although each piece seems to have multiple narratives, which can be interpreted as making particularly strong statements, Jeff's artwork, as seen below, was not explicitly evocative in the same way the others' artwork seemed to be. Yet, the size of the house in the first painting seemed to make a statement. Similarly, in his second piece of artwork as seen on the next page, Jeff's use and positioning of the words "angry love", placed just above his apparently happy character, also grabbed my attention. However, as stated earlier, my role was to not analyze, but to present each work as each child presented and explained (or did not explain) it to me.





Yet, Jeff's *response* to his artwork seemed to be more intense than that of the others. While Jeff seemed to enjoy expressing his feelings through his artwork, he adamantly did not want it to serve as a piece of conversation. He kept saying that he'd like to create his art and then "just leave it" and have it speak for him. He seemed to truly enjoy the cathartic notion, the emotional process of art, but was worried about the record it left and the ways in which this record could be used against him. Jeff attempted to leave no trace of himself, removing any opportunity for anyone to know and hurt him. In a way, he attempted to make himself invulnerable.

Jeff seemed quite unhappy—while he did not act out in class in my time there, in our conversations, he expressed a worried distrust of all people and a loneliness that he felt he had been sentenced to embody. The world was, he felt, truly against him. He was determined to keep everything locked up, because that was the only way he could keep himself safe, "I just keep it inside." He stated that he did not enjoy writing because he did not like writing about himself, "I don't have

anything to say because then people will know.” He also shared that he sometimes made up lies about his emotions so that he could effectively disguise his true feelings and keep himself safe. He took incredible care to keep himself hidden and, consequently, avoided any opportunity to be the focus of the kind of responses he expected, or the subject of a lack of response.

He was quite resolute in our first discussion as he explained exactly how he made sense of his life and how he had decided to not trust people—I never offered any protest but, in contrast, was very conscious to carefully listen and appear supportive, rather than concerned. He did not seem to push me away but, rather, he almost seemed to want me to understand why he did the things he did, to convince me of his reasoning and to validate it. Looking back, I felt honoured that he considered me to be a source of validation. I could, actually, understand quite well the justifications he gave for his emotional unavailability, as it was apparently performed in response to that which he had experienced himself from his parents. While I addressed each worry he expressed, I was most upset about how I had put him in a position where his power as artist was completely diminished and his primary worry about being exposed was unintentionally actualized through the class art show, in which anonymity was not provided.

During the art exhibit, I felt as if Jeff, more than any other child, had been involuntarily chained to his visually expressed emotions; all the while, he was explicitly aware that “he” was not protected. Although he did not directly say it, through the art show, I imagined that he experienced a loss of total control over his emotions and experienced a

subsequent state of vulnerability. In our interview, he stated that he wanted to keep things inside. In the class, he had not only communicated his life through the artwork in a social space, he had been physically attached to it. He stated that he did not enjoy the art exhibit. Although no one asked him about his artwork and he did not have to interact with anyone, he was put in a situation where he knew he could be asked to talk about his aesthetic expression. Based on his statement, if he did not want to talk about his life, and he did not want to express his life, a social art exhibit of his work in which he was the explicit artist of particular pieces put him in an uncomfortable position. While the project was meant to produce a feeling of power with and for each child in the role of artist and audience, the art show had done little good for a child who found power in his constant struggle to remain hidden and unexpressed.

Kerby (1991) claimed that the narrative construction of stories is an essentially human act of a person or, to use his phrase, a “speaking-feeling embodied subject” (p. 21-22). Yet, what happens when the person is faced with a subject that reflects an internal world that he claims he does not want others to see? What would happen if a child was given the opportunity to rewrite the subject? In our first interview, Jeff stated that he did not share how he felt with others; at the same time, his artwork was an embodiment of a felt experience to which others had access. In a way, he was publicly connected to himself—or to a subject that embodied his emotional expression. And, due to the format of the class show, he did not choose to be put in that position.

My experience with Jeff extended beyond the school grounds, beyond the borders of the space created through my research, and it was

in this outside space my relationship with Jeff, and my regard for Jeff, changed entirely. One day I encountered him out in the community whilst food shopping—he was standing in the entrance area of the store along with a man, who I assumed to be his father, and other children who were all running around him. At this point, I had worked with Jeff in the class and in our first interview. Our relationship had been confined to school. I was slightly shocked, as I had not expected to run into any of the children in my “other” life, and remembered to smile, already lecturing myself on any kind of time gap or hesitation in my reaction to seeing him. I unconsciously greeted him with a term of endearment, as I tend to do with friends and informal acquaintances, and he nodded, straight-faced. When walking to the front door of the primary school, I was usually mobbed with the other children in class, delighted to get me on their turf outside of the classroom—a space in which the power dynamics between us levelled in their favour, where they proceeded to inundate me with stories and opinions. However, Jeff never joined them. I was invisible to him on the playground. Therefore, I was not surprised when Jeff, in our moment in the entrance to the food store, squinted at me and, otherwise, exhibited no other response to me. The man accompanying him did not look up to see who was talking to his child. I had to stop for a second, as my husband was tying his shoe, and it seemed to be an almost awkward situation—I stood there with a bag of groceries with a child who quickly returned to interacting with the other children, who I presumed to be his siblings.

While I had already theorized that his inability to use me prevented him from needing me, I could not help but feel as if I had been deemed unimportant, dismissed, by the nine year old. I sought

escape in the certain company of my husband, as I felt somewhat hurt with Jeff's reaction to seeing me, and unable to decide upon how to respond "correctly". A couple minutes later, my husband and I started to walk out the door when I suddenly heard a loud shout, "Goodbye Hillarie!" It startled me because, as I turned around, I saw that Jeff's face had completely changed—it was no longer blank or suspicious. Rather, it was slightly desperate and packed with emotion. I returned his goodbye whole-heartedly, with all the emotion I could possibly use to swell my appropriate adult reaction, while the man with him continued to read his paper and did not look up. Jeff was ignored. I was ignored. We shared that moment.

Through this encounter, I came to fully realize that perhaps Jeff was stuck, and did not know how to "be", relational or otherwise. On the bus ride home, I felt as if our "real" worlds—the everyday worlds that operated independently of those of the other—had intersected for a moment and, as a result, we experienced an interaction that extended far beyond those Jeff and I shared within the school research setting. It was apparent that life could only be brought so far into a classroom. While I listened to what he offered to me in the research space, I actively constructed my idea of the home environment he described. I was an audience to his story. But, when I personally encountered him and what I interpreted to be his family in an outside space, I also became an active audience to the world he had described. A part of me felt that Jeff's stories were now "proven", and, for him, perhaps I was now proven to be a "real" person who existed in the same world he existed in. We shared non-neutral space. My interpretation of our shared and lived experience at the shopping centre is simply my subjective perspective,

but it weaved itself smoothly within the story we shared in the research setting and, for me, brought it to life. This experience also reminded me of the limits of research, and also the power produced by a short-term interaction between a child and myself. I was a brief, temporary, and responsive adult figure in his life. For all of those reasons, any attachment created was an incredibly complex thing.

I cannot know whether or in what way our community encounter affected our research space or our relationship, but it seemed that Jeff was quite excited about our next meeting. I had hoped that some control could be restored through Jeff assuming the role of co-researcher and editor in the second interview. After he read his story to himself and looked over the book, he stated that he did not know how he felt about it. I asked him what he thought his parents would think if they saw his book, and he stated that he didn't know anything about his mom and dad. For a second, panic gripped me, and I again felt the fear of not possessing background information on any of the children, and relying solely on what they gave me in our time together to get a sense of their life. This caused me to feel rather powerless, and unable to avoid stumbling blindly into a situation where a child did not perhaps have parents and I had potentially resurrected trauma—what had happened to Jeff's parents, I frantically wondered. Had they died? Was the man I encountered in the store his father? Were my ideas regarding his home life incorrect? Was he in care?

A colourful array of possibilities flew through my mind. At the same time, I could not think of anything to say except: "Okay. You don't know anything about your mom and dad—who do you live with?" He made an exasperated sound and responded, "My mom and dad!" He

lived with his mom and dad and simply did not know anything about them; he did not know them as people, so he could not know what they would think of his artwork. I was taken aback for a moment, for it seemed so obvious to him. Jeff had perceived a lack of emotional availability from his parents, and fully realized that he could not predict a response from them because they did not interact with him. As a result, Jeff may have internalized his parent's lack of interest in him, and, consequently, convinced himself that he did not require any emotional response from anyone, as Dallos (2007) states, "Roles of our attachment figures become internalized and we can come to apply to our self what we remember the attachment figures having done in the past." (p. 33) For, if Jeff's parents had ignored him, perhaps Jeff was now attempting to ignore himself, too.

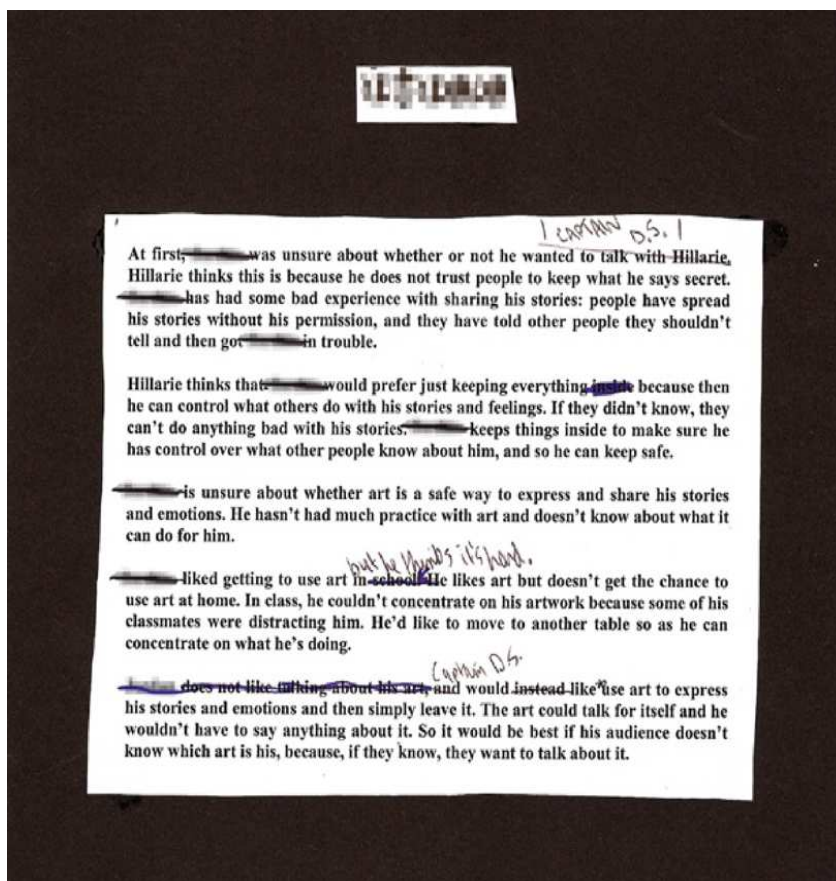
As he stared at me incredulously, as I had not quickly "picked up" on the fact that he did not know his parents as people, I felt rather, to be blunt, stupid. I was already unsure of what Jeff thought of me in my time with his class. He usually regarded me with a mix of suspicion and ambivalence, so I had responded by becoming disproportionately self-conscious when engaging with him. I was accustomed to sorting through these kinds of feelings in my work with teenagers labelled as being troubled. Everyone new was truly a legitimate threat to them. Yet, I preferred to think of myself as a potential break from the world the child was used to, and I would eventually prove myself. I could make a difference, if given a reasonable amount of time—*if it wasn't working, give it time*. With Jeff, I did not have the necessary time to explain myself, build up trust and work through my inevitable departure, as my

relational role was not acting as a counsellor, therapist or ongoing resource.

I started to worry that the brief nature of our contact could not only be insignificant, but damaging. Yet, I had not had much contact with Jeff, so I felt the damage I could inflict through my brief presence was minimized. At the same time, I reassured myself with my steadfast belief that providing a child with “something else” that they could potentially use in their everyday world, something with which to contrast their everyday realities and the ways in which they were regularly treated, was, in essence, the point of education and my project. He could use his educational experience or discard it. I lectured myself as I found I was focusing on the vulnerability of the child before me, and not on recognizing the courage, strength and resilience he must have known as a child living in the home life he described.

I asked Jeff whether he felt that having his parents read his story could help them to know more about him and he quickly answered, “Yeah.” But it was the way in which he responded that confused me a bit—he replied as if he had thought about it, and was excited by the possibilities. Yet, when given the opportunity to edit, the first thing he wanted to do was cross off his name in every instance it was typed. Although I explained that he would later get the chance to choose a code name for when I mentioned him in my research, Jeff wanted his name immediately replaced with a character from his video game system. He then proceeded to go through and cross out his name throughout his draft storybook. He looked up at me with a serious expression on his face, “I’ll know who it is.” In a way, he could potentially not trust that I would remove him at a later time. Therefore, he went about removing

himself from the story entirely. And, in his final editorial act, he blackened out the word “inside” from a sentence, and did not merely cross it out as he had done with his name, as shown below.



He also removed the beginning of a sentence that stated he did not like talking about his art and reconstructed the other half of the sentence, which now read, “Captain D.S. would like to use art to express his stories and emotions and then simply leave it.” In a way, he used his role as editor to completely remove himself from his own storybook. The author was truly dead, but not exactly in the sense Barthes had intended. For he was not merely deleted through the writing or the textual representation of self, he was deleted through the explicit action of the author. He did all he could to limit further interpretations; he attempted to control what others could see. If his parents were to read his book,

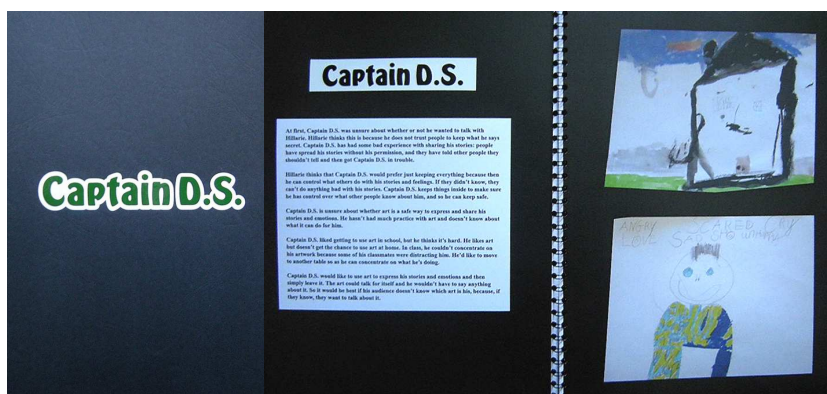
Jeff would be largely removed from view. It was as if he was completely removing any notion of internality from the book—there was no way anyone could access him—perhaps not even Jeff himself.

Jeff removed Jeff from his own story and replaced himself with a fictional hero character who was, unlike Jeff, superhuman and invulnerable. In Kleinian theory, the schizoid position can be demonstrated by individuals' attempt to "cut off" aspects of self; when pain occurred, Klein argued that the pain, the part of self that contained or caused the pain, could be projected upon another who could, in turn, be controlled (Segal, 1980). While I, once again, cannot ethically place such a label upon Jeff, his projection of self upon a fictional superhero could be seen as a way in which to establish more control over the self which was presented to others. At the same time, to attain the strength and invincibility suggested by a character in one of the video games he involved himself with in his playtime at home perhaps was a practical impossibility. As a result, he did not attempt to merely alter or distort his own character by removing "emotional" text as Aaron did, but removed himself as a character entirely. No amount of editing would suffice. He detached himself from his story, as he had attempted to extract his emotions from his artwork.

Yet, Jeff's process of erasure was one he shared with me. I felt that to be a positive sign. He willingly revealed that he did, in fact, have an emotional self, while also explaining and justifying his strategies of protection. He trusted me to carry on his proposed intentions and to produce a book that would keep him safe and hidden. In this way, I was invited into his mental representation of perhaps what he felt he needed to be in order to eliminate vulnerability. The project was designed to

facilitate children's agency and subjectivity, and Jeff did in fact exercise power as artist, author and co-researcher in his individual process of expression and editing of self. He cast his vulnerability into the role of subjective self, and replaced it with an indestructible hero.

I returned with the final books for each child to keep, was once again wonderfully mobbed by the children, and looked for Jeff. His seat was now in the back corner of the classroom, and I had placed his book on his desk space, as I did with everyone else's. However, some of the other children had noticed his chosen name on the cover of his book, as presented below, and gathered around him.



They then started to ask Jeff questions, “Captain D.S.? Who’s that? Is that supposed to be you? Why would you do that?” They did not mock him, but did seem a little incredulous and mostly curious. Jeff just shrugged and looked to me, standing across the busy room, looking at him. He had seemed to hold his own in class as a member of the “popular” boy group, despite his personal confession that he did not trust any of them. He then began to mouth words to me from across the social chaos of over-stimulated kids and pointed at his book. I was surrounded by excited children, and was never very good at reading lips,

so I shook my head in confusion, while the teacher ordered the kids to gather in a circle for pictures.

There was a ridiculous amount of activity in the immediate area, but through a moving wave of hands, faces, books and bodies, Jeff continued to mouth words and I continued to not understand. It seemed quite metaphorical that the moments assigned for individual discussion were somewhat void of emotion and contained a kind of ambivalence on his part, but the absolutely impossible moments, the times in which communication was most impractical, Jeff seemed to reach out. I regarded these to be gestures, rather than attempts to facilitate communication. “I care, but I can’t tell you, but I want you to know.” He did not attempt to grab my attention, until I was just about to leave. I had asked the children who participated in the research interviews to pick a code name and write it on a slip of paper, along with their own name. Jeff approached me with his paper and whispered, “I don’t want Captain D.S. anymore.” I nodded and opened the paper to see the name “Jeff” scribbled.

Later on, as I opened all the slips of paper, I found it ironic that, in the midst of professional football stars, pop stars and rap stars the other children picked, as demonstrated by the names “Fernando” and “Akon”—respectively, a football and pop star, “Akon” being later exposed as a “joke”, and then notably changed to “Aaron”—the name “Jeff” stuck out as quite ordinary and plain in comparison. The other children imagined famous figures, while Jeff imagined someone everyday, even “normal”. Jeff had tried so hard to participate in an expressive arts project, but in a way that protected him and seemed safe. He enjoyed expressing himself through art, but was fearful of revealing

himself to others. Yet, in his attempt to manage his participation in a safe way, to not draw attention to himself and avoid placing himself in a position of ridicule and laughter, he found that his peers found his attempts to do so strange, and he was eventually exposed. The project provided Jeff with tasks that he did not ordinarily allow himself to perform, and he approached them with the same techniques he used to cope with his everyday realities. While Jeff talked of hiding his emotions and keeping himself invisible, to continue to take part in a project asking him to externalize his emotions and assume a recognized role of power-making was an incredibly courageous feat. In the end, his coping mechanism proved insufficient, and his fear came true.

I spoke to the Place2Be counsellor about my overall concern for Jeff; I did not want to break our confidence, so I kept the discussion quite general, since he did not elaborate upon a particular instance that needed to be addressed, which worked out quite nicely because I felt his entire reality did, in fact, need to be addressed. She assured me that she was already aware of Jeff's home situation, and was currently working with his siblings. Although reassured that Jeff was not truly alone in the knowledge of his domestic reality, I again felt the limits of this kind of project while working with him—limits developed and shaped by the roles he had learned to play in his everyday life, roles created to keep himself safe and, in a way, detach from all that which could cause him pain. At the same time, Jeff's use of both our individual reflective and the social classroom space allowed him to explain and test out his methods of coping in an explicit way, with myself as a witness to his exploration. He had let me into his world, and I was able to see things

from his perspective, while he explored my own, negotiating their integration.

For these reasons, I felt my time with Jeff was the most unclear, challenging, rewarding and, for me, wholly unresolved. While I realized that a resolution was never the objective of a project focusing upon momentary interpretation and processing, I could not distinguish what I felt to be my impossible responsibility to “fix” a situation that could never be fixed in the way it needed to be, or, in other words, by never allowing it to occur in the first place. While each of the children discussed in the case studies was explicitly different and amazing to me, Jeff not only actualized his own fear of ridicule, but our relationship brought about my own fear of what my project and I could potentially expose, and what my project could never really be stretched to fit, cover or filter. While an ethical concern often expressed regarding my project was whether a door would be “left open”, I felt that, in the case of Jeff, the only door was firmly boarded shut, and the little boy could only wave from the window, while I could only wave back and reluctantly leave him behind.

Case Studies Summary

The case studies presented in this chapter show the differences between how individual children managed and utilized the expressive processes presented to them in the research curriculum, and the variations in the ways in which they participated in the research space. While educational interventions like the one I introduced are directed at a classroom of children, with particular aims and objectives to enhance

self awareness explicitly and implicitly embodied in its design and execution, it is the particular ways in which individual students balance and merge their experiences of home life with the educational experiences offered to them that demonstrates the limitations and possibilities of the structured endeavour. My curricular intervention was developed in order to help children expand their knowledge of self through the aesthetic emotional expression of life narratives. At the end of the research implementation, I was left surprised and moved by children's use of all aspects of my research project, and as I reflected back upon what had happened, I found that it was the unique research relationship that developed between myself and each child that played an unexpected role in what can be seen as the effectiveness of my short-term intervention. In this way, while the processes and ideas introduced in a classroom may be carefully designed, they also require ongoing critical reflexivity on the part of educators and researchers, in order to ensure that the power dynamics inherently present in an adult-child relationship are ethically managed. As such, from the perspective of both researcher and participant, I now turn to discuss in more depth the various themes that emerged through my research process.

Chapter Six

Chapter Six: Further Discussion

It is not just that individual “patients” or “prospective patients” are different from one another in virtue of the complexity of influences which shapes them...Persons also have an inbuilt and innate *will* to be different, to live and understand their lives in individual ways. Even if individuals may be shown to aspire to the similar kinds of fulfilment within their life-cycles it is the nature of human beings in our culture, and to a degree in *every* culture, that they desire to do this in their own particular fashion. (Rustin, 2002, Emphasis in text, p. 84)

A description of the emotional development of the individual cannot be made entirely in terms of the individual, but that, in certain areas, and this is one of them, perhaps the main one, the behaviour of the environment is part of the individual’s own personal development and must therefore be included. (Winnicott, 1971, p. 53)

Introduction

My research experience demonstrates the potential of a short-term educational intervention in which children are given a space to communicate and explore their emotional self through narrative construction and aesthetic expression. At the same time, as my case studies demonstrate, children’s ability to express, share and own their life stories in an educational context is based on their experience with doing so in other areas of their life, especially in their home world. In this chapter I discuss issues that emerged through the expressive arts intervention in which children’s historical experience of expressing self affected their ability to exercise power through the communicative roles

offered: namely, the act of owning and exhibiting artwork in a social classroom space. This discussion gives insight into engaging in critical reflexive research with children, as well as the complex nature of recognizing and including the emotional self in formal education as part of a whole child approach.

My experience also demonstrates the ethical significance of children's active roles in research endeavours and how a research space and the relationship that develops within it can serve an educational, as well as therapeutic, purpose. In the reflective space created through my methodological design, individual children negotiated their project participation through their lifelong experience with relationships and their communication of self with others. Our research space became performative, as each child explored their construction of self and some transgressed borders they had established in order to try out new ways of being in the responsive company of a researcher. I argue that children's particular use of the reflective interview space was significantly due to the defining characteristics of it and our relationship: brevity, newness and distinction. Therefore, I begin the chapter by exploring each of these characteristics and how they potentially contributed to each child's experience as artist, subject, and audience in a transitional space that existed outside the contexts the children were continuously formed within.

Collaborative Effect of Interactive Reflective Space

Introduction

Through the implementation of my research curriculum, a few variables appeared for consideration, but I felt that the small size of my study prevented me from making larger claims as to, for example, a gender effect. Rather, I chose to explore four case studies that give an idea as to how different primary school children utilize and make sense of educational processes intended to be empowering and promote emotional health, similar to those processes now being introduced through Scotland's national Curriculum for Excellence. In this way, my project was not a strange isolated experiment but, rather, it can be seen to reflect a current trend in Scottish education that is, I argue, driven by the whole child movement. It can provide an example of how philosophical ideas focused upon the emotional and educational expression of self through art media are embodied in educational design, and the *ways in which* individual children may use such expressive processes. For while the individual child is constructed through the particular way in which she negotiates and manages contextual interaction, her particularity is developed through the context she must continuously make sense of.

There were two primary spaces created in the project which defined the research relationship I had with individual children: a social classroom space, and a private reflective space in which the individual interviews took place. My research shows that the strategy a child uses to cope with the strange situation can be seen as an application of the

coping methods she has historically used to adapt to her other contexts in both conscious and unconscious ways (Simpson and Belsky, 2008). Some children's actions in the classroom space differed from the ways in which they were in our individual research space. They brought life and family issues into our space, although some had previously stated they would not discuss such things with anyone, as in the case of Abby. It almost felt as if some children were tricking a part of themselves—the part that would not allow them to disclose personal stories or feelings with others—and they were then working around their own rules. Bondi with Fewell (2003) argue that a counselling space can facilitate a “transgression” of familial boundaries and the borders of selfhood (p. 536). While each child brings in their other ways of being, a separate space can permit them to momentarily step outside the identities they wear in the other contexts. Similarly, in our reflective project space, it seemed that a child could maintain their coping mechanisms, while participating in the research in a way that they would not otherwise be able to without explicitly deconstructing or violating their internal processes.

For example, while Abby continuously declared that she did not share her life stories with others, she simultaneously discussed personal realities with me. It seemed that some children had created different roles and rules, which were used in order for them to seamlessly and simultaneously maintain conflicting working models that guided their interactive behaviour in our interview. This could be seen to resonate with Freud's concept of the “split in the ego”, and Bowlby's discussion of a client with “two conflicting selves that were consciously accessible at the same time. Rather than being deactivated, one of the selves was

merely kept secret from other people.” (Bretherton and Munholland, 2008, p. 106) Or perhaps this conflict provides an example of the incredibly complex interrelationship of espoused narrative identities confirmed and constructed through self-description and a person’s actual actions.

In a way, the children’s approach to interaction and participation was often revealed in our space, which began to seem, although unintentionally, as a time for reflection and introspection, not only into the child’s experience in the project, but upon their early experiences as a child in their various contexts. The roles of the project were tested against the roles they were accustomed to playing, and our interview space became truly exploratory and performative. The children seemed to find freedom in a new space, and through a responsive stranger disconnected from their school and home contexts. I purposely attempted to make the interview space distinct and keep the knowledge of a child’s other worlds solely in the hands and mind of the child. I wanted to convey that their multiple and simultaneous identities and realities were entirely theirs to communicate or keep inside, to invent and distort. I was to be a fresh audience, and, in turn, each child could test out potentially new performances and ways of being.

Bretherton (1995) argued that a child who engaged in emotionally open communication with caretakers at home would be more able to coherently discuss attachment issues with a “nonjudgmental interviewer” outside of the home environment (p. 316). In my time with individual children, I began to see the ways in which a child’s communicative role with me may have been influenced explicitly by the extent to which each child engaged in interactive communication

concerning emotion and self with attachment figures. At the same time, a child's home life did not automatically remove their ability to interact with me in a way they had not done before, but, rather, their familial relations caused children to create adaptive communicative strategies in order to participate in an emotive expressive art project that was meant to create power through sharing and learning in the social roles of artist and audience.

In my interviews with children, the actions of individuals seemed to sometimes conflict with their verbal statements; they opened up in a way they had apparently not before done. Therefore, I had to ask what was it about our relationship and its context that caused children to continue participating in the way they did. In doing so, I established three characteristics of our reflective space, which could distinguish it from the other spaces a child may inhabit in their ongoing everyday world: brevity, newness, and distinction—each involving me as a responsive stranger, and the interactive relationship which developed between myself and individual children in the spaces encountered. In a sense, the reflective space and my role combined to serve as a temporary secure base from which children could explore; although I feel the defining characteristics of the space prevented me from becoming an attachment figure, as idealized through an ongoing and consistent responsive figure, I also feel that they facilitated its therapeutic possibility.

I contemplate whether these contextual attributes may have allowed children to create new rules of interaction, while carefully negotiating their behaviour with those sets already set in place, based on their new motivation to participate in the project, and to, in some way,

take up the roles offered. The transgression of borders established in therapeutic spaces do not free an individual from the sets of identities and models they use to negotiate their being in other contexts, but a facilitating space can, in a way, suspend the processes which maintain them in a time of play and exploration. The reflective research space was created as a way in which I could manage the power dynamic between an adult and child and allow each child to affirm or change my interpretation of their experience. At the same time, this research space was also a transitional space suspended in time, disconnected from the worlds to which a child would return. Consequently, each child, in arguably both conscious and unconscious ways, controlled the extent to which our world merged with their own, as each served as the bridge between.

Brevity

While I regard brevity to be a factor as to why children opened up in our research space, I did not structure my project on its temporality—the time the children and I were given was shaped by practical constraints found in a school schedule, but, once again, the research context brought about an unexpected characteristic of my project. In therapeutic or educational endeavours, time is often seen as an essential ingredient as to its long-term effects; in my own professional and personal life, the idea that “it takes time” is often a source of support. If it isn’t working, if it isn’t healed, if it presently isn’t the way it should be, give it time. Time is required to build up trust, to “prove” one’s self, to truly learn and embody a new way of thinking, acting and being. Yet, time was not something the child co-researchers

and I had in my project, and it is often not a practical reality of various kinds of interventions. In fact, based on my research experience, I argue that an extended amount of time may not necessarily be the determining factor in whether an educational intervention will work. The constraints of emotional expression may be loosened in a short period of time, in a brief encounter, for the consequences of doing so may be seen as short-lived and not able to extend into ongoing relationships which do not themselves have a definable end.

My research concept came to be embodied within a short-term expressive arts curricular intervention. As a result, the research space, and the research relationship I developed with each child, were both defined by brevity. Yet, I did not feel this to be a bad thing. For I clearly remember particular moments in which my everyday life was disrupted by an incident in school; these moments are treasured for their small details, while their wider chronological context remains blurred; for instance, I don't remember much of Primary 2, but I remember when the regional TV weatherman came to talk to our school. Brevity is associated with inefficacy, incompleteness, a lack of closure, or as part of an unethical exchange. However, in my truncated experience with each child co-researcher over a five-month period, it felt like our short time together emphasized the power exercised by its temporality. We did not have all the time in the world to get somewhere; our time was explicitly limited. This fact could have created a sense of urgency in our interaction; decisions were made immediately for it was clear that the space in which their decisions were directly effective would soon be closed.

In addition, for children whose internal goals would have otherwise prohibited them from revealing what they revealed to me, the briefness of our encounter made it that much less likely that I would impact their everyday world and infiltrate their home environment. While it seems obvious to assume that a long-term relationship can make a significant impact with its own semantic attributes—time equates with worth; a child is “worth” a longer length of time, they are valuable enough to be assigned a longer period of time, I feel that, as my research shows, the substance of the time available, the individual investment and the personal relevance it contains define its extended effect.

While I looked to find academic support for my conclusions regarding temporal framework, I discovered that most educational interventions were created in order to produce a lasting change in behaviour and, in contrast, mine intended to expand a child’s knowledge of self in a moment. Furthermore, the long-term effects of my short-term intervention were not within the scope of my research; once again, I hoped to encourage social communication while learning more about subjective representation through the merging of aesthetic horizons. Yet, there are interesting parallels between what manifested through my intervention compared to others focused upon behaviour change when looking at the extent to which participants felt involved in the research process. In their systematic review of published and unpublished scientific literature concerning the benefits and harms of school-based interventions and their effect upon children’s perception of mental health stigmatization, Schacter et al. (2008) found that the majority of studies took place on a short-term basis, while not one working with

children under twelve years of age involved both an educational component and direct contact with an external figure, as my own project did. While the authors could not come to a strong conclusion whether long or short-term interventions were more effective either way, they conclude that long-term curricular projects have the potential to produce the greatest positive effect. Yet, they did suggest that there is a need for more research that focuses upon children's emotional health, as well as that which includes "education + contact" with younger children—in other words, a curricular educational component combined with direct interactivity with the children.

The idea of "personal relevance" seems to be seen as an essential indicator of whether changes developed in a short-term intervention are incorporated permanently into an individual's life. In order for a short-term project to work in the way its designers intended, participants must feel explicitly involved in the process (Delacourt, 2000). In a study evaluating the behavioural effects of a training program for educators, Moore, Truscott, Kirk and Klingborg (2007) argue that all potential elements involved in a short workshop—the level of interactivity, the provision of materials, and presence of a follow-up visit—may not be enough to overcome all the factors necessary to help participants to explore or increase their understanding of their emotional being.

For, as they state, in order for an educational programme to make a difference, the participants must understand not only what they're learning, but the reasons why they themselves as individuals find it important to do so. This can be seen as a key component as to why child co-researchers who claimed to not usually share their emotional

self did so in our temporal space. In my project, the class workshop which introduced my project, its message, and the roles each child was invited to assume, were all presented to be an inherently personal process—one that involved children's intimate idealizations of self and being. The initial workshop only lasted for an hour, but the children were asked to explicitly involve themselves, their lives and the individual ways in which they maintained and regulated both. If personal relevance and individual involvement are indicators as to whether a short-term educational intervention can have a long-term effect, children's experiences in my project can be seen to have a better chance of lasting.

Yet, in general, it seems that most attempts to determine efficacy of short-term interventions are widely indeterminate, or lean towards long-term initiatives as having a better chance to make some kind of difference in a child's approach to their life. Yet, as I discussed this with colleagues, we simply did not feel this to be an accurate reflection on how life works—it does not come down to time, but depends on the meaning created within the temporal frame. As Ogden (2009) argues, while internal psychological processes are often created through incremental changes in cognitions, the social world can at times produce unexpected events which cause us to re-evaluate, and potentially change, our concept of self and being. In addition, I argue that research must also incorporate the reality that no moment is independent, but an accumulation of all the lifelong experiences which have preceded it and shape the way in which one is able to decipher the illuminating moment. However, an unexpected disruption, while it may not serve as a trigger for change, does hold more potential due to its

temporal nature—it demands immediate attention due to its abruptness. In my project, children were provided with a research schedule that informed them of the dates and amount of time we would have together. And when some continuously asked about the designated end, my response never changed. The informed abruptness of our encounter involved children as knowledgeable participants in the process, while also providing them with a limited timeframe in which to make use of the resources offered. At the same time, as I have argued, the brevity of our relationship also allowed it to maintain a feeling of uniqueness when compared to the other relationships in each child's life, as I will discuss next.

Newness

In a relationship defined by its brevity, newness can also be seen as a factor that differentiated my relationship with children from relations in which a child regularly engaged. From the first moment I entered the classroom, it was apparent that the “novelty” of my presence could have also played an important role in a child's method of participation. Newness is also a defining characteristic of a stranger. Children are often taught that strangers denote danger, which is an important lesson to learn in order to restrict the amount of potential threats likely to present themselves. From a young age, children are taught to simply avoid situations that could potentially hurt them. This is one way in which inhibiting exploration is intended to keep a child safe. However, the attraction of strangers lies in the unknown world they carry with them, and, conversely, the personal realities invisible to them.

They can represent a new space with the potential of new rules and different roles to try out.

In my case, as a foreigner, a perceivably colourful American at that, my unfamiliar newness provided children with an entirely different world to contemplate—a world many had already idealized through media and entertainment. This was obvious with one child's tendency to refer to me by American celebrity names, and to create exciting, glamorous stories about me. Children do not seem to envision everyday American characters, but, rather, fantastic famous individuals. It became clear that each child defined me in relation to the knowledge they had already accumulated about strangers and Americans, but some seemed to easily integrate my personhood with more famous identities, while others remained quite sceptical, despite my efforts to extinguish any overestimation of my personal fame.

My physical presence was not only new, but represented a world about which they had (misinformed) knowledge and perhaps had dreamt about inhabiting. What would a child say to Hilary Swank or Hannah Montana, if given the chance? However, I feel that as our short time passed my status diminished as I became more real and familiar, but still not yet a regular part of their everyday realities. I sat in a space outside of their world, which could, in a way, be seen to have provided them with the opportunity or the desire to step outside of their known world defined by their known identities in order to join me. My presence was novel and the research interview was a new experience; the reflective space gave each child an opportunity to see themselves from a new perspective—through the eyes of a true outsider. In this way, I argue that the novelty and newness of our brief relationship, and the

educational space created through the intervention, encouraged children to give more attention and more of themselves in exchange than they may have otherwise given.

Distinction

Distinction is a characteristic implicit in the other two characteristics I've used to differentiate the research space and my research relationship with individuals, and in order to explain the expressive behaviour of the children acting within it. A space and an accessible individual disconnected from a child's other worlds, from the contexts which they have known their entire life, can possibly provide children with an entirely new world to comprehend. Connected intimately with the preceding characteristics, my role as an outsider who seemed very interested in their perspectives and their well-being could have offered children a strange dilemma. In fact, my presence did not only create a new space, but one that was potentially connected to other worlds a child had only imagined. It could be seen as partly fantasy, incorporating the potential of worlds beyond, and something completely separate from a child's regular life. A stranger does not represent simply another figure in a child's life, but a doorway to places unknown that extend much further than the immediate physical space in which the interaction may take place.

In this way, while our individual interviews took place in an empty school hallway and an unused music room, the space created through our interaction provided children with the option to step into a place in which they were unknown and free to pretend and explore. Our space was not school, and it was not home—it was an entirely distinct

context. In each individual space, I was only part of one child's world, and not the world of their families, classmates and peers. Each child trusted me to stay confined in the context we shared. For those children who did not usually talk about their family or their corresponding emotions, in order to maintain a state of being or to avoid expectedly painful consequences, my disconnected status proved a different situation. Did the same rules apply to someone who had no connection to their world, but had direct contact with them? Could I be trusted? Was I too unreal to factor into the same equations calculated in relation to regular interactions?

There are inherent constraints in being known. In attachment theory, an affirmative and responsive early (and ongoing) relationship with caretakers is seen as the best support a child can receive in developing a strong and healthy sense of self in context. A child operating from a secure base is better prepared to explore the world without fear, to express themselves with certainty and to anticipate a positive response from others, for they have previous positive experience in doing so. At the same time, a close relationship with a parental figure can also establish boundaries of being; while a child may have a responsive constant relationship with attachment figures, the intimate relationship can also limit the child's ways of being. For, if a parent knows their child's historical limits, the child can feel confined within the mutual knowledge shared. To be known can be both supportive and oppressive. Therefore, to encounter an individual who has no access to one's personal failures and achievements, can prove to be a potentially liberating situation.

Limitations of Research Space

At the same time, while a space and figure defined as brief, new and distinct may provide a child with the opportunity to reveal and explore their entire being, individual children will still negotiate to what extent they are seen. For instance, some children in my project hinted at sad stories they did not actually express through the artwork; Zoe chose to only express positive stories and emotions, because she anticipated the response of her parents, as discussed in the following:

Zoe: (My parents) would like that I only like happy stories to express in my art, and I don't really like sad stories.

Hillarie: So you think (your parents) would be happy that you just think of happy things?

Zoe: Yes.

Zoe explained that she did not usually talk about her stories, but felt “really good” about talking about them in class, and having people come to look at her art. However, while she chose to only express happy stories, her unexpressed sad stories were in the forefront of her mind, “I still thought about the sad stories and it made me sad.” Zoe had consciously chosen to keep her sad stories inside, but was also aware of their substance and placement.

Similarly, another child, Amber, also consciously chose to express only positive emotions, while she was aware of also having negative feelings. Therefore, while she enjoyed exhibiting and owning her artwork, she only allowed people to see a certain part of her, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

Hillarie: How did you feel about sharing stories from your life?

Amber: It was good and exciting...because no one has ever come to look at our art before...and because I got to talk with people about it.

Hillarie: Now you don't have to talk about the stories themselves, but why did you pick the stories you picked?

Amber: Well, because I like happy things and I just try to forget about

the things that are sad. Like remembering happy things and forgetting sad things.

Hillarie: Okay, so you have sad things inside, but you didn't want to express them?

Amber: I, eh, I try to forget them because they're sad. And I want to be happy.

Hillarie: Okay. You want to be happy, so you don't talk about sad things?

Amber: No, I just try to forget about them.

Amber, like Zoe, was aware of feeling sad, but attempted to keep it “out of sight, out of mind”. If she did not release it into the world, it was not necessarily real nor something she had to deal with—she made a choice as to what kind of self she wished to portray, as Goodson and Sikes (2001) state, “In choosing to relate one particular storyline we are, in effect, closing off other, alternative ones.” (p. 46)

While these girls seemed conscious of holding negative emotions, they felt that, if they only revealed positive emotions, they would only receive the positive responses these kinds of emotions naturally produced and, thus, their desired presentation of self would be affirmed. Zoe and Amber chose to fold their negative stories inside themselves, and not speak of nor express them. By doing so, they exercised a power over the effect these sad stories could cause. In order to maintain a happy image, these girls did not want themselves or anyone else to see their negative emotions, including their parents, as shown in the following quote: “I made flowers and my mom said they looked quite sad because they were all bended over and so she said that they looked quite sad, but I said they weren't sad because I felt happy when I done it. I love doing art.” In the passage, Amber's mother seemed to instigate a conversation regarding her emotional state, while Amber seemed to continue to keep certain feelings inside. She felt that creating art made her happy and, unlike Zoe, did not seem to feel

saddened with the knowledge that she contained negative emotions and chose not to share them. She had assumed control by detaching from them, depriving them from an audience and, thus, not allowing them to affect the state of happiness she wished to maintain.

In this way, the project enabled Zoe and Amber to both gain further insight into their defensive mechanisms and to also have them understood and affirmed. By making the particular decisions each child did, and sharing them with me, each child expanded her understanding of self. In both cases, each girl planned to create herself—who she wanted to be—through the eyes of her audience. In this way, the delineating circumstances of our relationship and the space that contained it did not permit these children to share things they had not shared before but, rather, presented an opportunity for them to verify what could be seen as coping strategies normally used to manage others' perception of them and to keep them both safe and secure. While my educational intervention can be seen as offering momentary freedom to some, children's home life and the everyday context and relationships by which they have constructed and defined themselves in both conscious and unconscious ways were very much present. If the limits of our language are the limits of our world, as Wittgenstein (1953) argued, comprehension of our world as we know it can theoretically be controlled through the ways in which we do or do not communicate it. At the same time, while some children saw the potential to express and communicate their troubles in our space, but chose not to do so, I argue that the project potentially increased their awareness of their emotion management strategies and options, which in itself consolidates self, knowledge and the capacity to act differently in another context.

Summary

The reflective space created through my research design and the research relationship that formed within this space possessed therapeutic qualities that extended beyond an evaluation of the educational worth of my aesthetic life narrative concept. Based on my research experience, I question how an interactive context, characterized by brevity, newness and distinction, and set in contrast to the familiar, affected individual children's educational experience. Through the expressive roles I introduced and shared, as well as the consistent affirmative audience I provided to each child's particular way of embodying these roles, our research space became performative as each child established, transgressed and/or redefined boundaries of being. Yet, as I demonstrated through the case studies of Fernando, Abby, Aaron and Jeff, the network of working models that support a child's adaptation and coping with new contexts can be seen as defined and negotiated through a child's life contexts. At the same time, the limitations of such a space's expressive and communicative potential are also established by ongoing relationships and realities that exist outside the space and inside each child, as they negotiate their roles and actions in a new space with rules created in others.

Making the Ethical Case for Aesthetic Expression of Emotional Self in Educational Context

Introduction

In the remainder of this chapter, I use my research experience to discuss the ways in which the aesthetic life narrative intervention, or the use of narrative construction and aesthetic expression, can be used in classrooms to help children express emotional self and exercise interpretive power through the roles of artist, author and audience. Each project role was intended to help children process, express and communicate emotional narratives with classmates, while maintaining a liminal space of interpretation in which to further explore aesthetic self. I opened this thesis with a story of how I personally came to find power created through the aesthetic expression of self amongst children who had experienced trauma in their home environments. Through my early experience I saw how street kids used aesthetic self expression in their attempt to create a new life and a new concept of home—one in which they were no longer vulnerable but, rather, could exercise power through their contextual presence. As they further unrolled their expanding reality, the children both destroyed and renewed aspects of the life they knew by establishing a sense of control over their evolving composite self. As I attempted to recreate this situational power in my research, I sought to explore the ways in which language shapes consciousness, and how subjective consciousness is shaped through our various contexts as communicated through the philosophies of hermeneutics and phenomenology. In using these philosophies and the corresponding

methodological approach they combined to create, I developed a way in which my research design could honour my ontological and ethical belief in the active engaged agency of a child, and the idea that language could help children to exercise power through their interpretation and expression of subjective life realities as creator and audience.

However, when I applied my past experiences to my present, and while I was very interested in the psychological aspects of children's process of internal expression and communication, I discounted the psychological effects of a child's "other" ongoing experiences. I did not adequately comprehend the complex ways in which historical experience with familial forces could shape the extent to which individuals found agency in the educational and/or research space. While I hoped to assist my co-researchers in their personal empowerment by exercising my own power to produce roles I felt could help them to expand consciousness through social communication, I failed to realize the complexity of interaction and the ability of children to not only use or not use the roles I offered, but to transform and adapt them in relation to their other contexts. Yet, through the use of critical reflexivity, my interactive presence permitted me to address instances of perceived vulnerability and to affirm the power exercised by children.

Similarly, while the contemporary notion of the whole child espoused by the emotional education movement now widely seen in Scottish education is presented as progressive and empowering, the use of reflexivity on the part of educators and practitioners is essential to uphold the ethical nature of any educational process explicitly incorporating the emotional life of a child. Based on my research experience with encouraging children to express their emotional self in

an educational context, I have identified two areas of my research implementation in which children were not able to exercise power through choice as designed. The expressive arts intervention did meet its objectives of helping children to expand their knowledge of self through communication by recognizing their ability *to* communicate and produce knowledge, as in Freire's (2001/1998) ethics of teaching. However, there were instances in which I did not maintain reflexive ethics (Etherington, 2004, 2007) or ethics of emancipation (Speedy, 2008), for, in not providing anonymity in the exhibition of their artwork, my own exercise of power firmly situated my co-researchers in a position that some would have chosen to not be in. Therefore, based on my experience, I argue that the use of aesthetic life narratives in a classroom context can be both educational and empowering if the use of aesthetic languages are accompanied with the use of anonymity and exercise of critical reflexivity on the part of educators and, in my case, researchers.

In the project, children engaged in reflection and communication in both a social context amongst peers, teacher, other students and me, and also in an individual interactive reflective space through our two collaborative research interviews. As I came to fully realize my role in the project, I focused upon the ways in which the power dynamics of the project spaces, the acts performed and the processes at play seemed to affect the ways in which children managed their emotional participation in my project. The early experiences children had within their home context necessarily affected their presence in educational spaces, as well as, in the case of my research, a distinct reflective space. While a child's methods of communicating self is developed through communicative relations with parent figures,

experience with interactivity in a child's home is not a determinant, but a conditioning factor in their way of communicating and exploring self in other contexts. Therefore, while it is essential to recognize the collective effect of social processes, my project demonstrates that children are not independent from their extra-school lives; they cope with their personal lives in individual ways. At the same time, while individual students will vary in the ways they interact and make sense of educational interaction, it is the responsibility of adults to maintain an ongoing determination to not only listen and incorporate children's perspectives, but to continuously refine our ways of hearing and being in relation.

Owning and Exhibiting Artwork in an Educational Space

Through the curricular implementation of my project some child co-researchers found a sense of pride in sharing and owning their subjective realities, while others found such acts to be exposing. While most if not all the children enjoyed the expressive workshops in class, the extra-class art exhibit presented some issues which can be seen as relative to their historical experience with emotional communication of self. More specifically, children's ability to publicly own what I term as "negative" emotions like sadness or anger, which they may not have been aware of or which they were making more explicit for possibly the first time, was disempowering for those children who had not apparently engaged in open communication with attachment figures in their home context.

While children were engaged in a social space as they created their artwork, they were surrounded by familiar classmates, and

possessed their own individual desk space, which they were accustomed to working within. However, a new situation was created when an unfamiliar audience entered their classroom—it created a new kind of context, a new exploratory space. While the physical aspect of the space did not change, the relationship with their audience was, in fact, altered. As interactions and relations lie at the base of attachment behaviour, I felt that the children's relationship, or lack thereof, with the new audience members activated their attachment system, as it is naturally activated in response to "contextual events", or the "influence of stress or danger" (Seifer and Schiller, 1995, p. 148). The art show brought about a different context with which each child had to negotiate. Sharing their artwork with an audience was always planned, but it was an aspect of the plan the children did not have access to.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the teacher and I thought it best that the children did not create artwork *to* exhibit, and exercised our power in making the decision to withhold that information from the children. In doing so, we revealed the classroom inequality present in the assigned roles of adults and children. Yet, this decision was made along with the plan that the children's artwork would also be presented anonymously, allowing each child to choose to explicitly own their artwork. In addition, I told each child that they could choose to remove their work from the show. I intended to provide options for each child, as I regarded power to be created through the ability and freedom to make choices. However, no child chose to remove their work—it could be argued that, since no one else chose to remove it, they felt socially obligated to keep their own work public. Yet, when anonymity was not provided, due to practical difficulties based on a lack of exhibition space

and simply “overlooking” how desks were physically assigned by name, the children found themselves directly connected to their artwork and coping with a situation that was more stressful than it was supposed to be. The children were, in a sense, forced to own their artwork before a new audience.

A secure protective base, developed through a child’s historical relationship with a responsive attachment figure, could be seen to enhance a child’s ability to engage in learning experiences with new social partners and within different contexts, and provides an ongoing “context in which differentiation of self and other can take place.” (Seifer and Schiller, 1995, p. 149) A child’s attachment system may influence their ability to not only express but also own their artwork in the new context created, depending upon the nature of their constructed secure base, which is demonstrated through the case study of Fernando. However, what seemed apparent in the project implementation is how some children did not seem to feel in danger while exhibiting their artwork to a new audience in general, but only in relation to the negative emotions expressed in their work.

It was both the change in situational audience, and the ownership of negative emotions which previously may have not been so explicitly expressed that caused particular children’s overall fear and discomfort with the art exhibition. The negative emotions communicated in children’s artwork seemed to represent stories involving trauma, pain or hurt, which, for most, were painful to share with a general audience. Naturally, this is not necessarily a new discovery, as our intimate and painful realities are often those we tend to share with those few with whom we have developed a trusting

relationship. Thus, especially for those children who had not previously experienced secure communicative relations with attachment figures, the possibility of sharing negative feelings with a large number of peers could have seemed especially difficult and certainly not empowering.

As discussed earlier, the ability to predict others' reaction to one's presentation of self can be seen as a learned skill, and one that is both conscious and unconscious. A child's ability to "read minds", as Fonagy et al. (2004/2002) argue, is a product of a secure base and responsive attachment relationships. At the same time, each child will, to some extent, anticipate the reactions of others, although her "guess" may be dramatically shaded by the responses she has historically received. A child who has been part of a supportive relationship, which has allowed her to feel confident in her parental figure's availability and willingness to engage in open communication, can be seen as more likely to "directly express the negative feelings associated with perceived threats." (Koback and Madsen, 2008, p. 38)

If a child has learned that her sadness, anger and fear will be safely contained and affirmed, and that she is safe and protected, she is more able to comfortably express and own her negative emotions in other contexts. She has had positive experience in her attachment relationship to which she can refer in her attempts to communicate herself in other situations. In this way, a child who is comfortable with expressing a range of emotions with attachment figures will be more likely to also feel comfortable with doing so through artwork in a public social space. On the other hand, if communicating painful life realities without possessing any positive experience from which to draw confidence, reassurance and strength, a child may naturally expect an

unsupportive reaction from her audience, just as she has experienced in the whole of her life. Therefore, a child hides the emotions that are meant to signal attachment figures, removes them from conscious processing, and, as a result, prevents negative feelings from further being “signals that facilitate self-understanding and interpersonal adjustment” (Kobak and Madsen, 2008, p. 39).

As such, a child’s expression of what could be unconscious emotions through artwork can create a situation in which a child’s defensive mechanism—for example, removing negative emotions from thought and view—has been unintentionally disassembled for a short time. As a result, although a child in a classroom may have learned more about himself through the expression of painful realities he had not been consciously aware of through aesthetic expression, he may also feel vulnerable and exposed in this kind of artwork’s display, to which he himself, in addition to the other school children, is a fresh audience. Therefore, a child asked to exhibit and own her negative artwork in a classroom space can be placed in a very difficult situation.

Anonymous Potential of Aesthetic Self

As my research shows, at the heart of some children’s fear of exhibition was the fact that there was safety in anonymity and risk in ownership, safety in the familiarity of context and audience compared to the risk of a different situation with new faces. The facilitating environment I had hoped to create in the classroom was not maintained in the exhibit space, because the “empowering conditions” Worley (2006, p. 2) discusses were not present at this point. Not only were the children not involved in the decision to place their work in a school art

show, but they were not offered the choice to own or not own their exhibited art. Although the classroom took on a transitional feel, as the familiar room assumed a different and temporary purpose, there was little room for the progressive resistance Worley describes.

In design, an aesthetic expression of self would not have to resemble the “facts” of what others know, but, rather, what a particular child experiences, internally and externally. For what truly mattered is that a child was able to recognize his own story and claim a type of personal possession over it—expressing and communicating, while maintaining a sense of power and control over the revealing of his communicative message, as Blaise (1993) stated, “Everyone’s fiction is almost completely autobiographical. What makes it fiction, usually, is its degree of disguise.” (cited in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 180) In designing the project, I planned for a child’s aesthetic story to be presented in this kind of disguise, and hoped for a child to exercise the choice to reveal the narrative, and to potentially find a method of resistance against external domination and internal suppression. I theorized that, through art mediums, a child could express her perspective, record her world in a moment, and perhaps also manifest a sense of power that she previously did not possess in a context where feelings of confusion, helplessness and a lack of control may have claimed a dominate position. The lens of language was to be expanded. In addition, the notion of narrative was utilized in the way Munro (1998) intended; the story extended far beyond the words captured to include the relational act of storytelling, which includes what goes unsaid and what is communicated through body language.

Yet, in practice, the creation of power through the communication of perspectives is most likely found and maintained through a detachment from the embodied perspective itself. In short, the artist as well as the stories she tells, are to be hidden from social view unless she herself chooses to reveal either, for the communicative relationship of most educational import is the triangulation between the artist, her artwork and herself, as Dewey (1934) argued. While others' perspectives are vital in order to further expand a child's understanding of self, their access is to be kept within the grasp of the child. I argue that aesthetic expression of self can expand a child's knowledge of self and contribute to their social educational experience. While children are capable of stating and owning their perspective through aesthetic expression and exhibition in a classroom, they should be given the space and opportunity to make the choice of whether and how they wish to do so; for, I argue, the educational value in expressive roles lies in a child's own process of shaping and developing their social role as artist and audience of their life stories. The "disempowering" aspects of my research process illuminate critical attributes of educational spaces dedicated to an aesthetic expression of emotional narratives.

Reflexive Research with Children

My research advocates the educational inclusion of aspects of self that were before officially delegated to the private realm. As I discussed in Chapter Two, a therapeutic education movement introduces complex ways in which whole child initiatives can be transformed into a hegemonic instrument of power through both standardized application

and evaluation, in the subtle ways Bourdieu (1984) described. In a context where rigid tools of measurement are used to gauge educational progress, a formal exploration of emotional self can focus upon teaching children “how” and “what” to feel, rather than upon the process and act of expression and personal exploration. On the other hand, a critical therapeutic approach involving open communication and conscious interactive reflection can instead, affirm a child’s role as active agent and not merely a vulnerable being who is a passive recipient to the educational process. Yet, my research shows that a child’s ability to play an active role is dependent upon the interactive role and space they find in a classroom environment. The shape of my research was carefully constructed in order to create and maintain an ethical and safe educational and research context, but my role in children’s descriptive telling was not limited to conceptual design.

In this way, my research process also served as a personal learning experience for me, as well as a “pedagogical device” (Richardson, 1995, p. 190) for others who may embark on a similar path. For I had intended to help children expand their own knowledge of self and found that my own education came through the lessons they taught me. While I had consciously processed the ways in which my past experiences had shaped the research curriculum and design, I did not comprehend the ways in which I as an immediate and temporal responsive figure in students’ temporal space would influence their engagement in the processes I introduced. As such, a significant aspect of my research was not the power I had envisioned children could create, but the intimate ways in which children used me in their attempts to negotiate their emotional participation, their ongoing and

simultaneous realities, and their presence in my project. Richardson (*Ibid*) asked, “How are readings of texts affected by their construction?” (p. 190) In my case, I found that the particular collaborative nature of the co-constructed data required that my narrative self be explicitly included in and presented through the research story I tell.

In designing my educational project, I had passionately advocated for the capable and broad capacity of children to provide their own perspectives, to fully take part in a phenomenological endeavour to express themselves in context, to participate in a hermeneutic reflection upon their consecutive descriptions of temporal moments and to evaluate and judge my expressive arts intervention. Yet, I did not foresee the ways in which children would exercise their power in response to me as *their* co-researcher, as the other subject and participant in our shared experience. I expected to maintain the detached role I had previously assumed when my concept was being implemented in other classrooms. However, I found that I had unconsciously positioned myself as an inextricable figure in children’s participation with not only my project concept and its curriculum, but with myself as an external and responsive presence. As a result, I had to expand my expectations concerning my own effect upon children’s experiences, and look at the ways in which I was intimately involved in their processes.

As I discovered that my role as researcher intertwined with each child’s particular role, it became clear that the research experience of the children and myself was a merging of their stories with my own, as Myerhoff (1982) stated in her discussion concerning the role of reflexivity in shared interaction, “(In reflexive works) the frame is repeatedly violated, and the two stories commenting on each other travel

alongside, simultaneously commanding our attention and creating a different world than either represents by itself.” (p. 4) Data produced from my research was a co-construction of the experiences of individual children and those of my own. We each assumed the role of co-researcher as an attempt on my part to balance the power dynamics between an adult and child. Similarly, and unexpectedly, I shared each child’s own attempt to assume the expressive roles I introduced, as I also played the part of artist, author and audience. My role as researcher was extended to also include explicit participation in the educational processes and roles I actively introduced to the children. As such, this dissertation is presented from the perspective of not only a researcher, but a participant and student in an explicitly educational endeavour.

The temporal roles we played were dependent upon and responsive to the ways in which the other performed their own. In this way, our actions were exceedingly interactive, and Gadamer’s notion of broadening horizons was, in this way, realized. While I had underestimated my role in the children’s processes, as well as the various ways in which I would exercise power in attempting to empower the children, I did engage in a great deal of reflexivity as the project unfolded, in order to provide the support and particular presence individual children required. My research demonstrates that a seemingly progressive and therapeutic educational design is not inherently liberating and must be accompanied with ongoing critical evaluation on the reflexive part of adults who attempt to implement empowering ideas.

Presence of the “Whole” Child in Education

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that schools play a significant role in children’s development of self. At the same time, the local and specific ways in which education is performed denotes the progressive or oppressive nature of the interactive context. While informal therapeutic spaces within schools theoretically provide children with an extra space where they can explore and play, the ideas embodied in therapeutic notions are also those Freire and others advocated in their idealization of education as an act of freedom and resistance. In my project, I assumed the role of educator and researcher in my attempt to expand children’s concept and comprehension of self. In doing so, I found that it is the ethical responsibility of a teacher and, in my case, a researcher, to come to understand a child as a whole being, and to engage in a reflexive evaluation of the effects of subjective interaction with an open mind. Freire regarded education to be a forum of Heidegger’s becomings—education does not teach children, it influences their being, or, in the words of Freire, “To educate is essentially to form.” (Freire, 2001/1998, p. 39) If educators are to assist children in exploring different ways of being, or to be part of a supportive and caring interaction, the child must be regarded as an historical figure. The act of educating is an organic process which does not only involve teaching and learning, but a merging and production of becomings.

In regard to the therapeutic education movement, Gerhardt (2009) emphasizes the importance of “parental relations in children developing a foundation for emotional health and physical well-being.”

(p. 124) As Bachelard argued that an individual's first world will impact their presence in every context that should follow, a child's relationship with parental figures will necessarily influence the roles he can play in an educational context, or the extent to which he can exercise power in a situation. A child's ability to assume roles in a facilitating space within an educational environment, to effectively negotiate the contextual transition, is relative to the roles he has played and continues to play in his home environment, as Bowlby (1965) pointed out in his discussion of transitional home contexts:

Indeed, very many of the problems which arise as a result of moving an older child to a foster-home are caused by the failure to recognize the deep attachment which a child has for his parents, even if they are exceedingly bad and have given him little affection. Unless these perplexities are cleared up and these loyalties respected, a child will remain anchored in an unsatisfactory past, endlessly trying to find his mother and refusing to adapt to the new situation and make the best of it. (p. 68)

A child's ability to break free of identities in which he was first cultivated is a complicated endeavour. Any new experience will be negotiated with the old and continuous, and, until this cycle of layered being is recognized and explored, a child may never truly be "free to be".

In this way, the potential of therapeutic and reflective spaces within an educational environment may provide a child with a new context in which to define self. In designing my research concept and methodological approach, I argued that a therapeutic effect could be created through educational processes—namely, through children's expressive exploration of emotional self and their individual negotiation with contextual being. Yet, my research experience shows that

incorporating the communicative ethics of teaching, as described by Freire, the ethical reflexivity of research (Etherington, 2004, 2007) and the emotionality of educating (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1999/1983) can also demonstrate the therapeutic implications of an education-based research process.

At the same time, while a whole child approach may in theory provide a child with the opportunity to reveal and explore their emotional being, individual children will still negotiate to what extent they are seen, as demonstrated and discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six. While some children enthusiastically advocated the healthy benefit of expressing their range of emotions in my project, others did not buy what I was selling, and simply responded, “No. I don’t do that, and I don’t want to.” In this way, I saw how education might be a socializing machine, but it is one that operates through interactivity, an ongoing construction of experiences and a merging of worlds, visions and moments. An adult’s responsibility is not alleviated, but there is some comfort in knowing that a student will negotiate educational processes through their own idea of who they are, and what they are willing and able to learn, behave, think and be.

My project involved an exploration of self in a social classroom and private individual research space. I hoped for children to communicate their emotional realities in order to further develop their notion of self. However, I also found that providing children with the choice to express certain realities could also be seen as expanding their knowledge of self. Children learned about themselves through what was and was not expressed, and through the ways in which they did and did not talk about their narrative choices. The educational aspect of the

project came through individual children's engagement in a conscious negotiation of self. For children who are consciously ready to face themselves, in the case of Abby, or for those like Fernando, who are already engaging in open communication with attachment figures, an expressive and reflective space may encourage progressive change towards, or further validation of, a healthy communication of self and internal emotional management.

At the same time, those using deep-rooted defensive mechanisms in their everyday interactions may focus entirely upon ways in which to *openly* utilize their guarded methods of coping with situations encouraging emotional disclosure. For example, Aaron actively engaged in an independent open aesthetic expression of difficult situations, which he seemed comfortable sharing with everyone in the project, except his parents. His ability to fully engage with attachment figures may be limited by his need to contain certain memories and keep them separate from his current home life. Meanwhile, the research project was used in very different ways by Jeff. For his detached way of coping with the project did not reveal his emotions as much as it exposed his efforts to hide them, as well as his efforts to remove himself from his narrative representation in a social environment. In this way, Jeff ended up revealing himself through his efforts to disguise and erase himself from sight.

As seen in the case studies of Fernando, Abby, Aaron and Jeff, each child participated in a way they felt capable. Their decision to ascertain the ways in which they felt compelled to participate was an interesting negotiation between a conscious process of introspection and subconscious functions which dynamically composed their working

models of self, guiding each child through a situation that he or she had not yet encountered. Offering children the opportunity to “get it out” caused some to engage in defensive mechanisms, as what was being asked of them conflicted with what they were able or willing to do. Bowlby felt that defensive exclusion could play a part in children’s coping methods when there is a “cognitive disconnection between an individual’s affective and behavioural responses and the otherwise anxiety-provoking interpersonal situations that caused them.”

(Bretherton and Munholland, 2008, p. 107) Individual children’s particular way of handling the expressive and communicative processes introduced to them in class cannot be seen as nonsensical or irrational, for their coping mechanisms were produced for a reason and, in this way, can be seen as part of logical behavioural adjustments. Yet, as the project was restricted to the classroom, these reasons were not apparent and could only be inferred by individuals’ actions and the stories they did (and did not) choose to tell.

In some cases, the children seemed able to connect their project behaviour to a life event or ongoing reality to which they have had to accommodate themselves, and offered me glimpses into their ability to engage in an analysis of self. Other children, as in the cases of Zoe and Amber, were more removed from an evaluation of the relationship between their behaviour and situational realities which occurred beyond the classroom door. Or, rather, they perhaps did, but they simply did not share this with me. What remains clear is that the children’s lives were not only the subject of expression, but the force behind their method of communication and way of partaking in the educational processes introduced. As Baerger and McAdams (1999) pointed out, the act of

storytelling does not only include the facts and signposts of life, but they may also “embody defence processes whereby some features, aspects and events may be excluded or distorted.” (cited in Dallos, 2007, p. 109) Yet, my ability to fully interpret what appear to be defensive actions by project children is limited by what individual children revealed to me in our particular momentary relationship contained in a brief, new and distinct space. All I can do is recognize that, while some children did not engage in the processes in a way that I felt to be healthy, they did so for genuine reasons that I as a researcher did not have access to and, thus, cannot explain and label with generalized methods of categorization, as Bowlby (1980) pointed out:

The more details one comes to know about the events in a child’s life, and about what he has been told, what he has overheard and what he has observed but is not supposed to know, the more clearly can his ideas about the world and what may happen in the future be seen as perfectly reasonable constructions. (cited in Bretherton and Munholland, 2008, p. 107)

The project I designed used a whole child approach, in that I wanted to address not only the intellectual, but the emotional life of a child in a classroom environment. I hoped to involve not only the student in a school context, but the child as a unique person, as a complex character in their own life stories. In doing so, I found great inspiration in what children exhibited in both aesthetic and personal ways, and how children seemed to adapt themselves to their lives, in response to the actions of adults. Yet, while some children were themselves surprised at what they revealed through their participation and our research relationship, it seemed clear that some children only showed a part of themselves. Despite my offer to use the space in a certain way, some children chose to use it another way. Perhaps some

children found they could facilitate power through the expression of previously unshared realities, while others found they could do so through controlling what they shared and the ways in which they communicated it. In this way, the educational space created in the project was composed of complex relationships that extended beyond those physically contained in the classroom and, while the whole child was written into the design of the intervention, the children themselves defined what exactly that was to mean for them.

In Chapter Two, I argued that the controversial nature of therapeutic education was based upon the question of whether exploring the emotional self will teach children vulnerability or help them to further understand who they are in relation to others. As an advocate of a therapeutic ethos in education, Loewenthal (2009) informally addresses the fears and warnings presented by Ecclestone (2009), and Ecclestone and Hayes (2009), by referring to the same philosophical ideas I utilized in designing and implementing my project. Heidegger's Dasein is based on the notion of actively being in the world with others. Gadamer argued for the broadening of our viewpoints through sharing and negotiating self with others. This notion of relative being is the foundation of human life. A child is a social creature, and, in this way, introspection and the inclusion of emotions and a child's own realities in an educational context is not a way in which to create individualistic isolation, but to expand learning and strengthen a child's ability to understand self and others.

Yet, as my project demonstrates, bringing an interactive and expressive environment about in schools can be a complex endeavour; ensuring that children are able to utilize and participate in such

environments seems to be a more difficult task. Some may argue that it is the responsibility of parents to provide a facilitating environment at home so that they are able to develop and understand their relational being in a healthy way, and are, in a sense, equipped to take advantage of open educational spaces. Others like Loewenthal (*Ibid*) feel that it is the responsibility of psychological therapists to educate society about what is “good” and what is “bad” in the sense that emotions, imagination and creative spaces do not make schools wasteful or unproductive but, rather, provide children with the space and resources to explore themselves, their lives and the world around them (p. 33). Some believe that a child’s social, emotional and spiritual well-being is in the hands of educators, while still others feel it is the burden of policy makers and politicians. If combining the viewpoints of all those addressing the state of therapeutic education, what is clear is that a child deals with simultaneous forces in the domestic, educational and social realms, and each serves to further facilitate a child’s development of relational self and the ways in which they will use and benefit from “emotional education”.

Yet, I argue that the most important thing educators, parents, politicians and practitioners can recognize is that decisions regarding education and, bluntly, real life do not only belong to the adults, but to the children themselves, as Reitemeier (2009) states:

This is equally a reminder that responsibility for childhood belongs to us all. If we are to really succeed in improving childhood for all children, including those living on the margins or in the care system, it is crucial that we listen to their views and expertise. (p. 86)

While emotional education is an embattled concept that deserves critical evaluation, it can also be seen as an excellent opportunity to provide open expressive spaces in which children can explore and be creative, in which children's own lives and experiences are the source of further learning, and, as philosophers like Dewey, Gramsci, Greene, Freire and others have argued, where it is recognized that knowledge does not come from without but from within. While social change and parental support are complicated endeavours, it is the responsibility of all—educators, parents, practitioners and politicians—to be aware of placing adult objectives upon the minds, bodies and souls of children in the educational realm. As a result, therapeutic education, like any educational initiative, should not be used as a way in which to measure and regulate facets of self, as is a common goal with other educational subjects in contemporary education, but, as my project shows, it can be used as a way in which to promote communication and recognize that children are negotiating and responding to every move we as adults make.

Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven: Summary and Educational Implications of Research

We have to find out how to open such spheres, such spaces, where a better state of things can be imagined, because it is only through the projection of a better social order that we can perceive the gaps in what exists and try to transform and repair. I would like to think that this can happen in classrooms, in corridors, in schoolyards, in the streets around. (Greene, 2003, p. 111)

Thesis Summary

Schools are not independent spaces. They serve as an intersection between personal and social, a space in which transformation and reparation can occur through giving children the space to explore, construct and perform their notion of self. I explored the communicative potential of this complex juncture through a short-term educational intervention that introduced aesthetic self-expression to children, and found that each child worked to negotiate what exactly that meant to them in both a classroom and research space. Freire (2005a, 2005b) defined education as being a human act of intervention, and through it educators interrupt and mediate the lives of children. As a result, the applied ethics of teaching and learning through practice is paramount, which I have shown through my research experience. As an advocate of a whole child approach, I argued that emotions are an integral part of a child's educational self, which I hoped to reveal through the implementation of an expressive arts education project in a

primary school. However, my experience has shown that it is the contextual application of educational ideas in which their “real” effects can be seen through the complex ways in which individual children make sense of and use the processes introduced to them. As a result, my research demonstrates the educational potential of aesthetic life narrative use, as well as the potential of short-term expressive interventions characterized by brevity, newness and distinction. For, as my research shows, children’s active participation in the research process increased their knowledge of self and allowed each child to further explore the expressive roles and processes introduced to them in the interactive classroom workshop space.

While I had set out to help children learn more about themselves, I found that my personal experiences and beliefs were also broadened in my time with the children. I came to see that my own presence was far more explicit than I had anticipated, and my diverse roles in individual children’s process played an intimate part in shaping their participatory approach and their overall experience with the ideas communicated through the project. My research shows that an adult’s approach in working with children must be accompanied by an ongoing reflexivity of relational self in context, as well as critical awareness as to the ways in which power is exercised through interaction and communication in the classroom. While I had intended for each child to increase their understanding of emotional self through social communication, I learned that the particular choices each child made with me in deciding who they were going to be in separate interactive spaces—in the classroom workshop, interview reflective space and home space through the ways in which they edited, presented and used

the research storybook—also made the aesthetic life narrative intervention a truly educational experience for all involved.

Through the research process, I saw that individual children's ability to own their artwork, in particular, and their ability to assume the roles offered by the project—artist, author and co-researcher—were strongly influenced by the attachments present in their home environment, and negotiated with my personal regard and the interaction and relationship formed between myself and each child. In participating in this research, children were asked to engage in an activity that focused upon both conscious and unconscious processes expressed through various communicative mediums, through which they could potentially acquire access to internal processes and, theoretically, draw, to some extent, unconscious activities into the realm of the conscious, as is often done in play and make-believe, in order to come to expand their consciousness of being. However, what became apparent is how each individual child's method of participation in a short-term intervention like mine was limited and differentiated by many factors that were brought about by each child's previous experience(s) and relationships. As a result, the idea of successful participation in my educational project was re-defined in significant relativity to a child's other historical and continual identities and ways of being. In other words, having students engage in processes that formerly involve a child's whole world—their emotions, stories and their personal view on life and self—is an extremely complex endeavour.

In my project, I set out to explore what primary school students thought and felt about the research concept of aesthetic life narratives, and found that many did find value in self expression and the use of

aesthetics. At the same time, the research experience itself contributed to a child's experience with the classroom intervention, for it brought about additional space in which each child could shape and reflect upon their expression of self, as well as the opportunity to interact with a responsive external adult figure. I argue that the reflective space created in my project helped individual children to raise awareness about the choices they made—what and why they chose to share or conceal and keep private—and promotes insight into their particular method of emotional management. In this way, both the classroom intervention, and a child's particular research participation proved to be a personal learning experience for each child—in a way, the roles of artist and audience were supported and broadened through the role of editor and co-researcher. As a result, in the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the implications of my research, as well as the possibility of incorporating attributes of my research process into a classroom context in order to create a more comprehensive learning experience for each child.

Project Implications

Looking back upon the project, I feel that the ways in which my research process brought about an unexpected therapeutic quality illuminates the potential of this kind of emotional educational intervention that encouraged expression, communication and reflection with a responsive external figure. In addition to the expressive processes I was introducing in the classroom, my methodological design produced an additional space—a space defined by its brevity, newness and distinction—in which each child could explore and perform in ways they were not otherwise able or free to do. An intervention in which a

child is regarded to be an equal and active participant, while her own perspectives, valuations, life realities and feelings serve as the subject material can potentially expand awareness of her particular ways of managing emotions and presenting herself to others in her various contexts. Consequently, I feel there is further need to explore the long-term potential effects of brevity, newness and distinctness in the creation of one-off reflective spaces following the implementation of emotional education curricula.

I argue that my research shows that brief outsiders in an educational context can represent an exciting connection to an external world, and provide a child with the opportunity to explore new definitions of self and try out or develop potential ways of being. I feel a reflective external space included in an emotional education/expressive arts intervention has the potential to verify, alter or disassemble a child's coping mechanisms, and invite re/consideration of a child's interactive roles in their world. Again, there is powerful potential in the connective and liminal space between worlds—the realms between subjective and external representations, the family and social, the unconscious and conscious, the immediate contexts and that of the greater social world as seen through media sources, as Winnicott (1960) stated: “We experience life in the area of transitional phenomena, in the exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation, and in an area that is intermediate between the inner reality of the individual and the shared reality of the world that is external to individuals.” (cited in Davis and Wallbridge, 1981, p. 75)

In a transitional space, a space in which a child can assume the role of artist and audience, creator and observer, there lies the possibility

for a child to truly come to see themselves from a new perspective, and come to understand, affirm or transform divergent ways of being. While a child can never truly be “whole”, as we as individuals are in constant re/formation, I feel that transitional spaces—spaces between the worlds in which a child is known—which involve expression, communication and reflection can offer children a “more whole” understanding of self, context and the experiences which compose the life they know.

Furthermore, these transitional spaces can be seen as an integral aspect of progressive and therapeutic educational endeavours.

At the same time, the original objective of my research was to contribute to education-based practice. The characteristics of my research space and the relationship I developed with children demonstrate the potential of ethical and reflexive research embodied in short-term interventions, but what exactly does that mean to primary school educators. It is important to recognize that the kind of reflective space created in my research is unlikely to occur in an educational context where familiarity, immersion and continuous spaces are an inextricable aspect of a child’s educational experience. There simply aren’t enough responsive strangers to go around. Short-term interventions are relatively sparse. There is often just the educator, the children and the familial, immediate, social and political contexts with which they must contend. As a result, the reality of creating this kind of space in a classroom setting can be seen as unlikely.

However, there is possibility for teachers to engage in time dedicated to group reflective space following the implementation of a curricular initiative in order to provide children with a communicative forum in which they feel their perspectives as participants are valuable

and relevant. In addition, while time and space are consistently in short supply, a teacher may engage in individual reflection with children in the classroom, which, while it does not necessarily create an external transitional space, can potentially disrupt the everyday format of the educational context they know and, in this way, produce a different kind of distinct space. While individual time might be reserved for children who seem to need it most, due to explicit behavioural or learning issues, I argue that it could also be used to supplement the social process of expression and communication, providing each child with more space in which to explore the roles of artist and their relationship with the life stories and emotions they express. Again, the practical realities of everyday classroom life may limit the availability of such space but, as most of my interviews with each child lasted an average of two minutes, there may be some limited room to negotiate for the creation of a new space within the old and regular.

The power of interventions is, in part, their “interventionness”—they explicitly disrupt the everyday pattern of educational life. Similarly, a teacher who can exercise his power by interrupting the status quo may not bring about an external space, but can create a break from the form of learning previously known. In this way, a familiar context and figure can create newness and bring about a new situational reality. The ways in which expression and reflection can be used in a classroom are diverse and varied, as their sequence, form and shape do not necessarily dictate their effect. Instead, the ways in which children are defined, the ways in which power is exchanged, created and used, and the reality that being is never fixed, are the primary ingredients in the kind of space suggested by this research project. And such ingredients are not

permanently assigned to research interventions, but can be potentially used in a practical educational approach.

Because I regard the process of education to be inherently emotional and, in some form, ethical, I argue that the act of education holds therapeutic potential in its daily form. The processes introduced by the intervention focused upon the emotional life of children, and my research explored the ways in which they could exercise power through the roles of artist, audience, editor and co-researcher. Yet, as I discussed in Chapters One and Two, philosophical ideas that abound through social science literature often focus upon the important ways in which, for example, power, ethnicity and culture effect the universal child in education. Aesthetic life narratives were inspired by this work and motivated me to see how social communication, veiled, shaped and expressed through aesthetic language, could contribute to dialogic educational exchange in a way that would be personally relevant and significant to a child. As this literature shows, there is a great deal of complexity involved in the act of educating. However, therapeutic theories can also be used in order to create a better understanding of the ways in which educational projects can be used by individual students in classrooms. If therapeutic notions embodied in expressive processes involving the emotional self and home life are being mainstreamed into education, then it also seems logical to utilize therapeutic theories in exploring the effects of such attempts upon the layered lives of children within these traditionally social science contexts.

While the inclusion of personal histories and realities in the classroom can be seen as a significant aspect of the critical education policies I advocate, I feel it is important to consider and attempt to

understand the inherently intimate ways in which a merging of contexts can be negotiated and managed by the children whose lives are now seen to be educational subject matter. My research provides an example of how ideas drawn from attachment theory can be used by researchers as they explore the ways in which political and philosophical concepts can be realistically utilized in educational practice. Coming to understand the ways in which early experiences can influence a child's ability to learn and adapt can actually break down boundaries of being, emphasize the impermanence of moments and interpretations, and help children to see that they are, in the words of Freire, conditioned but not determined.

Educational movements embodying therapeutic notions attempt to reify the new socio-cultural definition of child as an active and necessary participant in social processes. In addition, what was once regarded as private and intimate, namely one's emotions and personal life experiences, are now seen to be public, political and a part of the educational self. In this context, the kind of classroom space created in my project is possible. There is a space designated for expressive processes, and the creative exploration of emotional, cognitive and incomplete self. The use of arts and life storytelling is not as radical a concept as before, and, rather, can be seen as widely utilized, while both still retain their liberatory and aesthetic communicative nature.

Curricular interventions like aesthetic life narratives are only as progressive as the way in which they are used and perceived by individual students. Yet, if its implementation is accompanied by an ethical and critical approach, I feel they can serve as a communicative foundation for creating an educational experience that has personal

relevance for children as individuals and as group members. In short, I feel my research shows that there is potential, although inherently imperfect and tentative, for the educational and expressive concepts introduced and applied in my project to serve as a practical contribution to the construction of everyday classrooms in the contemporary educational context. Additionally, my research provides educators and other researchers with an honest account of how the application of ideas, the execution of ideas, is an extremely complex, personal and intimate process in itself.

Closing Discussion

My project was built on the idea that it is only when we establish the borders of our self that we can breach them and grow. If education is seen as an intervention in the worlds of children, or, rather, an intersection of contexts, it can also provide an effective space in which children can engage in an exploration of who they are, who they were and who they are to become. In this way, perhaps children can experience true education and the potential each has to reinvent, represent and reify their existence through recognition of their communicative roles. In applying reflexive ethics in educational practice, what matters is not where it went right, but where it went wrong; it is not necessarily who we are, but who we can become, and the ways in which we are inhibited and driven in our efforts to discover and perform the possibilities of being.

We can never achieve wholeness. However, by reviewing and breaking apart the ways in which we “cannot” and the ways in which we

“can”, perhaps children and educators can together come to establish new pathways of knowledge and understanding. Through theory and critical practice, through expression and reflection, the educational process does not suddenly become liberatory, but it can create the space in which freedom can be potentially created and embraced, and, ideally, extended beyond the context in which it was actualized. If education is to be an intervention in a child’s life, then adults must do all we can to ensure the intervention is ethical, therapeutic and progressive, in whatever ways we define the terms. In doing so, we support the children we work with, for, as they prove us wrong and challenge our own ideas on the world, we are more able to challenge and expand their own. In conclusion, I’d like to end this thesis with a quote by Freire, in which he beautifully articulates what I have tried to describe, argue and create in my research project in my humbling quest to negotiate the concepts of being, living and defining self, while finding hope and freedom in their contrariness:

The real roots of the political nature of education are to be found in the educability of the human person. This educability, in turn, is grounded in the radical unfinishedness of the human condition and in our consciousness of this unfinished state. Being unfinished and therefore historical, conscious of our unfinishedness, we are necessarily ethical because we have to decide. To take options. Our historical unfinishedness demands it. It opens up space that we can occupy with ethically grounded attitudes, which can in practice be subverted. We can only be ethical, as I have said before, if we are able to be unethical. To transgress. (Freire, 2001, p. 100-1)

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 1: List of induction year contacts 2007-2008

| Date | Organization | Contact |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 06/11/07 | MYPAS | Lynne Grahame, Art Therapist Hans Clausen, Counselor |
| 13/11/07 | Barnardos Skylight | Sharon Guest, Director Katie Yule, Art Therapist |
| 20/11/07 | Center for the Vulnerable Child | Paul Isaacs, Counselor |
| 20/11/07 05/12/07 | Place2Be | Chloe Hanchen, Coordinator Llinos Couch, Longstone Project Manager |
| 12/12/07 | | Sandra Matthews, Forthview Project Manager |
| 09/11/07 | Out of the Blue Art Space | Nichole Lambeng, Director |
| 20/06/08 | | Julie Dawson, Artist/Educator |
| 29/11/07 | Sunflower Garden Project | Gabriella Smith, Art Therapist Janet Logue, Counselor |
| 21/11/07 | Children 1st Midlothian | Katie Alexander, Art Therapist |
| 22/11/07 | Art Link | (team leader directed me to North Edinburgh Arts Centre) |
| 22/11/07 | Fruit Market Gallery | Johnny Gailey, Coordinator |
| 10/12/07 | Barnardo FACE group, Dundee | Susan Arnold, Team Leader |
| 07/12/07 12/02/08 20/03/08 | Shelter Edinburgh | Paula Robertson, Families Project Head |
| 30/05/08 | Shelter Glasgow | Hazel MacLellan, Child Support Worker Paula McLean, Education Worker |
| 06/12/07 | Room 13, Fort Williams | Robert Fairly, Founder and Manager Claire |
| 10/12/07 | Scottish government | Kathleen Marshall, Commissioner for Children Linda MacDonald, Executive Assistant to Kathleen |
| 10/12/07 | Barnardo FACE group, Dundee | Susan Arnold, Team Leader |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| 04/12/07 | North Edinburgh Art Center | Rosie Gibson |
| 17/01/08 22/08/08 09/11/08 | Longstone Primary School | Irene Mirtle, Head Teacher Laura Youngman, Teacher |
| 18/01/08 17/06/08 15/01/08 | Moray School of Education | Amanda Gizzi, Art Education Head Dr. Morwenna Griffiths |
| 20/04/08 | Beyond Text Program | Evelyn Welch |
| 06/05/08 | Scottish Arts Council | Sophie Bambrough, Administration (referred to Cerin Richardson) |
| 17/06/08 20/06/08 27/08/08 | Storyworks (Children 1st initiative) | Claire McNichol Sandy (Children 1st counselor) |
| 10/06/08 | City of Edinburgh Council | Cerin Richardson, Principal Officer of Arts and Learning (Creative Links) |
| 12/08/08 | Gilmerton Primary School | Elizabeth Fife, Head Teacher |
| 12/08/08 | Royston Primary School | Andrew Hunter, Head Teacher |
| 12/08/08 | Broughton Primary School | Alan Devine, Head Teacher |
| 18/08/08 25/08/08 | Balgreen Primary School | Avril Wilson, Head Teacher Melanie Brown, P3 Teacher |
| 08/11/08 | Children 1st Family Support Team | Fay McDonald, Receptionist (no meeting held) |

Appendix 2

**Appendix 2.1: Aesthetic Life Narrative project curriculum
(presented in unbound form)**

Aesthetic Life Narrative Curriculum

Primary 4, Primary 5

Child as Artist, Life as Art

Hillarie J. Higgins
PhD Research Student
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Aesthetic Life Narrative Pilot Draft

This curriculum is meant to serve as a guide; a teacher should use and adapt it to fit one's style and classroom. It can be followed verbatim, or it can be followed loosely. For example, if everything cannot fit into a session or the class gets "off the track," that is all part of the process and it should be encouraged—a medium and workshop, or a theme, can be cut out, for example, in order to create more time and space for discussion. The curriculum is to move at the pace set by the class—there is no driving need to cover and fit in as many themes and workshops as listed if it disrupts the learning process. Teachers (and students, if possible) are to pick the mediums used, depending on materials and space available, and examples of ways in which artists have used these mediums are included in curriculum as a guide for the children, but not as a model to follow. Teachers can insert the included examples with each medium chosen, but finding new examples is also encouraged.

SESSION 1: Project Discussion

RESEARCHER/TEACHER INTRO: *(Intro is meant to set the tone for the class, in the sense that it is to be interactive and based on the children's feedback, but still retains a structure and script. Throughout the introduction, one should have a surface to write the words that are discussed and a corresponding visual to give the kids a reference—examples are included in script)*

Research Intro:

Hello! My name is Hillarie and I'm a researcher, and I'm here because I'm creating a class and would like to ask you if you'll help me make it. Do you think you'd like to help me? *(students respond—if there are objections at this point, they must be acknowledged and this is not to substitute for the children's official consent)*

In order to help, I'm asking you to be researchers like me.

Do you know what a researcher does? *(students respond as one writes "researcher" and draws a ☺ on the paper/board)* A researcher is someone who is curious about something and tries to investigate and explore it to figure it out and to find out things about it. For example, if you have a school assignment about cats, you may have to read books or even watch how cats behave/act to find out more about cats.

?



RESEARCHER

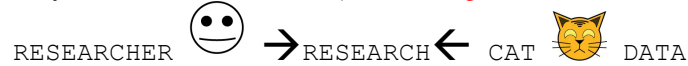


CAT

When you're watching cats or reading about cats, you're doing research **on** cats. But you can do research on anything, as long as you're finding and collecting/gathering information about something. Research is what a researcher does *(write "research" on the board and connect it to "researcher," and connect "cat" to research)*



Do you know what “data” is? (*students respond as one writes “data” on the board*)



“Data” is the information, the “stuff” that makes up the research. (*one connects “data” to the cat image*)



So, if you were a researcher doing research about cats (*point to the visual words and images as one verbalizes them*), you would collect data, or information, about cats. So you’ve been following cats around, watching what they do. You may have read some books about cats, too. What do you think you would find out about cats? What would your data look like? (*children respond by offering examples—a cat would sleep, eat, “meow,” chase things, play etc—and write their responses on board as they give them. If they can’t come up with anything, give them some examples*) What did the cat do? What did the cat eat? What color was the food? How long did the cat eat? How do you think the cat felt after it ate its food? How do you know that he felt happy? Did he act happy? Did he tell you he was happy? Did he look happy?

DATA:

Meowed 20 times
 Slept for 20 minutes
 Ate its food for 3 minutes
 Ate cat food
 Brown cat food
 He felt happy

So what am I researching? I’m doing research about you. I’m curious about how you’ll feel about the class I’m making, and how you’ll feel about what you make in the class.

In this case, the data is what **you** are thinking and how **you** feel—the information I’m looking for has to come from you. So I’m inviting you to be co-researchers with me. If you want to help me with my research, I may ask you questions in class and in short interviews at the very end of the term. That means that throughout this class, you can think about how you’re feeling and what you think and let me know. It is *entirely up to you* if you would like to take part in the research.

We’re going to tell you a bit more about the class and you can think about whether or not you’d like to take part in the research. I’m going to hand out information sheets and consent forms for you, which I’d like for you to fill out by the end of class. (*at this time, hand out child information sheets and the consent forms. Although it is preferable to receive child consent forms in class, each child is also given the option to take them home along with the parent/guardian forms*)

(*Teacher's name*) is going to try out this class with you for an hour every week for an entire session (10 weeks). The point of this hour is to give you each some time to think about you and how each one of you is an artist. In this class, you will create art based on your life and your own personal stories, and you will then be part of an exhibit, or "art show," where you can show other people your artwork. This artwork will be an expression of you.

Teacher Intro (researcher can also do this part if teacher prefers):

Do you know what an artist is? What does an artist do? (*write “artist” on the board as the kids respond while recording their answers on the board as they respond—but, if it’s not mentioned, state an artist is someone who makes art*)

ARTIST

And what is art? (*write “art” on board and, as kids respond to question record their words on the board*)

ARTIST → ART ?

Art is all of that and it is also made out of everyday things. Artists use all kind of things to create art. Some use paint and clay, while some use words and paper and movie film, and others make art with their bodies and music. Some even make art from garbage and things that they find in the street or in their home.

But do you know what every artist does? (*allow time for kids to respond*) They tell a story. (*write “speak” on the board*)

ARTIST → ART → SPEAK

Artists talk through their art. They use art to speak and tell stories (*write “story” on board*)

ARTIST → ART → SPEAK → STORY

and share parts of their lives, like things that have happened to them and how they feel about things. (*write “feelings” on board*)

ARTIST → ART → SPEAK → STORY → FEELINGS

So artists make art to tell stories that express their feelings. Do you know what “express” means? What do you think it means? (*write “express” on board and allow time for kids to respond and write definition close to what follows*)

EXPRESS to make something on the inside appear on the outside so other people can see

It means that someone is taking something that’s inside and putting it outside. Someone is telling and showing other people how they feel on the inside.

EXAMPLE: Embodied dialogue (*teacher looks very sad and pretends to wipe tears OR one draws a sad face on board with tears*) How do you think I’m feeling right now? (*children respond “sad” etc*) How can you tell? (*children respond “you’re crying” etc*) Why do you think I’m crying? Is there a reason? Is there a story behind why I’m crying? (*one wipes eyes a bit and sniffs etc OR, if using a white board, wipes away the tears and draws a happy face*) What do you think? (*children respond*) I/s/he feel(s) better now. I/s/he got all that out. Thank you for comforting me/him/her etc.

If teacher performed example: Now I'm not really sad, but I *looked* like I was, didn't I? I was *expressing* sadness. I was expressing how I felt and making it so that you could see it.

What happens when you feel a certain way, but you don't express it? For example, what happens if someone felt very sad, but didn't show it at all? Where does the sadness go then? (*children respond*) The sadness just stays inside and makes a person feel bad. It gets heavy and then you have to carry it around with you, which can make you tired. It's important to express our sadness and get it out of us so we can feel better.

Or what if someone feels very happy and they didn't show it? Where would the happiness go then?

EXAMPLE: Embodied dialogue—teacher can substitute the action by using a smiley face figure drawn on the board: (*teacher exhibits happiness—one can jump up and dance around a little, or just smile and laugh*) How do you think I'm feeling right now? (*students respond "happy" etc*) How can you tell? (*students respond "you're smiling/laughing/dancing etc."*) Yes, I feel so happy that I have to smile/dance/laugh. I have to smile/dance/laugh because I'm happy! I'm expressing my happiness through a dance/smiling/laughing. Can you tell? (*students respond*) Why do you think I'm happy? (*students respond*) Expressing my happiness makes me feel better.

How does the way I'm acting make you feel? (*children respond "happy" etc*) So what you're saying is that my smiling/laughing/dancing about made you feel happy/laugh etc.? (*students respond*) What would happen if I didn't smile/dance around/laugh, but kept a straight face and just sat here and kept all my happiness inside? (*students respond*) Would you know if I was happy?

When I made up that dance/drew that smiley face, I was an artist. Do you know why? Because I *created* the dance/drawing.

What does create mean? (*write "create" and record students' responses—"to make"*)

CREATE to make something

Right. So artists take their feelings and express them by creating something. Artists take their feelings from the inside and shape them into art so that others can see it. They take their feelings and make something from them.

ARTIST → ART → to EXPRESS (SPEAK → STORY → EMOTIONS/FEELINGS)

I → created a dance/drawing → to show everyone → I'm getting a dog → I was happy

When you saw the dance/drawing/me smiling, could you tell *why* I was happy? No? Why? (*kids respond*) Because I hadn't told you my story. I hadn't told you the reason I was happy. But you still knew I was happy because I showed it with a dance/drawing/smiling.

And how did you feel when you saw me dancing/smiling/laughing or how did you feel when I drew a big smiley face? How did my dance/the drawing made you feel? So art can sometimes make other people have feelings and sometimes they'll have the same feelings you do.

So the art is actually made up of feelings that you can now see. And artists often put their art in shows and invite other people to come and see their art. The people who come to see the artwork may not know why the artist created the art, but they can guess about the stories and feelings behind the art. And the artist gets the chance to express his or her feelings without having to talk out loud to anyone because sometimes it may be hard to find the right words or the right time or the right person.

And it's really important to express our feelings to get them out of us.

In this class, you're going to be artists. You will get the chance to tell your stories and express your feeling through art. We'll look at some different examples of how other artists made their art, and you'll get the chance to try out the way they did it.

At the end of the class, you'll have created different pieces of art that was made from your feelings and stories from your life. You will put your artwork together and make one big (or small) piece of art that you will put in an art show for others to come and see. You can name it whatever you want. It will be artwork that is all about you. It's made up of your feelings and your life stories. It will show the world, "Hey, come look at me! I can express myself!"

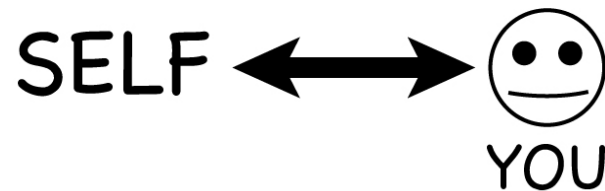
Do you know what "self" is? (*children respond as one writes "self" on the board*)

SELF

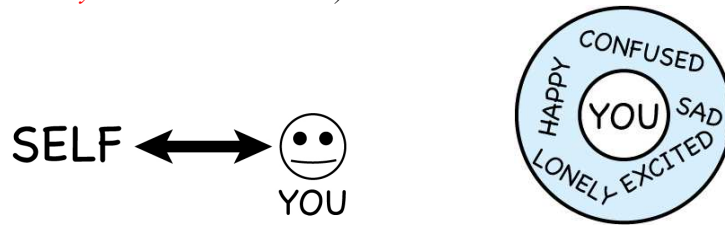
It is you.



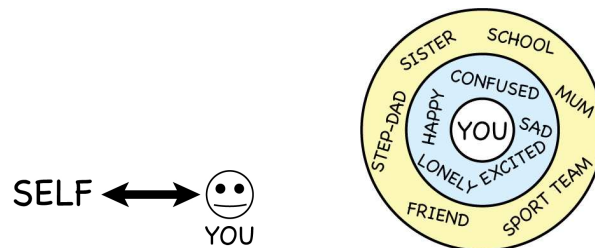
(*draw "you" on the board and circle it*) Your inside and outside and all the things that make up you.



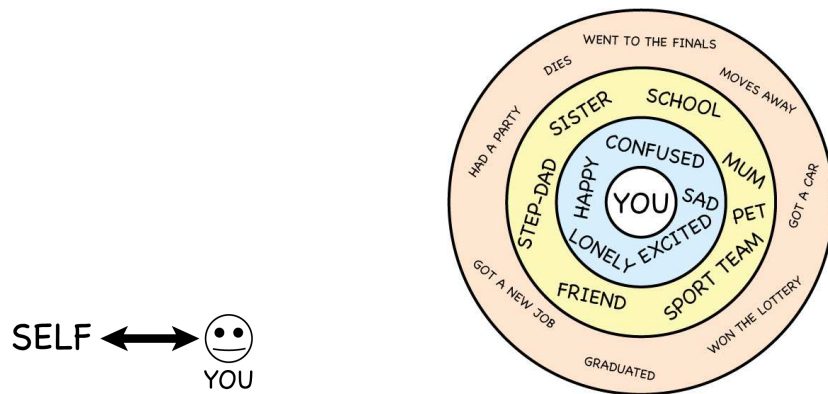
What's on your inside? Feelings? (*students respond—draw feelings they name around the “you” circle and circle it*)



What are things on your outside? (*draw family, school, football teams, music etc as kids respond—they may need some hints so start writing the more obvious things down...e.g. school, since they are all in school at that time*)

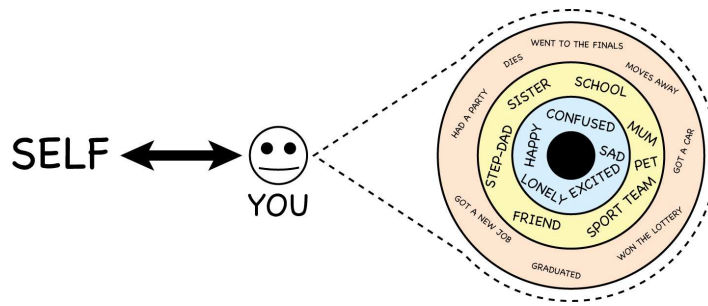


What do these things do? What are some stories about these things? (*again, one may need hints to understand, so start by writing “moved away” or “won the game” in the 3rd circle*)

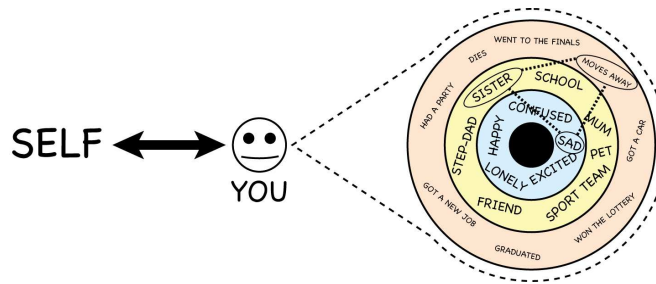


So you have a lot of things that make up your self, and “you” are at the middle of a lot of different things. Sometimes it's even hard to see you, because you're surrounded by all kinds of things in your life like, school and feeling lonely and your dog (*use the examples they gave*).

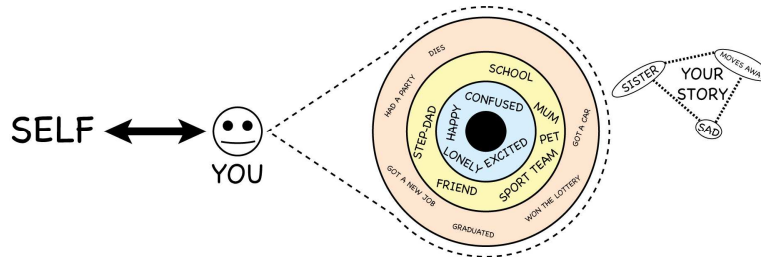
But these things aren't you—you can't see all of them when you look around you (*pretend to look around*), can you? Because they're really inside of you. (*draw a circle around the large figure and indicate it is inside the “you” image as shown*)



Now that's a lot of stuff to keep inside you. That can get pretty heavy to carry around. So, to take off some of that weight, you can express some of it. By expressing your "self", you are picking out something that is inside and putting it on the outside—you're getting it out of you. For example, (*visually draw a line between something in the outer circle to a person in the 2nd circle and a feeling in the inner circle as shown*) you are sad about your sister because she is moving away.



So you take this triangle out and show it to the world as a story. (*teacher erases the words used in the example—"sister," "moves away," and "sad"—and rewrites them as shown, entitling the triangle "Your Story"*)



You are doing "self expression." You are expressing your self by sharing some of the things that are inside you. By doing this, you are making your self stronger because you're lighter and your head is clearer and so you can think and do things better because you're not all weighed down and full of feelings and people and things and stories.

In this class, you're expressing yourself through art. Because sometimes we're not quite ready to show the world what's on our inside. Sometimes we maybe don't want the world to know how we're feeling or why we're feeling that way, but we don't want to keep it inside of us either because it makes us feel heavy.

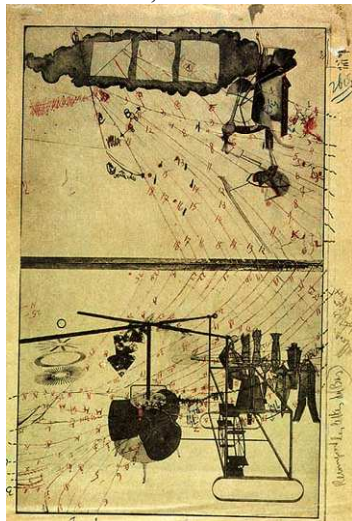
There is no right or wrong way to make art. It isn't supposed to look a certain way. You are each the artist of your own stories and feelings, and only you can tell if these are expressed in the right way. Art is great because it can express—tell and share—feelings and stories that you can't always fit into words. In this class, *only you* can tell if your stories and feelings look right.

You are the expert, you are the artists. (Teacher) am here to help you, but you are the ones coming up with the ideas about how the class goes.

Art can be made out of anything. And sometimes it can come out different from what you thought, but that's okay. That becomes part of the art.

For example, here's a short story about an artist and his art. (*use visual example of Large Glass with the cracks explicitly numbered*)

Marcel Duchamp's the Large Glass: Reversed print of the 'Large Glass' with cracks numbered to make the stencils which transferred them to the celluloid prints for the 'Boîte', 1939



Available: <http://www.toutfait.com/duchamp.jsp?postid=778> 02/04/08

Marcel Duchamp was a famous artist. He made a piece of art from glass, lead foil, fuse wire and dust. But, on the way to the museum, the piece of art cracked and started to break. The museum people were very upset and were afraid that the art was ruined and that Marcel would be upset. But Marcel carefully fixed the cracked glass, so that it wouldn't fall apart, but did not replace the glass. He liked it as it was.

So now that piece of art is cracked, and it's still displayed in fancy museums, even though it's broken and looks different from how he first thought it should look. This just goes to show that art can happen without you being in control or aware of it. It takes its own shape. It just happens. You have to let it happen. It is not supposed to look any certain way, so keep an open mind as you start to create.

So that is what we'll be doing in this class.

Researcher: Remember, if you're going to take part in the research *as* researchers, you should be thinking about what you're doing and how you feel about it. And make sure to tell me so I can add it to the data.

If you would like to take part in the research, at the end of the class, I'll ask you what you thought of the class—what you liked and did not like about it. How it could be better. I'd especially like to know what you think about your artwork, and how it felt to make it and have other people come and see it. I'm very interested in what you think, since this class is all about you and I would like for you to help create it and own it. If you do decide to take part in the research, you can stop at any time, if you don't want to continue. That means that I won't ask you for your opinions and feelings about the project and your artwork.

Questions? Feelings? Anything you want to ask or want to say?

(keep responses children have given for they'll be again used and referred to in following sessions—these responses will serve as a running record. At this time, it would be ideal to collect the children's consent forms and to distribute the opt-out parent/guardian forms with instructions. Refer them to contact details on information sheets if they should have any concerns or questions in the future and would like to talk to me individually)

SESSION 2

Project Intro continued:

(bring out the responses children gave in the last session)

Feelings

Human beings are made up of feelings. We all cry, laugh, smile and sigh. When you are feeling a certain way, someone else in the world is feeling the same way. A child in Bogota/Los Angeles/Sydney may be feeling exactly how you are feeling right now.

In this project, I would like you to express yourself through art. Do you remember what “express” meant? (*children respond*) To “express” something means to get it out and share it. You can express feelings and tell stories. Remember how we talked about artists last week? (*give time for children to provide some feedback and briefly recap last week’s session, if children seem to have forgotten*)

This is your space to tell your stories, talk about your life, through art. You are artists. By the end of the class, you will have created different pieces of art that are expressions of your stories and how you feel, and you will put them together in a show for others to come and see. It will be an expression of your self through art.

Emotions

What are emotions? What are the different ways that a person can feel?

(write emotions on the board as the children list them)

happy sad excited sleepy bored lost afraid confused
lonely

Visual Identification: *[show pictures/photographs of children’s faces (preferably children of a different culture) exhibiting different emotions—children pictured should be around the same age of the children in the classroom] How do you think this child is feeling? (continue to ask students how each one of the children pictured is feeling, based on their facial expression. Connect to their responses to the emotions listed on the board)*

Reasons for Emotions (stories):

Why is the child in the pictures feeling (emotion children identified)? *(children will connect their own experiences with emotions to those of the child pictured and provide answers based on their own realities—write reasons on the board as children call them out)*

happy sad excited sleepy bored lost afraid confused
lonely

because his dog died because his grandma is coming to visit because he doesn’t like school because he didn’t know where I was because it was a different city because his sister moved away etc

Sometimes someone may have a smile on their face, but are feeling sad. Sometimes we don’t show how we’re feeling because we’re not sure how to express it.

Communicating Emotions:

Have you ever felt X? (*all emotions discussed are those brought up by the kids*) Sometimes it's hard to say and show how you're feeling. There aren't any words that can really explain how you're feeling, and maybe you feel like there's no one to listen. It's very important to express your feelings and not keep them inside, but it can be difficult figuring out how to express them in a good way.

Methods of Communication:

But there are lots of ways to speak. What are the ways in which people talk to each other? How can you tell someone how you're feeling? (*write communication methods children volunteer on the board*).

Talk write show them etc

Incorporate Aesthetic Elements

When you can't find the right words to match your feelings, you can use art to talk for you. You can be an artist and express yourself through art. There is no right or wrong way to using art—you just explore it and create a new language, one that will express how you're feeling.

Storytelling:

Think of the times when you each felt X or Y (*list the emotions the class named on the board*) or perhaps you've felt other ways that are not listed on the board. Think of your own experiences and the times you felt sad, happy, excited etc

People all over the world have been telling their own stories in many different languages. There are many different ways to speak and to share one's stories. People tell stories in order to express and share their feelings and experiences with others.

You can put anything you want into a story. Maybe your story can be about a frog's life. Perhaps you can be the frog. You can be anything you want in a story, using your imagination.

How does a person become an artist? (*allow time for responses*) Art is all about expression. It is fueled by emotions. It can help you to speak what you may not know how to speak. Every one of you is already an artist. You just have to show it.

In the next sessions, we're going to look at the ways other artists have expressed themselves so you can get an idea of the way other people tell their stories and express their emotions.

Developing personal stories

(*For each class, the white paper/board with the childrens' feedback and brainstorming should be visible and accessible so they can use that for reference*)

Themes:

- I would like each of you to tell stories about your world. We'll have to come up with themes for these stories.
- A theme is the core of a story. It is the reason for telling it.
- What do you think you would like to write about? Think of the reasons people can feel sad, happy etc that we talked about before. Think of times you have felt sad, happy etc and why you felt that way.

- Can we find our story themes in these reasons? (*children will come up with themes for their stories, the borders of their expression, and these themes are to be written on the board*)

Each child will pick 3 or 4 story themes from the classroom brainstorm. Or a child can come up with their own themes.

HOMEWORK: Each child is to start thinking about life story themes for class next time.

SESSION 3: First Medium and Story Application

*Teacher and children may choose a different medium for each theme (2-4 themes), or pick one medium to use for all of one's stories. For each medium, children should be provided with examples of **different** ways of using each medium, so that the children are not referring to one example as the model to imitate. The project is about expression and not imitation. They have to be reminded of this.*

The examples included are just samples—a teacher can come up with new examples if they want to. The point is to provide children with very different ways in which to use the medium. Different styles, so that each child does not imitate one certain way in which to paint.

At the end of the sessions, each child should have ideally 3 or 4 life stories expressed through aesthetics, but this is not necessary—it depends on the pace set by the class. A different medium is recommended for each theme in order for children to try out various approaches, making it more likely that a child will find something that feels more natural and that they are better at, but, again, if this is not possible, then one medium can be used.

In order to make this practical, use “easy” mediums. For example, use just one more material-dependent medium like paint or clay, and then use mediums that do not require as many materials, like short stories/poetry, composition/collage work and multi-media. In this example, I've included 2 mediums which are more material-dependent—paint and clay—since these are 2 mediums which are commonly used in classrooms, and writing, which does not require many materials. Multi-media and collage examples will also be provided as part of the curriculum.

Although music and dance are ideal forms of artistic expression, these communicative modes do not create a “product,” that can be held and examined—rather, they create “living forms” which dissipate as they are created in a moment. Yet, these modes can be used if there are materials and resources available to record the moment. It is important to decide upon a way that the children can then exhibit their creations as an external product—perhaps through recording each performance and then running a film at the art show (on the wall via projector or on a television/DVD/VHS). It is important that the performance narrative is exhibited, since the display aspect is vital to the process as it entails the “sharing” portion. Yet, it is equally important to leave it up to each child. Some may not be comfortable with performing publicly, and some may not want to be taped. At no time should a child be forced to share or show any of their art. It does belong to each child. It is up to a teacher to provide options for exhibition, if available.

So now we all have themes for our life stories. We are going to take each of our stories and you can think of how this story makes you feel now and how it made you feel when it was happening.

Once you have worked out the emotions and feelings for each story, you are ready to express them. Today we are going to look at how other artists have expressed their feelings and stories, and then you'll get a chance to express your story and its feelings in the same way. So, when we're going through the different ways you can use each art material and hearing about the different stories behind each piece of art, I want you to think about your own stories and how you can express them through art.

First Medium: *Introduce the medium and provide examples of the ways in which it can be used*

Medium: Paint

Some artists use paint to express themselves. There are many different ways to use the paint. Some artists paint on canvas—this is like cloth. Or some paint on wood or cupboards or walls. Artists can paint anywhere. HOWEVER, it is important to remember that one has to respect other people's property and not paint on something that does not belong to you or that you don't have permission to paint on. We will be using (material available) to paint on in this class, so we'll be looking at painters who also used a flat surface like canvas or paper.

Here are some different ways that artists who use paint have expressed themselves to give you an idea of what you can do. ***Remember, there isn't any correct way in which to express yourself.*** These are just examples of what other people have done. You don't have to do it this way, but, if you choose to or like it, then you can go ahead and try it out.

Example 1) Jackson Pollack and the Abstract Expressionists—Number 1

Jackson Pollack was a New York artist who painted on huge canvases on the floor and was more interested in expressing his feelings and emotions than representing a true image or painting something exactly the way it looks in real life. People said artists like Jackson combined physical action—moving his body and being really active when making his art—with emotional expression to create a balance of the two.



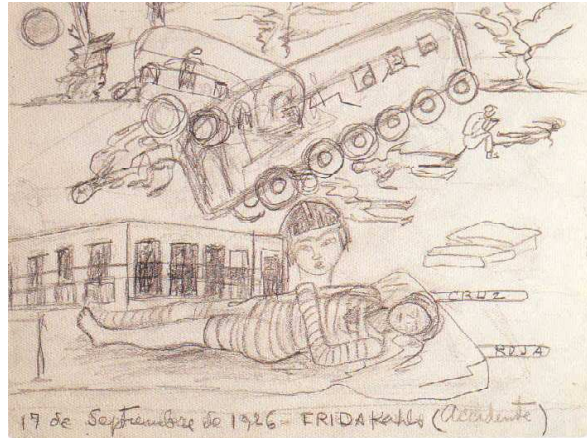
Available: <http://www.nga.gov/feature/pollock/lavendermist.jpg> 04/03/08

Example questions:

What do you think Jackson was trying to say or express in this painting? Why do you think he painted like this? What do you think he was feeling when he painted this?

Example 2) Frida Kahlo

Frida was a Mexican artist who did a lot of self-portraits—that means she painted pictures of herself, but in the way ***she*** saw herself. In some of her paintings, she drew herself as someone hurt because, when she was young, she was in a very bad accident when a bus and streetcar collided. She was in a body cast and had to stay in bed for many months. She felt her injuries throughout her life and affected the way she saw herself. In this drawing, she shows what the accident looked like and how it felt to her.



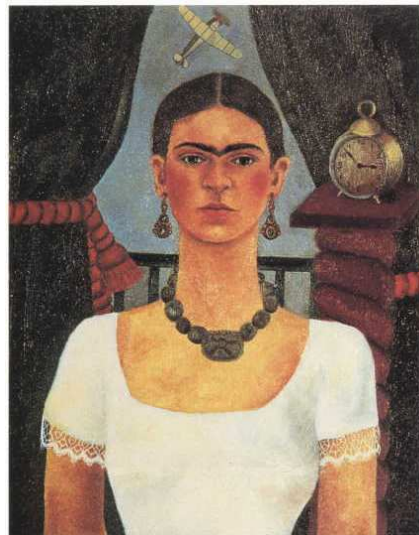
Available: <http://fbuch.com/images/Frida1926.JPG> 04/04/2008

Example questions:

What do you see in this drawing? What do you think she was feeling when she drew this?

But, while she was in bed, her mother brought her paints and she started to use them to express herself.

This is a painting Frida did of herself:



Available: <http://fbuch.com/images/FridaKahlo1929b.JPG> 04/04/2008

Example questions:

What do you think she's feeling in this painting? What was she trying to express when she painted this? What do you think the clock is there for? What about the plane? What do you think those mean?

Example 4) Otto Dix—Self Portrait as a Soldier

Otto was a German painter who often painted portraits of people, but in the way he saw these people. When he was younger, he was a soldier in World War I and was very affected by the things that he saw as a soldier and had nightmares about them.

His artwork later expressed his fear and the horrors he saw in war and, as a result, the Nazis destroyed much of his work.

Otto named this painting: Self Portrait as a Soldier. It was created early in his life.



Available: <http://www.art-ww1.com/peinture/004dix1.jpg> 04/04/2008

Example questions:

What do you see in this painting? Do you see Otto? What do you think he was trying to say about himself in this painting? How does the painting make you feel?

Example 5) Georgie Young—Commotion

Georgie is an artist who lives right here in Edinburgh. She paints about how Scotland makes her feel—the feeling she gets when looking out over the water or across the land.



Available: http://www.georgieyoung.com/gallery2/main.php?g2_view=core.DownloadItem&g2_itemId=282&g2_serialNumber=2 04/04/2008

Example questions:

What do you think she is painting here? How do you think she feels about what she's painting? How does this painting make you feel, as you've probably seen the same things she's seen in your lives?

Example 6) Roberto Matta—The Angry One

Roberto was an artist born in Chile, which is in South America. He often used oil paints to tell stories and express his feelings about things in his world through figures and images like the one you see here, which he named “The Angry One”.



Available: http://www.matta-art.com/the_angry_one.jpg 15/06/2008

Example questions:

How does this painting make you feel? What does it say to you? Roberto named this “The Angry One,”—do you see anger in this painting? If so, why? Why not?

Example 7) Francis Bacon—Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion

Francis was an American painter who often destroyed his art because he didn't like it. Others thought this was a shame because they thought his art was wonderful, but he did not agree. But he did like the painting you see here.



Available: <http://www.humanitiesweb.org/gallery/275/3.jpg> 04/04/2008

Francis often expressed his religious beliefs through his art. In this painting, he originally wanted to paint the Greek furies—fantasy creatures who hunted down people who did bad things, but instead he painted what you see, saying he did not want to paint the characters in the story, but instead “tried to create an image of the effect (the story) produced inside me.”

In other words, Francis did not paint the characters in the story because it would have looked like how other paintings looked when things were painted in a way that the figures looked very real—like a photograph. Instead, Francis painted the way the story made him feel. He painted how the story of the Furies made him feel on the inside.

Remember the emotions we talked about before? What does X look like? How does X feel? For class today, you all should have come up with different stories from your own lives.

For the remaining time, I'd like you to just start exploring the material and trying out different ways of using it. You can use it like the artists you've seen today, or you can use your own style. In any case, how you use the paint will be an expression of your own style.

HOMEWORK: Now pick one of your own life stories and think about the feelings your story caused you to have and think about how you'd like to express it through paint. Next time we will have a painting workshop and you will create and express your stories and feelings in pieces of art that will go into the final show.

SESSION 4: Painting Workshop

(Bring up the medium example pictures again to refresh the students' memory. Also have the large white sheet with the students' feedback about emotions and reasons accessible so that they can look at it and be reminded of what they talked about before. This is a time for children to explore different ways to use the paint. The teacher should be available to help children who are stuck—small groups can also be used. At the end of the class, each child should have a story/stories expressed through the medium)

Today we are going to explore painting. At the end of class today, you should each have one or more work(s) of art that express how you feel about your life and/or something that's happened in your life.

Remember how last week we saw the different ways that artists can use paint to express themselves? Today it is your turn.

You should have picked out a story and theme, and thought about the feelings that go along with it. So now think about how this story makes you feel? If it helps, close your eyes and try to imagine how this story makes you feel.

Your feeling about your experience is what you are trying to express.

Remember, there is no correct way to do this. Only you as the artist can know if you are doing it right. No one else can tell if it's wrong or right. Just pick up the brush and pick a few colors, dip the brush in and start to move it along on the paper. Think about your story and what was in it and imagine how you felt as a character in the story. What does it look like to you?

SESSION 5:

Second Medium: *Introduce the medium and provide examples of the ways in which it can be used*

Medium: Clay—Sculpture

Some artists use clay, rock, plastic and lots of other things to make a sculpture. Like painters, these artists tell stories and express their feelings about these stories, but they do it through the creation of a sculpture. Your sculpture may not be as detailed as some of these, because sculpting can take a lot of practice, but you can still use sculpture to express your emotions and stories. These examples are meant to give you an idea about the different ways people can use material to make sculptures.

Example 1) Alexander Carrick

Alexander is a famous Scottish sculptor, and you've probably seen his work throughout Edinburgh and its surrounding Scotland. Like Otto, Alexander based a great deal of his artwork on the time he spent as a soldier in World War I. He was a gunner and, when he was on the frontlines, he made a model of another gunner out of the clay in the trenches. He later created a large bronzed sculpture from it.



Available: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/1/14/The_gunner.jpg/175px-The_gunner.jpg 04/04/2008

Example questions: Why do you think he made a clay model of the soldier when he was in the frontlines? How do you think he felt when he was making the model? What do you see when you look at the gunner sculpture? How does it make you feel?

Alexander created many sculptures of soldiers and war memorials when he returned from the war. He created statues entitled “Justice Guiding Valour” and other themes. He also created sculptures of Robert the Bruce and William Wallace, which are built into the wall of Edinburgh castle. It's said that this statue you see here inspired an American screenwriter to write the script for the film Braveheart.



Available: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/d/d7/Wallace_%26_wall.jpg/400px-Wallace_%26_wall.jpg 04/04/2008

Example questions: How does this statue make you feel? Have you seen it before? Did you ever stop to look at it? What do you think Alexander was trying to say about William Wallace?

Example 2) Auguste Rodin—Burghers of Calais

Auguste was a famous French sculptor. (show example images) In the example you see here, Auguste is telling the story of how 6 town-leaders offered themselves up to save their town to which English King Edward III had laid siege during the Hundred Years' War. After eleven months, with the people desperately short of food and water, six of the leading citizens, or "burghers," of this town offered themselves as hostages to Edward in exchange for the freedom of their city. They took off their fancy clothes and walked through the streets dressed as you can see here, believing that they were walking to their deaths. Auguste shows the burghers as vulnerable and conflicted, yet heroic in the face of their likely fate. However, the King's wife convinced him to spare their lives.

Cite: www.metmuseum.org/explore/publications/pdfs/burghers/divided/story_Burghers.pdf 04/04/2008



Available: http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/rodin/r_burghers1t.jpg 04/04/2008



Available: http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fmart/rodin/burghers3.gif 04/04/2008



Available: http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fmart/rodin/r_burghers0t.jpg 04/04/2008

Example questions: How do you feel when you look at this? How do the men look? What do you think they were feeling? What is each man doing in the sculpture?

Example 3) George Segal and Pop Art—Bus Stop 1975 and Untitled

George was an American artist who used plaster bandages—the kind doctors use for casts when you break a bone—to create his sculptures. He often created things he saw in his everyday life, in his world. Like the one you see here of people at a bus stop. He also created statues that were not meant to stay in museums, but which stand where people lived their daily lives—for example, he would position his statues to sit on a park bench.



Available: <http://www.segalfoundation.org/images/busstop.jpg> 04/04/2008

George created environments for the people he created—he didn't just sculpt a person, but also created the space around the person. Like in the example you see here, George created a room with a window, chair and bed for his figure.



Available: http://www.barbarakrakowgallery.com/stuff/contentmgr/files/bb1a5207e1d9c3b510a710c7b18d274b/img_two/segal_whtbrnzview1.jpg 04/04/2008

Example questions: How do you think this figure is feeling? What are they doing in this sculpture? What do you think the artist was trying to say? How does this piece of art make you feel?

Example 4) Richard Long—A Line Made by Walking and Untitled

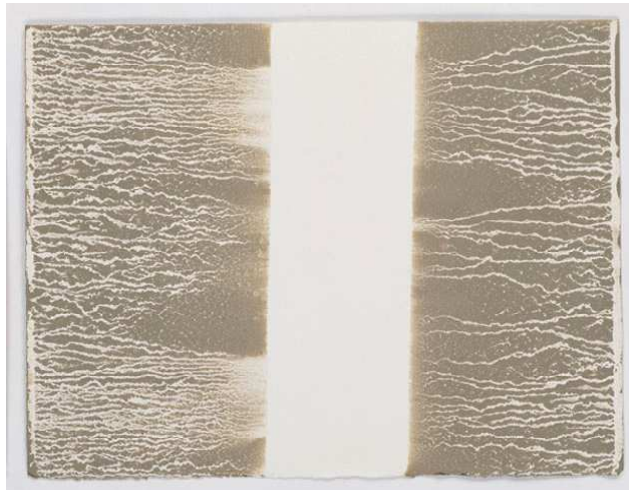
As you can see in this example, not all art has to look the way it looks in reality. It can just look like how you see it in your head and how something makes you feel or act. And not all sculpture has to be created from rock or plaster. For example, Richard Long is a British artist who creates artwork from the long journeys he took all over the world when he was younger. Along the way, he created art, took pictures with his camera and picked up things along the way that helped him to remember all the places he saw and how these places made him feel while he was there. He uses all kinds of natural materials to make his art, like mud and rocks, and his work takes the form of photographs, maps, drawings and sculptures. As he explored, he has walked in circles and he has walked in lines.



Available: http://image.guim.co.uk/Guardian/arts/gallery/2007/jun/28/art/rl_a_line_made_by_walking_-9024.jpg 15/06/2008

Example questions: What do you see in this picture? What does it mean to you? How do you feel about using grass or natural things in your art? Have you ever wanted to remember a place you've been, or how this place makes you feel?

In his journeys, Richard has fallen into rivers and has been attacked. He did not stay on the roads, but traveled through mountains and woods. In this piece of art, Richard used mud! In an art show he recently had at the Edinburgh Museum of Modern Art, Richard threw buckets of mud from the Firth of Forth on the museum's walls, where it then dried. He also draws on tree bark and boards, as well as rusted metal.



Available: http://image.guim.co.uk/Guardian/arts/gallery/2007/jun/28/art/rl_untitled_2005_mud_with_-412.jpg 15/06/08

What do you see in this piece of artwork? What do you think Richard was trying to say about the place he visited? What do you think about using mud in your art? What kinds of things would you use to create art from the places you've visited in your life?

Example 5) Tim Noble and Sue Webster—#1 and #2

Like Richard Long, Tim Noble and Sue Webster are London artists who also use rather unusual things to make art, for Tim and Sue create sculptures from trash—trash that you would find in a bin or blowing around on the streets. When you look at these sculptures, all you might see is simply a pile of rubbish. However, these piles cast strange shadows. In these examples, the artists have created shadows of themselves, or how they see themselves. The rubbish has been carefully organized and put together in order to create the shadow you see, but you would not know that by simply looking at the trash. The garbage pile's shadows reveal their secret and tell a story about the artists.



Available:http://bp3.blogger.com/_d4CyGYpnfYs/R565evF1mNI/AAAAAJE/7a0NFtevwKc/s320/art-not-garbage-05.jpg 04/04/2008



Available:http://bp2.blogger.com/_d4CyGYpnfYs/R563YfF1mEI/AAAAAAAAAH8/sdmxmjDzFFo/s320/trash%2Bart%2B1.bmp.jpeg 15/06/2008

Example questions: What do you think about creating art from garbage? What are the shadow people doing? What stories are the artists telling with this garbage? Why do think these artists use trash to create art?

So now we've seen some examples of the ways in which different artists have used materials to create sculpture. In the remaining time today, think about the story or stories you want to tell, how these stories make you feel, and how you can use the clay to express them. (*this can also be a time for continued dialogue and for new ideas to be brought up—you can talk about the upcoming exhibit and who they'd like to invite etc.*)

HOMEWORK: Remember, for next time, you'll be given workshop time to create pieces for the art show. So please have your story or stories picked out and a good idea about how you'd like to express them through clay.

SESSION 6: (2nd Medium) Workshop

(Again bring up the example pictures again to refresh the students' memory. Also have the large white sheet with the students' feedback about emotions and reasons accessible so that they can look at it and be reminded of what they talked about before)

Today we are going to explore clay. Remember how last week we saw the different ways that artists can use materials to express themselves through sculpture? Today it is again your turn.

Last week we had a chance to see how other artists create sculptures and the ways in which they can express emotions, objects and people, as well as the stories behind why they may do so. Last time you created works of art with paints, so you have an idea about how the creative process can work.

Remember, there is no correct way to do this kind of art. Only you as the artist can know if you are doing it right. Think of the some of the examples we've seen—no one may know what the artist was saying because it didn't really look like anything in particular, but the artist knew and that's all that mattered. Other people can make their own guesses, but no one else can tell if it's wrong or right.

For today, you should have picked out a story and theme, and thought about the feelings that go along with it. So think of your life experience and how it makes you feel.

That's what you are trying to express today.

Now think about your story and what was in it and imagine how you felt as a character in the story. What does it look like to you?

(the students are given workshop time once again and should create one or more pieces of art with the clay)

SESSION 7:

Third Medium: *Introduce the medium and provide examples of the ways in which it can be used*

Medium—Writing

Writing is something that you've all done. You've all probably read a poem, and you've all read a book, or have had books read to you. You might think that some books are fun to read, while others are hard to understand or are just boring. Words can be used in a lot of different ways to cause a lot of different reactions.

With painting or sculpture, you can tell a story without having to explain it in details for everyone to hear. And you can do the same thing with writing. Just like with the other art mediums, you can use a word to stand for something else. When someone says, "I'm feeling blue" they don't actually mean that they are feeling like the *color* blue. Rather, they are feeling sad. Or if someone is very embarrassed by something and says "I almost died when that happened" they don't literally mean that they almost stopped living, but that they were very embarrassed or shocked by something.

These words are used to represent feelings.

There are different categories of writing, like poetry, short stories, novels, fiction—the kind of writing that involved imagination and fantasy and does not include "reality" or "fact" as we understand them and non-fiction—the kind of writing that presents itself as "true". We're going to look at shorter pieces, so that we have time to look at more than a couple.

Yet, you can write about something that is true to you, while using your imagination to express how this truth made you feel. So it can be a fictional kind of truth. It might not look true or real to others, but it is to you.

Today we're going to look at the way some authors have used words and maybe you can get some ideas about how you can use words. *(the teacher is to read the writing examples, but also, if possible, present the words visually so that the children can follow along—either by handing out an example of each writing piece to each child, or using the copy provided on the CD)*

Example 1) Sandra Cisneros—Four Skinny Trees

Sandra was born in Chicago as the only daughter among seven children. Her family frequently moved between the United States and Mexico because her father missed his home, where Sandra's mother still lived. So Sandra often felt homeless and displaced and said, "Because we moved so much, and always in neighborhoods that appeared like France after World War II - empty lots and burned-out buildings - I retreated inside myself." Sandra started to write about her life. She went to a university and realized that she stood out from the rest of her classmates because she was from a different culture. She said that "everyone seemed to have some communal knowledge which I did not have... This caused me to question myself, to become defensive. What did I, Sandra Cisneros, know? What could I know? My classmates were from the best schools in the country. They had been bred as fine hothouse flowers. I was a yellow weed among the city's cracks." She wrote a book called *House on Mango Street*, because of she always wanted to have real house. In

this book, Sandra made up a little girl named Esperanza to express her emotions and thoughts.

Cited: <http://www.answers.com/topic/sandra-cisneros>, 04/04/2008

They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here. Four raggedy excuses planted by the city. From our room we can hear them, but Nenny just sleeps and doesn't appreciate these things.

Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep.

Let one forget his reason for being, they'd all droop like tulips in a glass, each with their arms around the other. Keep, keep, keep, trees say when I sleep. They teach.

When I am too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, then it is I look at trees. When there is nothing left to look at on this street. Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be.

-House on Mango Street, 1984

Example questions: What do you think Sandra is talking about in this poem? How do you think she's feeling? How does this poem make you feel? Have you ever felt the way Sandra is feeling?

Example 2) James Berry—Childhood Tracks

James grew up in a small Jamaican village, and then he moved to the United States, and then he moved to Britain, where he still lives. The poem we're going to read is based on the sights, sounds, tastes and smells he experienced as a child in Jamaica—he is describing the world he knew through his senses.

Eating crisp fried fish with plain bread.
Eating sheared ice made into "snowball"
with syrup in a glass.
Eating young jelly-coconut, mixed
with village-made wet sugar.
Drinking cool water from a calabash gourd
on worked land in the hills.

Smelling a patch of fermenting pineapples
in stillness of hot sunlight.
Smelling mixed whiffs of fish, mango, coffee,
mint, hanging in a market.
Smelling sweaty padding lifted off a donkey's back.

Hearing a nightingale in song
in moonlight and sea-sound.
Hearing dawn-crowing of cocks, in answer
to others around the village.
Hearing the laughter

of barefeet children carrying water.
Hearing a distant braying of a donkey
in a silent hot afternoon.
Hearing palmtrees' leaves rattle
on and on at Christmas time.

Seeing a woman walking in loose floral frock.
Seeing a village workman with bag and machete
under a tree, resting, sweat-washed.
Seeing a tangled land-piece of banana trees
with goats in shades cud-chewing.
Seeing a coil of plaited tobacco
like rope, sold, going in bits.
Seeing children playing in schoolyard
between palm and almond trees.
Seeing children toy-making in a yard
while slants of evening sunlight slowly disappear.
Seeing an evening's dusky hour lit up
by dotted lamplight.
Seeing fishing nets repaired between canoes.

-Only One of Me, 2004

Example questions: How does James' world compare to yours? What's going on in this world? How do you think he felt about his world? How did this poem make you feel? Are the things that made up his world in your world? If they aren't, does that seem strange to know that another child's life is full of so many things that aren't in your life? If you wrote a poem about the things that you see, hear, taste and smell, what would it be about?

Example 3) Shel Silverstein—Rain in My Head

Shel was an artist who expressed himself in lots of different ways. He wrote poems, plays, movies, songs and drew pictures for books. He wrote about all kinds of things, many of them having to do with being a kid.

Cited: http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/shel_silverstein/biography,
04/04/2008

I opened my eyes
And looked up at the rain,
And it dripped in my head
And flowed into my brain,
And all that I hear as I lie in my bed
Is the slishity-slosh of the rain in my head.

I step very softly,
I walk very slow,
I can't do a handstand—
I might overflow,
So pardon the wild crazy thing I just said—
I'm just not the same since there's rain in my head.

-Where the Sidewalk Ends, 1974

Example questions: What do you think Shel is talking about? How do you think the person in the poem feels? Do you think they actually have rain in their head? What do you think that means? How does it make you feel? Do you ever have rain in your head? How do you get it out?

Example 4) Marriot Edgar—The Burghers of Calais

Marriot is a Scottish poet who was born in Kirkcudbright, and his friends called him “George.” He often tells rather funny stories about historical events and about various people and things, from footballers to soldiers to little boys who want to go to Australia and hide inside a lion to get there. He uses rhyming in his poem, so that the poems start to sound like a song. Do you remember the sculpture we saw a couple weeks ago? (*bring up the pictures of Rodin’s Burghers of Calais for visual reference*) This poem is entitled “The Burghers of Calais,” which is the same name that Auguste Rodin gave to his sculpture. Both the poem and the sculpture tell the same story, but do so in different ways. Marriot uses poetry and Auguste uses sculpture. Remember when we before talked about this story before? The burghers were the men who were in charge of the town of Calais. So listen to this poem and see if it matches up with the story you can see in the picture of Rodin’s sculpture.

It were after the Battle of Crecy-
The foe all lay dead on the ground-
And King Edward went out with his soldiers
To clean up the places around.

The first place they came to were Calais,
Where t’ burghers all stood in a row,
And when Edward told them to surrender
They told Edward where he could go.

Said he, "I'll beleaguer this city,
I'll teach them to flout their new King -
Then he told all his lads to get camp-stools
And sit round the place in a ring.

Now the burghers knew nowt about Crecy-
They laughed when they saw Edward's plan-
And thinking their side were still winning,
They shrugged and said- "San fairy Ann."

But they found at the end of a fortnight
That things wasn't looking so nice,
With nowt going out but the pigeons,
And nowt coming in but the mice.

For the soldiers sat round on their camp-stools,
And never a foot did they stir,
But passed their time doing their knitting,
And crosswords, and things like that there.

The burghers began to get desperate
Wi' t' food supply sinking so low,
For they'd nowt left but dry bread and water,
Or what they called in French "pang" and "oh"

They stuck it all autumn and winter,
But when at last spring came around
They was bothered, bewitched and beleaguered,
And cods' heads was tenpence a pound.

So they hung a white flag on the ramparts
To show they was sick of this 'ere-
And the soldiers, who'd finished their knitting,
All stood up and gave them a cheer.

When King Edward heard they had surrendered
He said to them, in their own tongue,
"You've kept me here all football season,
And twelve of you's got to be hung."

Then up stood the Lord Mayor of Calais,
"I'll make one" he gallantly cried-
Then he called to his friends on the Council
To make up the rest of the side.

When the townspeople heard of the hanging
They rushed in a crowd through the gate-
They was all weeping tears of compassion,
And hoping they wasn't too late.

With ropes round their necks the twelve heroes
Stood proudly awaiting their doom,
Till the hangman at last crooked his finger
And coaxingly said to them-" Come.

At that moment good Queen Phillippa
Ran out of her bower and said-
Oh, do have some mercy, my husband;
Oh don't be so spiteful, dear Ted."

Then down on her knee-joints before them
She flopped, and in accents that rang,
Said, "Please, Edward, just to oblige me,
You can't let these poor burghers hang.

The King was so touched with her pleading,
He lifted his wife by the hand
And he gave her all twelve as a keepsake
And peace once again reigned in the land.

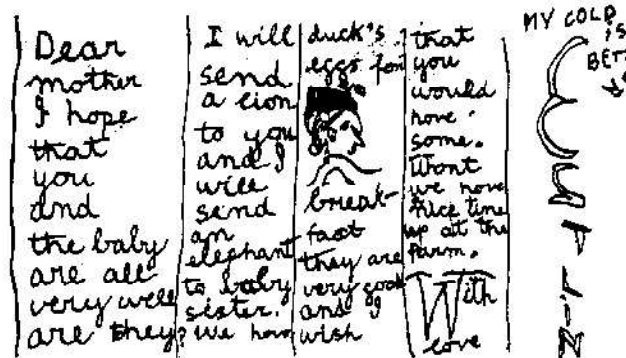
Example questions: What do you think of this poem? Is the story Marriot told in this poem like the story Auguste told? How does this poem make you feel? Does it make you feel any different than how the sculpture made you feel? Do you think the artists were trying to say different things about the same story? Do you think they wanted their art to express a different kind of emotion?

Example 5) e.e. cummings—r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r and maggie and milly and molly and may

Edward Estling Cummings was a poet who often did not keep his words in straight lines or in neat and square shapes. Rather, his poems are famous for looking a certain way—he did not use capital-letters, for instance. So his words are not just expressing something, but the way he shapes his sentences are also expressing something. Many of his poems are meant to be seen *and* heard. In the examples below, it shows that Edward, when he was younger, used drawings with his words, so that his letters are full of both letters and images.



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Available: <http://www.geocities.com/soho/8454/let1sm.gif> 04/04/2008

Example questions: Have you ever drawn pictures like that? Do you ever include pictures with your words? Do you ever doodle in your notebook? What do you think about including pictures with the words?

When Edward got a bit older, he didn't use actual pictures alongside his words, but used the words and spaces and punctuation to create a new look for his poems. This next poem is a great example of Edward's use of words and spaces. It's very

difficult to read out loud, if impossible—you have to see it to understand it, and you have to look very carefully. At first, it may not make any sense at all. But Edward carefully placed all the words and arranged them in a very particular way, so that they are saying something. You just have to figure out what that something is. Some people say that he is destroying all of the rules that people have made for poetry, showing that a poem can look like anything.

r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r

r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r
 who
 a)s w(e loo)k
 upnowgath
 PPEGORHRASS
 eringint(o-

 aThe):l
 eA
 !p:
 S a
 (r
 rlvInG .gRrEaPsPhOs)
 to
 rea(be)rran(com)gi(e)ngly
 ,grasshopper;

- *Complete Poems: 1904-1962*

If you look carefully and move around some of the words, the sentence: GRASSHOPPER, WHO, AS WE LOOK, NOW UPGATHERING INTO HIMSELF, LEAPS, ARRIVING TO BECOME, REARRANGINGLY, A GRASSHOPPER is supposed to come out. The title is “grasshopper” spelled backwards and with its letters jumbled about. Throughout the poem, “grasshopper” slowly is arranged to form the correct spelling of the word that you can plainly read. He wrote the poem to try to get the reader to really think about its meaning and what it’s saying.

Some people think that the poem is meant to show a grasshopper jumping across the page, so the word “grasshopper” is the actual grasshopper who jumps around and, no matter what he looks like or how he is spelled, he is still a grasshopper at the end. Some people also think that Edward is trying to say that grasshopper stands for people, and how we all start out our lives jumping around in different directions and trying new things and then we straighten out as we get older.

That is just a good example of how you can use words to say something that others may not be able to understand, like a puzzle.

Example questions: What do you think Edward was saying in this poem? What do you think about the way he used the letters, words and punctuation? How does it make you feel?

Of course, he didn’t always write like that. In the next poem, the words are all placed so that they look more like other poems.

maggie and milly and molly and may

maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach(to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles,and

milly befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles:and

may came home with a smooth round stone
as small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose(like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in the sea

-The Complete Poems: 1904-1962

Example questions: What do you think Edward was saying in this poem? What do you think he meant when he said that we can find ourselves in the sea? Do you agree with him? What do you find when you go to the sea? Have you ever found the same kinds of things as the children in this poem?

HOMEWORK: For next time, think of another story that you'd like to tell, and of how you'd like to express it through writing. You'll have time to work on your writing pieces in the workshop time in next class, but, at the end of the next class, we'll also be looking at collage work—that's when an artist takes all kinds of different things and puts them together to make a piece of art. So you will have less time to work with the writing, making it really important that you spend time thinking about the way you want to use writing next time.

SESSION 8: (3rd Medium) Workshop

(Today there should be about 20 minutes left at the end, so that the teacher can talk to the children about next week's workshop, giving the children examples of multi-media and collage work.

For this class, again bring up the example pictures to refresh the students' memory. Also have the large white sheet with the students' feedback about emotions and reasons accessible so that they can look at it and be reminded of what they talked about before)

Today we are going to explore writing. Last week we looked at the different ways that artists used words to express stories and feelings—some of the poems rhymed and some of them didn't. Some of the poems were meant to be read and some were meant to be seen, some focused on the way their worlds looked, smelled, tasted and the sounds it had and others talked about their life by using story characters. Some even used drawings to go with the words. You are free to try out any of these and to invent your own ways to use words to express your stories, thoughts and feelings.

You should have at least one story and feeling to express through writing today. You'll have less time to work today, because, in the last 15-20 minutes, we are going to talk about next week and I'll be showing you some more examples of what we'll be doing to help you with your homework assignment.

(Children should have at least one writing piece completed at the start of the collage introduction and are to be reminded that they must finish it before the next class. In the last 15-20 minutes of class, the teacher is to introduce the children to collage examples and talk about the homework for next week's class)

By this point, you should all have something expressed through writing. If you don't, please finish something by next week's class. Now we're going to talk about what we'll be doing next. We're almost done with our class and we have to get ready for the show we're having in 2 weeks. You're going to put your art on display and invite people to come and see it. You're all artists showing your work to others. Even though you know what your art means, it may not be clear to other people, in the same way that the artwork that we looked at wasn't always clear to us. Art is a great way to tell stories and express our feelings so that you are sharing it, but you still have power over who hears it, because you may have to choose to explain what the art may be about.

Do you know what "exhibit" means? *(children respond)* It means that you will be showing it off for others to see. So we'll be having an "art exhibit" of your work as an artist. *(at this time, depending on what kind of exhibit is practical, you can briefly discuss creating invitations and who to invite and where to have it...get them thinking about what's possible)*

For this art exhibit, you are going to take all of the work that you've done in the past few weeks and put them all together to make one piece of art. This piece of art is to be made up of all the stories, feelings, thoughts and people that you based your artwork on—it will be an expression of your life and the things that make it up. Remember when we talked about self at the beginning of this class? How you are composed of stories and people and feelings? You have spent a few weeks expressing all these things that are inside you and creating them on the outside of you, so that you can see and touch them.

You can choose to simply place your different pieces near each other and not combine them at all, or you can completely change them to create something entirely new. What we create at the end of next week's class will be the art you'll display in the show.

In order for your pieces to go together and make up just one piece of art, you'll need to bring in things to hold them together, to connect them. Things from your everyday life. Again, your final piece of art is to be an artistic expression of you and your self, made up of your stories and emotions.

You can use whatever you want for your final piece of art—any one of the mediums we explored can be used (*if this is possible*). Bring in things that you can afford to put into your art, so don't bring in anything that you'll need again or that belongs to anyone else. It could be a leaf that you find on your way to school. It could be the glue that you use at home. It could be a hair tie or nail polish. Or a golf tee or scrap of a magazine. Or a photograph, but remember to only use things that you're permitted to use. Art can be made out of everyday things. What's important is how these everyday things are used. If you use them to express your self, then they can be made into art.

Medium—Collage

We're going to look at some ways in which other artists have taken different things and put them together to make art, so you can get an idea of what you can do next week.

Look at these different collages and what they're made up of—what kind of things do you see used in the picture? (*children respond—connect what is in these collages to items that may be in their daily lives*)

Michelle Korte

In the collage you see here, Michelle used things from her daily life; including, bird eggs, Mexican worry dolls, rusted sardine can, ceramic pieces washed up on streets and shores, plastic bags assembled on wood found in a garage – which she herself hand-sawed and sanded. Do you see these items?



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Here are some other examples of the way other artists used items from their lives to make collages. What do you see in these collages?

Susan Katz:



Available: <http://www.susankatzstudios.com/images/outside/briland-house.jpg>, 04/04/2008

Lada Alekseychuk



Available: <http://www.sorridente.org/08Italian-Opera.jpg>, 04/04/2008

So now you have an idea of the way some artists use everyday objects to make collages. You won't be making something entirely new, but you'll be making a collage from the artwork you already have created, plus objects that you bring in for next time. These examples are meant to give you an idea of what kind of things you can use to put all that together.

Yet, if you're creating a piece of art out of the artwork you've already created, you'll be creating something that's called multi-media, which means that you are using different mediums, like paint, clay and writing, to make up one piece of art. In the collage examples, you can see that the artists used paints, words, wood and other materials all together. Next time, you'll be creating a multi-media piece to exhibit, which means that you'll put together all of your artwork to make one piece of art that you'll put in the art show for others to see.

HOMEWORK: Next time you'll work on creating your final piece of art, which will go into the show. Bring in things from your everyday life that you feel you

could use to connect your art pieces. Again, don't bring in anything that belongs to someone else or that cannot be replaced, because it is likely to not be usable after it becomes part of your artwork. You should also think about whom you'd like to invite to come and see your stories and feelings as expressed through the art you've created. *(If an exhibit can be opened to family and friends and held in a community space, that would be great, but would require some additional planning. Otherwise, the show can take place within the school for the other students and possibly family members etc.)*

SESSION 9:

Creating and connecting the art stories:

(Make as many visual examples available as possible, along with the white sheet/board of the children's emotions and ideas. This time is meant for the children to put together all of their artwork to create one piece that they will exhibit in next week's show. In addition to the workshop time, the kids can also think about creating invitations for family and friends, or for other students and teachers in the school

With these various life stories in different mediums, a child can then look at them and connect them into a general expression of self. This would be easier with more visual modes, including text. Basically, a child is making the different presentations coherent and connecting them into a greater life narrative.

At this point, a child could add more things in—the initial stories may become lost within such additions. A child could think of more stories to tell or use whatever aesthetic element they felt most comfortable with to physically connect the stories for presentation. This final work could be more about self-expression, rather than story telling)

I hope you all remembered to bring some things in for your final art piece, the one that you will put into the art exhibit. Now you each have different stories, different works of art expressing different feelings.

All of the stories and emotions—each piece of art that you created—are inside of you right now. They're all together inside your head and inside your heart. So we're going to put them together like how they are inside of you right now and make one piece of art that expresses you and your self.

That's why you brought some other things in, because there are all kinds of things that make up your life, and these things can be part of your art.

You can change anything you want about your art; you don't have to keep everything the way it is if you don't want to. This is to be your life as you, an artist, sees it. You can cut up your pieces of writing and put the words in different places on the paintings you've done, for example. This is all your art to be taken and used as you see fit.

When you've decided you are done with your final piece of art, you should step back and think of a name for it. Remember, this final piece of art is made up of all the feelings and stories you've expressed through paint and clay and writing.

SESSION 10: Art Life Work Exhibit

Students now are to be given space and materials to exhibit their final creation. If possible, this class time can be used in addition to another time that is in the evening or after-school so that students' families and other invited guests to also come.

For the research project, photographs will be taken, with the permission of each child and, ideally, the child him/herself can take the photographs, and open-ended interviews will take place during this time. The researcher hopes to get initial reactions and comments of both students and teachers during the art opening itself.

Appendix 2.2: Head teacher invitation letter

Hillarie Higgins
PhD research student
Department of Counselling Studies
School of Health in Social Science
Medical School, Teviot Place
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh EH8 9AG

Date

NAME

Head Teacher

SCHOOL

ADDRESS

ADDRESS

Dear **HEAD TEACHER NAME**:

I am a PhD research student in the Counselling Studies Department at the University of Edinburgh. I have developed a curriculum for Primary 4 and Primary 5 classrooms and am wondering if your school would like to participate in my research by incorporating this curriculum into your classes and contributing the time of your teachers and students to partake in short interviews throughout its implementation in the 2008/09 autumn term.

The curriculum consists of 10 sessions, which can be used weekly, or in a block of time, for the curriculum is flexible and can be restructured to fit into a space your school may have available and any present themes or requirements. I will work closely with both you and the class teacher in order to negotiate the best way in which to put the curriculum and research into practice. I can provide a copy of the draft curriculum for your review and reference.

The curriculum is entitled “Aesthetic Life Narratives—Child as Artist, Life as Art,” and contributes to the main goals of education, as specified by 4 capacities of the new Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, which should help children to be:

- **Successful learners:** the curriculum promotes innovative and creative thinking and helps children to learn different and enjoyable ways in which to communicate, articulate and share one’s perspectives and feelings, which can broaden their lens of learning in other areas of contemporary life.

- **Confident individuals:** the curriculum provides children with a space in which to express one's self in a social space, which can contribute to a child's ability to interact and communicate with others both as an individual and as a class community member.
- **Responsible citizens:** the curriculum encourages children to think about the world around them, and how their own individual lives both affect and are affected by one's social context.
- **Effective contributors:** the curriculum is solely based on what the children contribute to the class as artists, storytellers and, if they wish to participate in the project, co-researchers.

"Participation in expressive arts activities can make an important contribution to a young person's sense of wellbeing and can bring learning to life." (Curriculum for Excellence, *Healthy and Wellbeing for all*, draft outcomes summary paper)

The curriculum aims to integrate the areas of Expressive Arts and Health and Wellbeing and is aligned with the age-specific requirements in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence. It contributes 10 hours to these areas, and is to be used in the time slot your school has allotted or will allot to Expressive Arts and/or Health and Wellbeing, as required by the National Curriculum.

The goals of the Aesthetic Life Narratives curriculum promotes:

- visual literacy
- emotional literacy
- a strong sense of self by providing a space where children can explore various ways in which to communicate and share their stories through art mediums.

The project curriculum is meant to support children as they cope with transitions and changes in their worlds by strengthening their identities as both individuals and as members of their community. I have chosen to work with children ages 7-9, as they are living in the space between childhood and adolescence which can require special attention. Each child is to create art from their life experiences and emotions, and is given the opportunity to exhibit their work in a school or community art show, which can be held at the end of the 10 sessions. I will work with the teachers and children who will decide about how this exhibition will be structured, depending on various practical and ethical factors.

In this curriculum, children will learn about both local and global artists and the ways in which they have used art to tell their stories and express their emotions. The art mediums used are to be picked by the teacher and school, depending on space and materials

available. In the curriculum, corresponding examples will be provided for each medium, which the teacher can use to give the children different ideas about how they can utilize the medium chosen. This is meant to show them that there is more than one way in which to express one's self, even when using the same materials.

In the project, teachers are asked to facilitate the class, while I will be present to assist when needed and to observe both the practicality of the curriculum itself and the reactions and comments of both the children and the teacher. The children who wish to participate will be considered co-researchers, as the information I gather is to come directly from each child's interpretation of one's art and the feedback they provide.

In order to participate, I ask to speak with each teacher before we begin the project, at which time we will discuss the class structure, as well as any concerns about potential issues of disclosure or confidentiality which can occur in the classroom—the research project will run in accordance with your school's policies and any concerns are to be addressed by the rules already in place. I will also require open-ended interviews with both teachers and participating students, if they have given consent and their parents/guardians do not object, throughout and after the project's application, in order to both receive feedback and to provide any further explanation and assistance required.

The research will be introduced to the class in the first session, at the end of which each child can fill out the child consent forms, if they wish to take part in the research. Children will also be reminded throughout the project that they can withdraw from the research aspect at any point. In accordance with current ethical practice and procedures with this proposed age group, if a child wants to participate in the research, parents are then offered an opt-out choice about whether their child can participate in the research aspect of the project and will be sent an information sheet and opt-out form to complete and return.

In addition, all research information is to be made available to all participants involved, and I plan to incorporate any feedback they may have into my final write-up. Therefore, the teacher and each child will approve all data included before it is submitted to external bodies, in order to maintain a level of confidentiality that each participant is comfortable with. In my final academic write-up, the children's identities will also be protected through the use of code names, which the children themselves will choose.

In order to do my fieldwork in primary schools, I will acquire Disclosure and have received permission from the University of Edinburgh Ethical Procedures Board.

If you are interested in participating in this research project, please do let me know and I would love to set up a time to come and speak to you. Please feel free to contact me at any point! I truly appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Date

Hillarie J. Higgins
PhD Research Student
Department of Counselling Studies
School of Health in Social Science
University of Edinburgh

ENC: Draft Aesthetic Life Narrative Curriculum
Teacher/Child/Parent Information Sheet
Teacher/Child/Parent consent form

Appendix 2.3: Teacher information sheet

Research Project Aesthetic Life Narrative Curriculum

Information sheet for teachers

What is the project about?

Hello! My name is Hillarie Higgins, and I am a PhD research student who will be conducting my research in your school. For my project, I have created a curriculum called “Aesthetic Life Narrative” for primary school classrooms, and am interested in what the children think of the artwork they create in the class, their roles in the class (as artist and audience), and what students and teachers who take part think about the practicality of the curriculum in general.

Who is being invited to participate and what will it involve?

Students and teachers of Edinburgh Primary 4 and Primary 5 public school classrooms are being invited to take part in the study. Although each teacher will lead the classroom, I will be present and serve as a co-facilitator with the teacher if needed, and will ask children and teachers for their feedback throughout the class periods. I will also require brief interviews with teachers before, during and after the class project time. In this time, we will go over each school’s guidelines and policies in particular situations and how we will handle these if they should arise. I will be available for questions and concerns throughout the entire length of the project.

What exactly is the curriculum about?

This curriculum encourages children to think of their lives as art, and express their life stories through various art mediums. Each child will explore the ways in which other artists have used different art mediums to tell their stories and express their emotions, and then be given the space in which to communicate their own. At the end of the class, there will be an exhibit in which each child will display their life artwork as artist, author and creator. I will work closely with teachers and

participating children to create an art exhibit that suits each classroom.

Why am I doing the research?

I believe schools can provide children with an interactive forum in which their own knowledge is used to learn, share and teach. With this curriculum, children are given the opportunity and space to process their own life stories with the understanding that their lives are of worth and value, and that they have the power to change and form their artwork, as well as their life roles and identities. This curriculum is meant to contribute to both visual literacy and emotional literacy, supporting children in their exploration of self and ways in which to communicate with others. If a child has a strong sense of “who” one is, a child will be best suited to cope with life transitions and various life situations. If a child learns to process, express and share one’s perspective and feelings at an early age, this can contribute to healthy emotional development, supporting both one’s identity as an individual and as a contributing member of one’s community.

The curriculum is also intended to provide teachers with a way to create an interactive space involving arts, which can sometimes feel a bit intimidating. The script is meant to create a structured environment, so that you as a teacher will have a guide to facilitating the class. The project is meant to assist with the transition between the former National Curriculum, which was based on multiple standards and requirements, and the Curriculum for Excellence, which is intended to reduce overcrowding while encouraging a broader range of learning and teaching styles.

Will this project cause more work on top of my curricular requirements?

The curriculum will also be used to meet academic requirements of the new Scottish Curriculum for Excellence draft outcomes in the areas of Expressive Arts and Health and Wellbeing, so it will not call for additional time or space than what is already required. I will also work with each teacher to adapt the curriculum in order to support any existing themes and requirements.

What if I don’t want to take part in the research?

Although children and their teacher will be taking part in the curriculum as part of a school's general curricular requirements, each teacher, like each child, is free to choose not to volunteer one's opinions and perspectives through interviews. However, if one does agree to take part, s/he can choose how long s/he wishes to take part, from just one session or for the length of one's involvement in the class and project. Again, every participant can choose to stop being in the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality

When I write up the study everyone's names will be changed so that no one can be identified. Each participant is welcome to choose one's own name for the study and will be encouraged to offer any suggestions or opinions about the research and the way it's structured. All paperwork will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and all electronic data will be locked on my personal computer to which only I have access. Each participant will have the opportunity to review what I've recorded and will have access to their data throughout the project. In the future, aspects of the study may be published in some journals.

Contact Information

If you would like more information about the research or would be willing to have a chat with me about it before deciding please contact me:

Hillarie J. Higgins
PhD research student
07792261678
Email: hjhiggin@yahoo.com
Counselling Studies Department
School of Health in Social Science
University of Edinburgh
Medical School, Teviot Place
Edinburgh EH8 9AG

You may also contact my PhD supervisor for additional information:

Seamus Prior
Co-Director of Counselling Studies
School Postgraduate Studies Director
School of Health in Social Science

University of Edinburgh
Tel +44 (0)131 651 6599
Email: seamus.prior@ed.ac.uk

In addition, if you should have any complaints or concerns, you may contact:

Liz Bondi
PhD Programme Director
School of Health in Social Science
Tel. +44 (0)131 650 2529
Email: liz.bondi@ed.ac.uk

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I very much look forward to working with you!

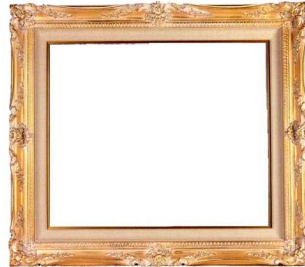
Sincerely,

Hillarie Higgins DATE

Appendix 2.4: Teacher consent form

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Aesthetic Life Narrative Curriculum for Primary School Classrooms
Research project exploring **Life as Art, Child as Artist**



Dear **TEACHER NAME**:

Hello! You are being invited to co-facilitate a Primary 4 and Primary 5 class curriculum entitled “Aesthetic Life Narrative Curriculum,” in which students will create their own artwork, while learning about various art mediums, forms of communication and different artists.

Throughout and after this class, you will have the opportunity to participate in individual interviews with myself as the researcher. These interviews will ask for your personal and professional opinions and feelings about the curriculum and how the children both individually and as a group responded to it.

Your participation in the interviews and any data you contribute is completely voluntary, and you may review, have access or withdraw any of your individual data at any time before it is submitted.

If you would like more information about the research or would be willing to have a chat with me about it before deciding please contact me:

Hillarie J. Higgins
PhD research student
07792261678
Email: hjhiggin@yahoo.com
University of Edinburgh
School of Health in Social Science
Counselling Studies Department
Medical School
Teviot Place
Edinburgh EH8 9AG

You may also contact my PhD supervisor or your child's teacher for additional information:

Seamus Prior

Co-Director of Counselling Studies
School Postgraduate Studies Director
School of Health in Social Science
University of Edinburgh
Tel +44 (0)131 651 6599
Email: seamus.prior@ed.ac.uk

TEACHER,
CLASS
SCHOOL
PHONE
(EMAIL)

If you should have any complaints or concerns, you may contact:

HEAD TEACHER
SCHOOL
PHONE
(EMAIL)

Liz Bondi
PhD Programme Director
School of Health in Social Science
Tel. +44 (0)131 650 2529
Email: liz.bondi@ed.ac.uk

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I very much look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Hillarie Higgins **DATE**

Please cut out and return consent form in the envelope provided by the date indicated.

Teacher Consent Form

I have read and understood the teacher information sheet (**dated XXXXX**), which explains the research aspect I can choose to take part in, and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these sufficiently answered.

I understand that my participation in the interviews is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw any information I have contributed at any time, without giving a reason.

Printed name of teacher

Date

Signature

Please return completed form by **DATE**. Thank you!

Appendix 2.5: Child information sheet

Research Project Aesthetic Life Narrative Curriculum

Information sheet for children/participants

What is this project about?

For 10 weeks, you will be part of a class where you

- Use **art** to tell **stories** from **your life**
- Share **how you feel** about these stories.

What is research?

Research means that a person is searching, or looking for something.

I'm looking for **how you feel when using art to tell your stories**.

Why are you doing the research?

- The reason I am doing the project is that I believe **schools should give children a space** where you can share and tell stories about your life.
- Your life is art and you are its artist. You are able to **change, share, brighten, darken, erase** and **add** to the life you share through art.
- Sharing our life stories and how we feel **can make us feel better** and I believe art can help you to see and find out things about yourself that you did not know before and I believe this will help you to know yourself better.

What do I have to do in the research?

Before, during and after class, I may ask you to talk with you about

- **what you think** of the class
- **what you think and feel** about the art you are creating.

I may record what you say, so that I make sure to get all of your words right.

You will have the chance to look at or take back any words or pictures that you give before they are published.

Your feelings and what you think make up what I'm looking for in my research. You are **co-researchers** which means:

- we will work together in this project
- **you will have a say** in how the project goes.
- you can talk to me at any time about any questions or concerns you have.

What if I don't want to take part in the research?

You only participate in the research *if you want to*, and you can stop being involved whenever you want to without anyone being upset or disappointed. **You choose how much you want to take part, and for how long.**

Confidentiality

- If you do want to participate, you will choose a code name so that no one will know what words and what artwork is yours.
- Only you and I will be able to look at your words and only you can give permission for others to see them.

What happens at the end?

- In the last class, you can choose to put your art in a class art show.
- This piece of art can be made up of all the art you've created in this class, and you will give it a title.
- You can invite other pupils and perhaps even family members to **come look at the artwork you've created as an artist.**

Contact

Thank you so much for thinking about helping me with this research! If you have **any** questions or concerns, please feel free to talk to me—you can reach me by email or phone:

Email: hjhiggin@yahoo.com

Tel: (0)779 226 1678

I'm really excited to work with you!

Hillarie

Appendix 2.6: Child consent form

Aesthetic Life Narrative Curriculum Research Project



Hello! My name is Hillarie, and I'm very excited to work with you! If you would like to join in the art class research, please fill out this form and return it to me by the end of class.

| | Please initial |
|--|----------------|
| 1. I have read and understood the participant information sheet (dated XXXXX) and have had any questions answered by the researcher. | |
| 2. I understand that it is my choice to participate and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. | |
| 3. I agree to take part in this study. | |
| 4. I understand that my artwork and things I say about my art and the class can be included as information used in the research, but I will be able to see this information when I want and approve what is and is not used. No one but the researcher and myself can access this data without my permission. | |

.....Date.....
Printed Name

.....Date.....
Signature

Appendix 2.7: Guardian information sheet

Research Project Aesthetic Life Narrative Curriculum

Information sheet for parents/guardians

What is the project about?

Hello! My name is Hillarie Higgins, and I'm a PhD research student who is doing my research at your child's school. I have created a new kind of expressive arts class for primary school classrooms, and am interested in what children who take part in the research think of the artwork they create in the class, their roles in the class (as artist and audience), and what students and teachers think about the practicality of the class in general.

What exactly is the curriculum about?

This curriculum encourages children to think of their lives as art, and express their life stories through various art mediums. Each child will explore the ways in which other artists have used different art mediums to tell their stories and express their emotions, and then be given the space in which to communicate their own. At the end of the class, there will be an exhibit in which each child can display their artwork as artist, author and creator.

Why am I doing the research?

The reason I am doing the project is that I believe schools can provide children with an interactive forum in which their own knowledge is used to learn, share and teach. Through this art class, children are given the opportunity and space to process their own life stories with the understanding that their lives are of worth and value, and that they have the power to change and form their artwork, as well as their life roles and identities. This curriculum is meant to contribute to both visual literacy and emotional literacy, supporting children in their exploration of self and ways in which to communicate with others. If a child has a strong sense of "who" s/he is, a child will be best suited to cope with life transitions and various life situations. If a child learns to process, express and share one's perspective and feelings at an early age, this can contribute to healthy emotional development, supporting both one's identity as an individual and as a contributing member of one's community.

Who is being invited to participate and what will it involve?

Students and teachers of Edinburgh Primary 4 and Primary 5 public school classrooms are being invited to take part in the study. I will be taking part in the research as a co-facilitator with the teacher, and will ask children and teachers for their feedback throughout the class periods. I will also require brief interviews with teachers and students, before, during and after the class project time. In the project, children are to be co-researchers, which means that all research information will be made up through their interpretation and perspectives. They will choose what is to be included in the research, and will be given time in which to review and respond to any feedback that I have given.

Will this project interfere with a child's academics?

Not at all. The curriculum will also be used to meet academic requirements of the new Scottish Curriculum for Excellence in the areas of Expressive Arts and Health and Wellbeing, and I will be working closely with schools and teachers to support current requirements and themes.

What if my child doesn't want to take part in the research?

Each child is, of course, free to choose not to take part in the study and can simply take part in the class. However, if a child does agree to take part, s/he can choose how long s/he wishes to take part, from just one session or for the length of one's attendance in the class and project. Again, each child can choose to stop being in the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality

When I write up the study everyone's names will be changed so that no one can be identified. Each child is welcome to choose one's own name for the study and will be encouraged to offer any suggestions or opinions about the research and the way it's structured. All paperwork will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and all electronic data will be locked on my personal computer to which only I have access. Again, each child will have the opportunity to review what I've recorded and will have access to their data throughout the project. In the future, aspects of the study may be published in some journals.

Contact Information

If you should have any questions, concerns or would like more information about the project, please feel free to contact me at any time:

Hillarie Higgins
PhD research student
Department of Counselling Studies
School of Health in Social Science
University of Edinburgh
Medical School
Teviot Place
Edinburgh EH8 9AG
Email: hjhiggin@yahoo.com
Tel: (0) 779 226 1678

You may also contact my PhD supervisor or your child's teacher for additional information:

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Seamus Prior | TEACHER, CLASS |
| Co-Director of Counselling Studies | SCHOOL |
| School Postgraduate Studies Director | PHONE |
| School of Health in Social Science | (EMAIL) |
| University of Edinburgh | |
| Tel +44 (0)131 651 6599 | |
| Email: seamus.prior@ed.ac.uk | |

In addition, if you should have any complaints or concerns, you may contact:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| HEAD TEACHER | Liz Bondi |
| SCHOOL | PhD Programme Director |
| PHONE | School of Health in Social Science |
| (EMAIL) | Tel. +44 (0)131 650 2529 |
| | Email: liz.bondi@ed.ac.uk |

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

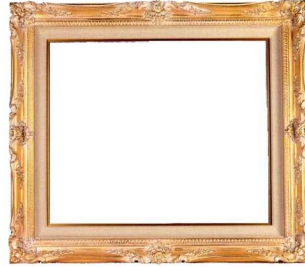
Sincerely,

Hillarie Higgins

Date

Appendix 2.8: Guardian opt-out form

Aesthetic Life Narrative Curriculum for Primary School
Classrooms
Research project exploring **Life as Art, Child as Artist**



Dear Parent/Guardian:

Hello! My name is Hillarie Higgins and I am a PhD student who is inviting your child to join in my research project, which is taking place at **INSERT SCHOOL**. Your child's class will participate in an art class, in which students create their own artwork, while learning about various art mediums, forms of communication and different artists.

My research explores both art expression and storytelling as ways of helping children to develop the feelings and thoughts one may have about one's self.

I'm interested in your child's opinions and feelings about the class, the art they create in it, as well as their role as artist, and how these contribute to your child's sense of identity. Therefore, your child will have the opportunity to participate in individual interviews with myself as the researcher that will take place during classes and at the end of the project.

This information gathered in these interviews solely belongs to the child, who can access or withdraw it any time, and only your child can give permission for any others besides the researcher to access it.

If you do *not* want your child to participate in the individual interviews, please complete the enclosed form and return to me in the envelope provided.

Please note: If you do not return this form and your child chooses to participate, then s/he will automatically be involved in the research interviews.

If you should have any questions, concerns or would like more information about the project, please feel free to contact me at any time:

Hillarie Higgins
PhD research student
Department of Counselling Studies
School of Health in Social Science
University of Edinburgh
Medical School
Teviot Place
Edinburgh EH8 9AG
Email: hjhiggin@yahoo.com

You may also contact my PhD supervisor or your child's teacher for additional information:

Seamus Prior
Co-Director of Counselling Studies
School Postgraduate Studies Director
School of Health in Social Science
University of Edinburgh
Tel +44 (0)131 651 6599
Email: seamus.prior@ed.ac.uk

TEACHER, CLASS
SCHOOL
PHONE
(EMAIL)

If you should have any complaints or concerns, you may contact:

HEAD TEACHER
SCHOOL
PHONE
(EMAIL)

Liz Bondi
PhD Programme Director
School of Health in Social Science
Tel. +44 (0)131 650 2529
Email: liz.bondi@ed.ac.uk

Thank you so much for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Hillarie Higgins
DATE

If you do not wish for your child to participate in the research project, please cut out along line and return to me in the enclosed envelope by the date indicated. If form is not returned by this date and your child chooses to participate, this form will no longer be valid.

Opt-out Consent Form

I do not give permission for my child to participate in this research project

because: _____.

Printed name of child _____

Name of parent/guardian _____

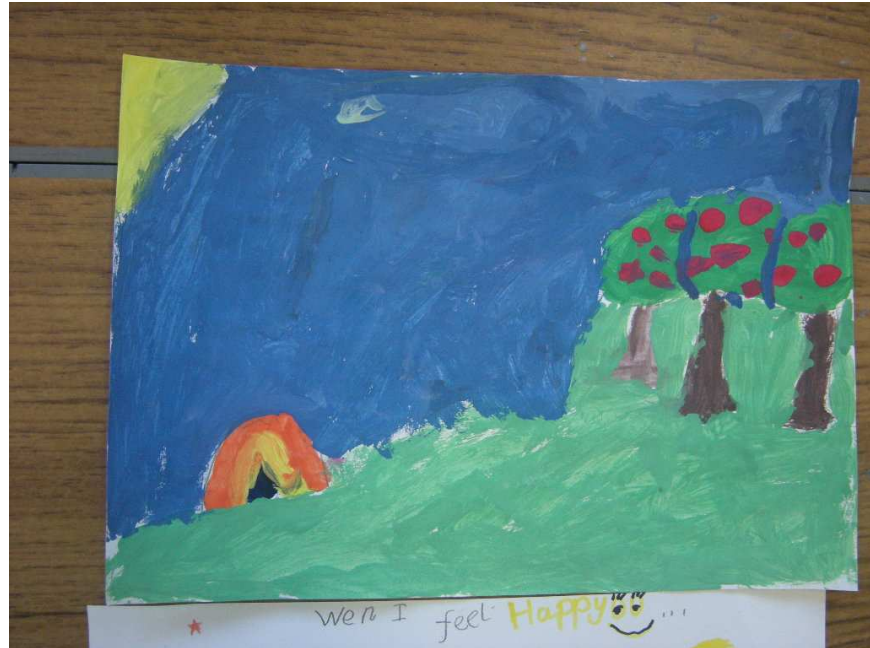
Signature

Date

Please return to me in the enclosed envelope by INSERT DATE.

Appendix 3

Appendix 3.1: Original photograph



Appendix 3.2: “Photoshopped” photograph



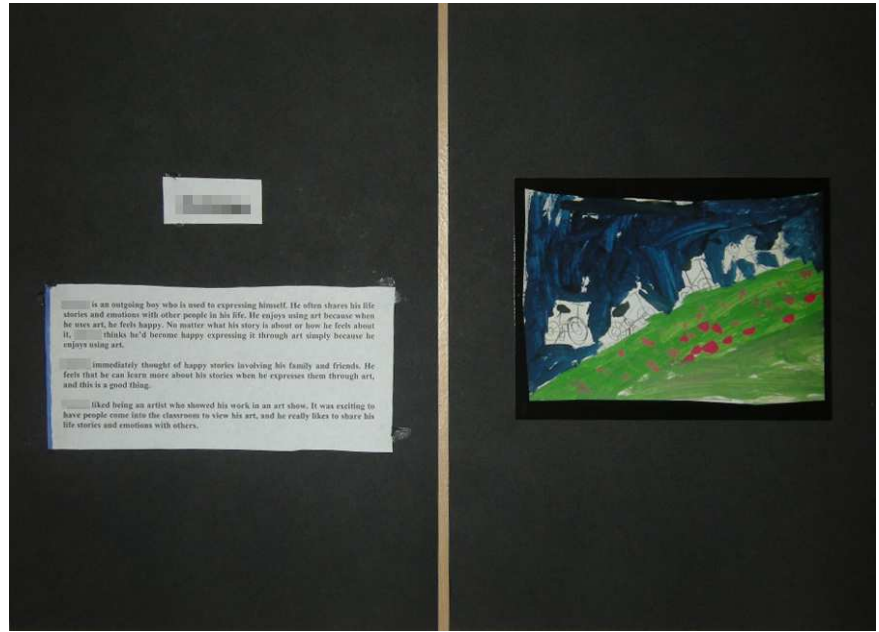
Appendix 4

Appendix 4: Class poster publicly displayed in primary school entry foyer

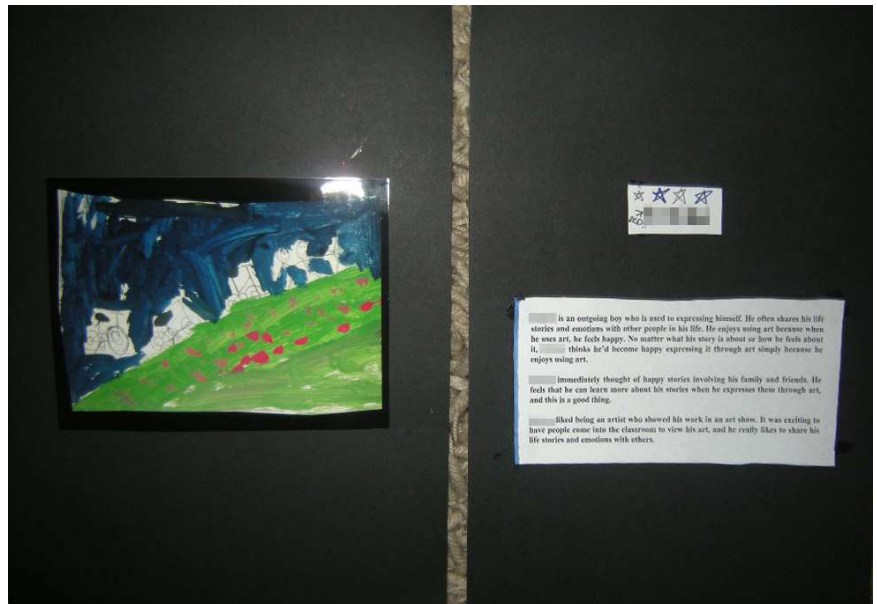


Appendix 5

Appendix 5.1a: First interview storybook draft pre-edit



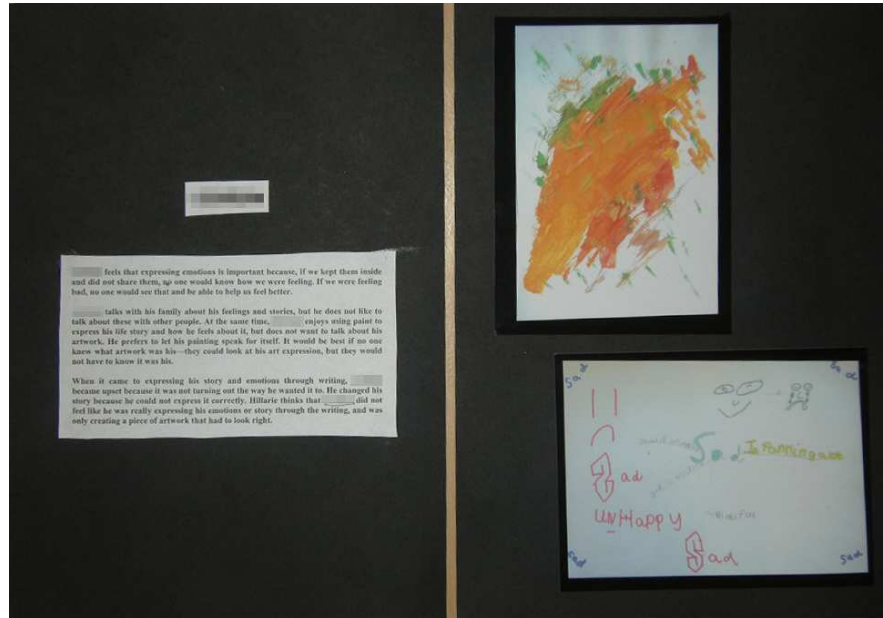
Appendix 5.1b: Second interview edited storybook



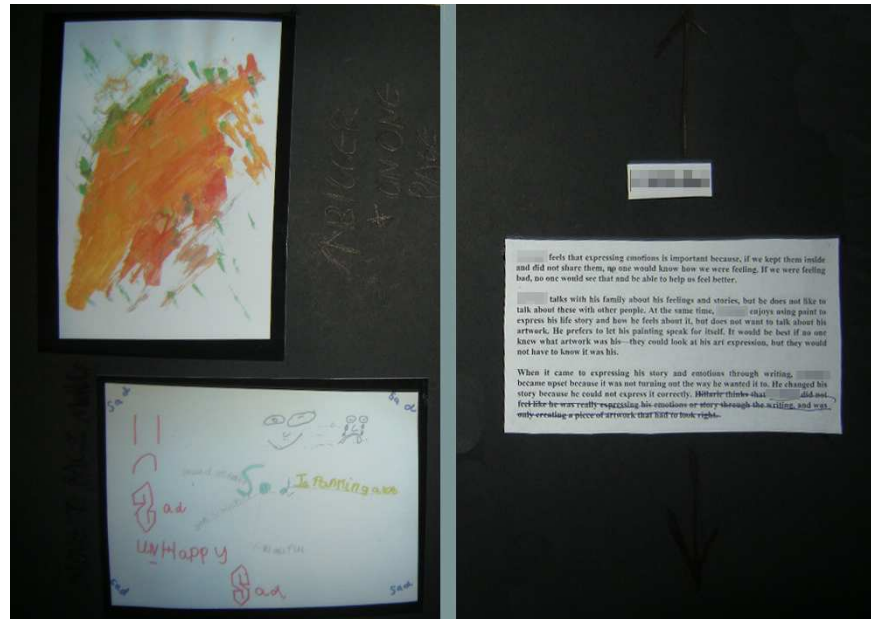
Appendix 5.1c: Final storybook post-edit



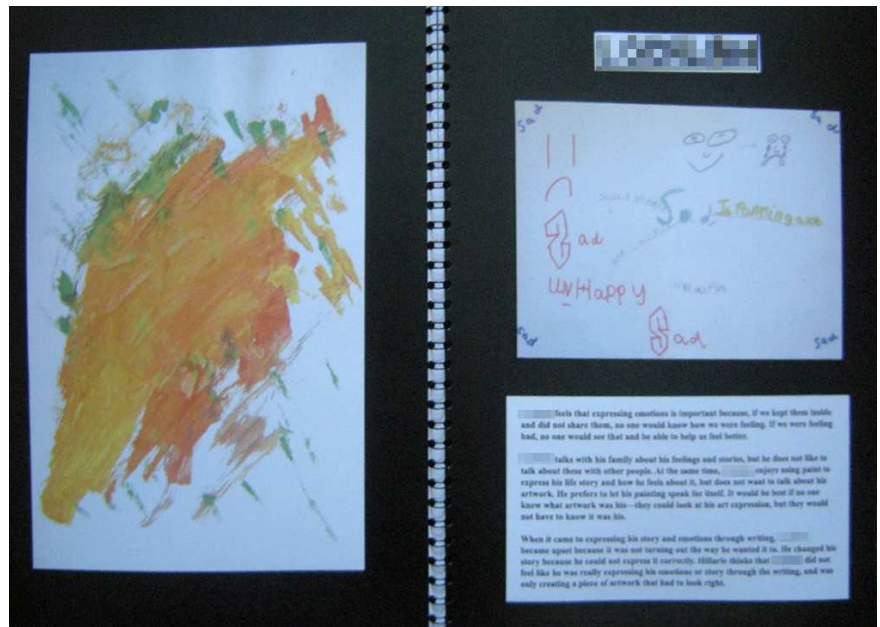
Appendix 5.2a: First interview storybook draft pre-edit



Appendix 5.2b: Second interview edited storybook



Appendix 5.2c: Final storybook post-edit



Appendix 6

Further examples of children's artwork









30.10.08 Nerves about do

★ when I feel **Happy** 😊 ...
I feel **relaxed**
I see **pink** and **yellow** 🖍️
I **SCREAM** all over the **place**
I am **Jumping** up and down 🧑
I want to go **camping** 🧑
★ 😊 😊 🌟 🏕️ ★ ★ ★ ★

I went out with my family and i went with Jordan marsh
Jean Leanne. I went to Berwick when we got there it
was hot we went to the beach for tea we had
chips. I met new friends I did a lampost and at
that day it rained two days.





My body is tingling
I want to pop
I am so excited
I can't wait to the cakes
I can see the colour yellow
Does my friends think they are good?
I feel so at ease
I love my cakes

baking cakes

