Reflections on teacher subjectivity in early childhood education: Conversations around fictional texts

Sandra Chang

Department of Integrated Studies in Education
Faculty of Education
McGill University, Montreal

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how insights gathered from the subjective experience of the early childhood teacher can challenge assumptions that underlie the occupation's lack of professional recognition. I apply a humanities approach of inquiry, based in curriculum theory and literature/film studies, to talk with daycare, kindergarten and early elementary school teachers about their work with young children.

Literary and film texts – which "break us loose from our anchorage" (Greene, 1995, p. 111) – were used to provoke the teachers' discussions. The research was structured through three phases of inquiry: a focus group study, a case study, and a co-constructed narrative inquiry. The purpose of this "triptych" method (Alvermann and Hruby, 2000) was to accumulate insights by returning to the same phenomenon through different lenses.

In responding to fictional representations of childhood, the teachers demonstrated extraordinary ease in crossing the liminal spaces between adulthood and childhood, in assuming the perspectives of child protagonist, adult viewer, teacher, mother, and child self, and in "occupy[ing] all these positions at once" (Kuhn, 2000, p. 188). These discussions opened into reflections that juxtaposed the complex ways that early childhood teachers form their conceptualizations of childhood (such as through memory, motherhood, and gendered expectations) with the ways they understand actual children.

The polyvocal nature of the teachers' talk, or the "layers of consciousness," was deliberately highlighted in the thesis (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Writing became a central part of my inquiry, and the resulting experimental representations

– in the forms of real, semi-fictional, and internal conversations – reflect my struggles to find my own researcher voice.

My purpose in these accounts was to attend to and name the contradictions that early childhood teachers, predominantly women, face in a historical and societal context that positions them in the space between two discordant expectations: fostering their own growth (in the public domain) and having no commitments greater than responding sensitively to children (in the private domain). Ultimately, my goal in this thesis was to develop understandings that contribute to "reflection and deliberative action" in early childhood education (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a, p. xiv).

RÉSUMÉ

La thèse présente, grâce à l'analyse du vécu des éducateurs préscolaires, souhaite remettre en question les prétentions à la base de l'absence de reconnaissance de la profession. J'ai appliqué une méthodologie d'enquête utilisée en sciences humaines, basée sur l'investigation des programmes d'études et littérature/ cinéma et j'ai discuté avec des éducateurs de garderies, maternelles, et d'école primaire de premier cycle sur leur travail avec les enfants.

Pour amorcer la discussion, j'ai proposé des textes littéraires et des scénario de films qui "provoquent une rupture des encrages d'habitudes" (Greene, 1995, p. 111). Ma recherche s'est subdivisée en trois phases investigatives: j'ai dirigé un groupe de discussion, une étude de cas d'un seul éducateur, et un récit des échanges entre les protagonistes fictifs. Cette méthode dite "triptyque" (Alvermann et Hruby, 2000) pénètre les mêmes phénomènes sous plusieurs angles.

En réponse aux représentations imaginées de l'enfance, ces professeurs jonglent avec maîtrise avec leurs perceptions en propre et leur vécu d'adulte en tant que mère, éducateur, protagoniste à l'enfance, témoin et théoricien de la petite enfance (la leur incluse), en "excerçant ces rôles simultanément" (Kuhn, 2000, p. 188). Ces discussions ont stimulé les réflexions des éducateurs sur la juxtaposition entre leurs conceptualizations de l'enfance (avec la mémoire, la maternité, les attentes culturelles) et la façon qu'ils comprennent les enfants.

La pluralité de leurs commentaires ainsi que "les couches sous-jacentes de conscientisation" ont été mises en évidence dans cette thèse (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Ainsi, l'écriture devient pour moi un médium d'investigation, prenant plusieurs formes expérimentales – dialogues réels, partiellement

imaginaires et intimes - en reflétant mes défis de trouver mon approche comme chercheuse.

Mon but était de mettre en évidence les paradoxes que vivent les éducateurs préscolaires (surtout féminins) dans le contexte historique et culturel des sociétés qui exigent d'eux la performance dans le développement personnel d'une part et, à l'opposé, comme pleinement investis à répondre aux besoins des enfants. Ultimement, puisse cette thèse susciter un avancement des compréhensions de l'éducation préscolaire contribuant "à la réflexion et à l'action délibérante" (Denzin et Lincoln, 2000a, p. xiv).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

An excerpt from a conversation with early childhood teachers

Linda: It's my eleventh year in Kindergarten and what interests me most is, yes, the books, but also the importance of being in early childhood education because we're not always taken seriously. In my school (Kindergarten to Grade 12), we're always considered last. I just find people don't realize how important it is. It was the same when I was working at the daycare.

Catherine: I'm stunned that that is still the case when all the research shows that those first few years are so stunningly important –

Linda: And everybody will *say* that. Everybody will say that, but they will not act like this.

Catherine: But the parents value what you do –

Linda: It depends (sounds of agreement and disagreement). It depends who –

Maggie: Oh, I can. I can –

Linda: – I can just give an example. We have a lot of technology in our school and all the teachers have laptops. We all do now. We do our report cards and everything on them, and I was the last one to get a computer because I am in Kindergarten (sounds of surprise from others). I used to say, "*I* am not in Kindergarten; I am *teaching* Kindergarten." But for people in school settings, you are in Kindergarten. It is not serious.

Catherine: That's also –

Linda: – And I'm very frustrated.

Catherine: That's also, that's how high school teachers think of elementary teachers and –

Sandra: – There's a hierarchy.

Linda: That's so silly.

Catherine: Of course it is.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

"*I* am not in Kindergarten; I am *teaching* Kindergarten."

– Linda (research respondent)

Linda aptly captures the feelings of being misrepresented and dismissed that early childhood teachers contend with on a regular basis. Throughout my years of work in early childhood education, I have encountered a number of capable women (and men) who have dedicated themselves to developing high quality programs for young children, programs that are informed by creative and intellectually well thought out emergent and constructivist curriculum models and play theories. What baffles me is the continued existence of frustrations like Linda's. Preschool teachers belittle daycare teachers, elementary school teachers belittle preschool teachers, high school teachers belittle elementary school teachers, college teachers belittle high school teachers, and almost every university faculty belittles Education faculties. There is an absurd, almost Monty Python quality to this system of self-defeating one-upmanship that is both puzzling and disheartening.

The educational system is especially plagued by assumptions about gender and childhood. Traditionally, women are young children's primary caregivers and teachers; therefore, gender politics has dictated that child care and early teaching are inferior. Children under five bring to mind notions of innocence and simplicity – giggling babies, toddlers at storytime, and preschoolers enraptured in pretend

play. Images of cute little children stir nostalgic feelings about our own childhoods: mothers, warm milk, blankets, and other touchstones such as the aroma of homemade bread fresh out of the oven. Upon further reflection, however, I wondered if these vague feelings of warmth and dependence also embarrass us or frighten us from *too* much consideration. They may evoke memories of powerlessness that we want to avoid, or futile longings for places to which we can never return. Thoughts like these compelled me to look more closely inside the folds of childhood: within a cultural bias that both sustains as well as undermines the work of early childhood teachers.

In writing this dissertation, I sought to analyze my fascination with childhood as a discursive formation, and to come to terms with the ways I internalized my experiences as an early childhood teacher in the school system hierarchy. As I researched the teacher's subjective experience of her professional identity, I found myself drawn to literature and film studies, rather than to studies that traditionally inform early childhood education such as developmental psychology and curriculum planning. For instance, I turned to apparatus theory to make sense of the ways that early childhood teachers often aspire to assume the perspective of the child—" a different way of seeing"—or a point of view that parallels the position of the spectator of films that focus on children (Powrie, 2005, p. 342). Literary and cinematic ways of reframing the experience of the early childhood teacher proved pivotal to my analysis of teacher subjectivity. In this study, I invited early childhood teachers to respond to movies and stories about childhood in order to talk about their teaching experiences, the identity issues they

faced as child-centered adults, and the ways they overcame a dearth in professional recognition by the values they place in their work.

The teacher in early childhood education

Evidence that quality early childhood programs benefit young children, socially, educationally and developmentally, has accumulated over the past 30 years, emerging around the same time that feminist movements, such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, led increased demands for child care to enable fuller participation of women in workplaces and society at large (Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2009a). While attention to the needs of young children and women in Canada has progressed, the teachers of early childhood programs continue to function unnoticed in a historically and socially biased system that positions their work as low status.

In early childhood education, the teacher is the most important resource and the most significant factor in determining the quality of the children's learning experiences. However, the field is hard-pressed to attract and sustain the brightest teachers given its professional reputation. There are structural markers that indicate the undervalued position that society places on work with young children. Today, and in my context of the province of Quebec, the legally mandated professional qualification of child care educators is lower (CEGEP level) than elementary and secondary school teachers (university level). In terms of salary, in 2006, daycare teachers in Quebec were paid between $27 573 and $36 525 (Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2009b), and elementary and high school teachers were paid between $36 196 and $63 296 (MELS, 2006). Further, non-regulated forms of child care proliferate, with no professional or educational foundation required;

child care providers are regularly compared to babysitters. In addition to these tangible markers, the field operates within a historical legacy that naturalizes the care of children as women's work. Early childhood education is overwhelmingly represented by female teachers, with an estimated 97 percent of child care educators, preschool teachers, and pre-kindergarten teachers being women (Goldstein, 1997).

I argue that insights gathered from the early childhood teacher's subjective experience can be used to challenge a cultural bias by revealing the contradictions within its underlying assumptions.

Theoretical framework I. Teacher subjectivity

In approaching the concept of teacher subjectivity, I draw on Weedon's (1987) definition of subjectivity as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding her relation to the world," a way of connecting the individual's experience with social discourse (p. 32). Fundamental to curriculum theory and educational practices is the system of beliefs about the learner (Getzels, 1974), which, in the case of the early childhood teacher, hovers around the child. As such, I use teacher subjectivity to refer to how the early childhood teacher experiences her teaching identity, and more specifically, in this dissertation, how she experiences her teaching identity in relation to her ways of understanding childhood.

Accessing one's teacher subjectivity requires what Maxine Greene (1978) called wide-awakeness: "[t]his attentiveness, this *interest* in things, … the direct opposite of the attitude of bland conventionality and indifference so characteristic of our time" (p. 42). Teachers often assume the comfortable position of watching

only the child's movement, excusing themselves from scrutiny, as if they were static or fully developed (Grumet, 2006). Grumet (2006) calls this "a strangely alienated way of being interested in somebody" (p. 220). Taubman (2007) contends that attention to teacher subjectivity, including the "disquieting feelings, histories, images, and associations that are often ignored about teaching," leads to more complicated understandings of their work (p. 5).

In regarding the teacher as reflective practitioner, Pinar (1975) urges teachers to enlist their reflexive capacities in re-conceiving *their own* situations of childhood and adulthood, with the purpose of "exceeding one's biographic situation" (p. 412). *Currere*, Pinar's method of curriculum inquiry, addresses the teacher as learner first, as a step required and returned to, with the hope of then being able to move beyond the self and extend insights to others in a collective and shared manner (Pinar, 1975, 2004). Reflecting the feminist notion of the personal as political, Pinar (2004) writes that "[t]he significance of subjectivity is not as a solipsistic retreat from the public sphere… [t]he significance of subjectivity is that it is inseparable from the social" (p.4). Self-mobilization and social reconstruction are necessarily dual processes. In fact, the early childhood teacher maintains a distinctive subjective position in between the personal and the political, as early childhood settings "mediat[e] this passage between the specificity of intimate relations and the generalities of the public world" (Grumet, 1988, p. 14).

For the early childhood teacher, teacher subjectivity is inextricably linked to her conceptualizations of childhood; however, we function in overlapping contexts that offer multiple and contradictory messages about childhood. Cultural theorists argue that adults construct ideas about childhood through well-established

social images and through residues from their own childhoods (Jenkins, 1998). These two facets will be discussed next.

Theoretical framework II: Childhood

Childhood as a discursive and social formation. Western society is invested in viewing childhood as a banal and transparent phase of life, without concealed ideological meanings worth digging up, and without the political agency of youth. Youth culture has engendered intense research in cultural studies, with focus on deviance, resistance, and subversiveness, whereas children are seen as asocial or presocial, the privy not of cultural theorists, but of developmental psychologists who, traditionally, focus on normative development. Children's behaviors or misbehaviors are interpreted as immaturity or inadequacy rather than something more nuanced (Jenkins, 1998).

Within the last two decades, interdisciplinary studies of childhood have advanced and gained respect in academia (James and Prout, 1997; Jenkins, 1998); however, these theoretical developments have yet to impact the work of teachers in early childhood settings.

> Childhood studies is currently an emerging multidisciplinary field that takes for its central starting point the nature of childhood experience and [the] ways cultures construct and have constructed childhood.
>
> - Travisano, 2000, p. 22

> What the child *is* matters less than what we *think* it is.
>
> - James Kincaid, 1992, p. 62

A society's working definition of childhood, even if not explicitly discussed or known, feeds into all its interactions with, expectations of, and fears for its

children (Calvert, 1992). Metaphors of childhood impart powerful social messages about what to believe and value in children, and frame our consciousness as teachers (Cooper, 2006). In other words, any description of children "limits the possibilities that we as educators provide for them" (Canella, 1998, p.158). However, the "semiotically adhesive child" (Jenkins, 1998, p. 15) is "often a figment of adult imaginations" (p. 23), and being subjected to these repressive myths and ideologies, is never truly or fully contained by the representations.

The idea of childhood as a social artifact, rather than a biological reality, points to the difference between the actual and the conceptualized child (Postman, 1982; Bignell, 2003). Childhood is an institution that frames our ways of understanding the early years of biological immaturity in the human life "into culturally specific sets of ideas and philosophies, attitudes and practices which combine to define the 'nature of childhood'" (James & Prout, 1997, p. 1). The notion that childhood is constituted discursively means that the meanings we ascribe to our experiences as children and with children do not refer to real or authentic experiences of childhood. What we know about childhood is "made real," that is, constructed, through our interactions and practices, through conversation, stories, writing, and more. Further, our ways of thinking and talking about childhood "fuse with institutionalized practices to produce self-conscious subjects (teachers, parents and children) who think (and feel) about themselves through the terms of those ways of thinking" (James and Prout, 1997, p. 23).

Childhood is a subject that we are "in the habit of talking about in particular ways" (Lemke, 1995, p. 7), including psychological, medical, biological, legal, educational, religious, sociological, and literary. As James and Prout (1997) write,

"different discursive practices produce different childhoods, each and all of which are 'real' within their own regime of truth" (p. 26). As well, different discourses of childhood take place between parents, teachers, child care providers, social workers, government representatives, scholars, and children.

The ideological function of discourses is to naturalize, challenge, disguise or weakly reinforce the general circulation of power and inequity in societies (Lemke, 1995). My dissertation examined the ways teachers in early childhood education talked about, absorbed, challenged, and complicated the institution of childhood. My goal was not to uncover some fundamental essence about childhood. On the contrary, the purpose of interrogating the ambiguous nature of truth about childhood was to explore the multifarious ways that we can reflect on our practices as teachers, parents, and caregivers.

Adult memories of childhood.

Without remembered selves how can we act?

- Flax, 1987, p. 106-7

Adults also construct their ideas about childhood through their own memories of childhood (Jenkins, 1998). Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) argue that many aspects of childhood can only be understood in its afterlife; however, memories are messy affairs. First, memories are always partial, and mixed with messages from socially prescribed value systems (status through class, gender, and race), from cultural representations surrounding us (including television, advertisements, and the internet), and from our relationships with family, school, and friends. Second, as Hodgkin and Radstone (2003) describe, the past is "constituted in narrative, always representation, always construction" (p. 2).

Neither our narratives, nor the meanings that these narratives are given, are fixed, as memory is a continually transforming process that changes according to our needs. Our explanations of our own childhoods often evolve through a "mixture of history and myth," as we interpret childhood memories with the intent of explaining our present as a logical outgrowth (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002, p. 62). Erica Rand (1995) describes the "moments of hegemonic incorporation and moments of resistance" adults face as they rewrite their childhoods to frame their lives as linear paths (p. 7).

> An event, an emotion remembered, inevitably cannot have the same meaning retrospectively as it had at the time, weighted as the memory must be with everything that has happened subsequently.
>
> - Hodgkin and Radstone, 2003, p. 23

Pinar (2004), however, urges teachers to live what he calls temporal lives, that is, "simultaneously in the past, present, and future" rather than through the fantasy of linearity (p. 4). In this dissertation, I examined how teachers, as reflective practitioners, could productively use their memories and understandings of childhood to illuminate the complex subjective experience of adults who work with young children. In posing questions about "the relationship between the present and the past" (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003, p. 1), the memory work in this dissertation involved using memories to act in the present (Flax, 1987), and "'relocat[ing]' personal experiences into public significance" (Strong-Wilson, 2008, p.13).

Boler (1999) cautions that self-reflection can easily "result in no measurable change or good to others or oneself" (p.178). Knowing oneself is not the golden key to thinking critically. The findings in this dissertation indicate that

what a critical disposition does is to force us to accept that the boundaries that we've believed to be essential are in fact negotiable. It forces us to suspend our beliefs in the coherent, linear self, and to accept the multi-temporal and multivocal nature of our selves.

Teacher identity is a messy, contradictory, "ongoing narrative project" (Goodson, 1998, p. 4). The teachers interviewed in this study demonstrated that, while learning is often assumed to be accompanied by feelings of mastery, "learning may also involve disorientation and dislocation" (Silin, 2006, p. 232). Just as Deborah Britzman (1998) encourages teachers to engender in their students a tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, rather than a desire for some false notion of truth and linear knowledge, teachers as learners are encouraged to foster this tolerance in themselves.

Purpose of the study

> When women serve as the primary caregivers to infants, it is assumed that because the neonate is preverbal, preconceptual, and pre-symbolic, the nurturing woman is too.
>
> - Madeleine Grumet, 2006, p. 219

In this thesis, I examined how early childhood teachers' responses to childhood texts evoked understandings of the subjective experience of their work and the ways they negotiate the ideologies and assumptions about childhood that underlie the devaluation of their profession. The study was grounded in the feminist position that women's personal experiences are embedded in structural inequalities, and that consciousness-raising in relation to hegemonic social structures can be transforming (Koedt et al., 1973). I did not aim to incur a major change in structural inequalities or to finally reveal an essential, but previously

unknown value in a marginalized field. My goal was more modest. I wanted to find out what intelligent, talented, and caring women, who *chose* to enter and remain in the field of early childhood education, could, through the lens of childhood fictions, teach us about the ways we make sense of childhood and childhood education. Further, the purpose of the study was not to procure generalizable findings but, rather, to generate insights in early childhood teacher experience. Taking a critical and postmodern position, I explored the multiple, contradictory and dialectical understandings both within the self (adult, teacher, parent) and among teachers in conversation. Ultimately, my purpose in this interpretive work was to develop understandings that contribute to "reflection and deliberative action" in early childhood education (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a, p. xiv).

Research questions. A number of questions were addressed, beginning with: "How do fictions of childhood evoke responses in early childhood teachers?" This question focuses on the unusual way that the child film works on the adult viewer to evoke responses imbued with childhood emotions and memories (Lury, 2005; Powrie, 2005), rather than on the content of the adult's responses. I then used childhood texts to approach critical questions, including: "What are some of the factors, including assumptions about gender and childhood, that underlie the devaluation of early childhood education?" Teacher identity issues were considered: "What do the early childhood teacher's responses to the stories reveal about her subjective teaching experiences?" and "What identity issues does the early childhood teacher face as a child-centered adult?" Finally, I examined the contradictory messages that early childhood teachers face, through questions such as: "Why do smart, competent women choose to work in a field that is devalued?"

and "How do they negotiate the lack of recognition they receive in society with the value they place in their work with children?"

Research framework

I designed a qualitative study that bridged fiction and social research to address my research issues. The discourse of childhood is a concept that intersects two enduring fascinations of mine: childhood fiction and early childhood education. As such, I selected two sets of concrete representations through which to explore the abstract concept of childhood: 1) representations of childhood in fiction (four films, one television episode, and one picture book), and 2) my readings and teachers' conversations around these fictional representations, which generated further representations of childhood.

To address my research issues, I developed three conversations around childhood and teaching, or three phases of inquiry: a focus group study with five early childhood teachers, a case study in memory work with one teacher, and a narrative account of a co-constructed, semi-fictional conversation between teachers, mothers, a curriculum theorist, and a literature/film student. The three methods were designed with the intent of circling the research issues from different perspectives in order to accumulate insights through different lenses. Each phase of inquiry was structured to highlight the polyvocal nature of our identities. As my data was collected and analyzed, it became apparent that it wasn't just *what* the teachers thought about childhood that mattered; it was *how* they thought about it. What was striking was: 1) the importance of memory in the teachers' readings of the childhood texts and in their interpretations of childhood, and 2) the significance

of gender in their readings, in particular, the links between motherhood and teaching.

Texts. The texts that the teachers responded to included four films: *Where the Wild Things Are* (1988), *The Hockey Sweater* (1980), *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005), and *The Piano* (1993); one picture book: *Outside Over There* (1981); and one television episode: *My Future Self N' Me* (2002) from the animated series *South Park*. The childhood texts functioned both as prompts to elicit the teachers' thoughts about childhood and as foci for interpreting childhood. My rationale for choosing these six texts was on the one hand, idiosyncratic, in that they were texts with which I connected, and on the other hand, contextual, in that the texts were familiar and deemed respectable in quality within the context of the teachers in this study.

Summary of chapters

The following is a summary of the subsequent chapters in the dissertation:

Chapter two sets up a theoretical framework through which I interpreted the teachers' responses and conversations. I review the literature on the construction of childhood in literature and film, with a focus on the adult reader. The first part of the chapter describes ways that childhood is constructed in fiction, including: childhood and adulthood as oppositional (and Othered) existences, childhood as development, universal childhood, and childhood as innocence. The second part of the review addresses the position of the adult reader, and specifically, the teacher, in relation to the child protagonist.

Chapter three outlines the methodological framework of my interpretive research project. I describe the three phases of inquiry: the focus group study, the

case study, and the co-constructed narrative. I also detail the methods of data collection and data analysis that I employed. I review the advantages of focus group inquiry as my first method to examine the interactive nature of the participants' knowledge production, and I describe the form of conversation analysis (CA) I used to analyze the discussions. Following this, I describe the significance of voice and account in my second and third phases of inquiry. I then outline my second phase of inquiry, the case study approach, in which I applied ethnographic strategies, in particular, Pinar's (1975, 2004) *currere*, to explore the subjective experiences of one teacher's ongoing journey. Finally, I describe the third approach, a co-constructed narrative, in which I wrote a semi-fictional conversation as my heuristic device to bring together different lenses to approach early childhood teaching.

In *chapter four*, I report on my first phase of inquiry, the focus group study that I conducted with five early childhood teachers. I present the analysis of five sets of conversational sequences selected from transcripts of three focus group sessions. The discussions were analyzed primarily through a conversation analysis, in order to capture the interactive nature of the teachers' interpretations of childhood. The teachers shared a multiplicity of thoughts and memories, which were evoked by the fictional children presented in the texts. For instance, they identified with the child protagonists by comparing their remembered child selves with the fictional children; they moved effortlessly between positions of childhood and adulthood in the past, present, and future; they argued as mothers; and finally, they extricated themselves reflexively and critically from their identifications. These conversations returned me to Greene's (1978) call for attentiveness to our

experiences and ongoing learning as reflective practitioners.

In *chapter five,* I shift to my case study, in which I examined one teacher's subjective experience in constructing childhood meanings and the ways these constructions intersected with her teacher identity. Drawing on Kamler's (2001) relocation of the personal as "a critical engagement with experience" (p. 1), I used a hybrid form of ethnographic writing, drawing upon elements of memoir, fiction, and creative writing to develop memory vignettes. The case study, Emily, was based in autobiography and, for purposes of evasion, invention. The purpose of this study was to generate insights that "readers [and teachers] can use" (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, p. 28). Specifically, the goal was to encourage teachers to return to and evaluate their own childhoods as part of a larger project to support actual children today, rather than conflating children with their own childhoods (Pinar, 1975; Grumet, 1991; Greene, 1995). Pinar's (1975, 2004) method of curriculum inquiry, *currere*, provided the framework to analyze the memory vignettes, which were juxtaposed with scenes from a *South Park* episode, *My Future Self N' Me*. The case study was reported in a layered account, as a form of experimental writing (Ronai, 1992, 1995, 1997; Richardson, 2000) which marks different voices, speakers, intentions, and theoretical levels.

Chapter six recounts my third phase of inquiry, a co-constructed conversation, in which I joined my voice (as teacher, mother, student of curriculum theory, and student of children's literature and film) with the teachers' voices from the focus group discussions. This report was a deliberately "multivoiced representation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b, p. 158), an experiment with the concept of "possible worlds" (Lewis, 1973, p. 3). I selected excerpts from the teachers'

discussions of one text, the picture book *Outside Over There*, blended in my responses to the teachers' thoughts, and added my own interpretations of *Outside Over There*. This co-constructed narrative provided another possibility for weaving together voices, accounts, and lenses in the research process. The purpose was to openly represent the voice of the researcher and to engage audiences through an evocative format, rather than a traditionally written report (Gough, 1998).

In *chapter seven*, I synthesize the findings from my three research chapters in order to consider the implications for practitioners in early childhood education. I draw together the threads from the different phases of inquiry in addressing the set of research questions. I also consider the limitations of my study and implications for further research.

Chapter 2. Literature review: Constituting childhood in fiction for the adult reader

In this chapter, I review the literature that addresses the adult as reader of fictional childhood narratives in film and literature. The purpose of this review is to provide a theoretical framework with which to analyze the teachers' responses to the childhood texts. In examining fictions of childhood as social texts (and their adult readers), I consider how fictions of childhood *do* childhood, that is, how, through the event of reading these texts, they make meanings of childhood happen (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

The first part of the review addresses the construction of childhood in fiction. In addition, I review studies on childhood in literature and film in terms of its oppositional existence to adulthood, childhood as developmental, universal, and innocent, and ways of understanding the child within the adult. The second part examines the adult reader. I address the nostalgic ways that the adult reads childhood texts, the position of the adult in relation to the child protagonist, and then more closely, the teacher as an adult reader of childhood stories.

Before I began my dissertation research, I was interested primarily in cultural formations targeting child audiences. For example, I analyzed how cartoon series, such as *The Powerpuff Girls*, appropriated the discourse of girl empowerment, only to reposition girls into conventional roles as consumers (Chang-Kredl, 2007). I also examined the pretense narratives that young children generated while playing with media-based character toys (Chang-Kredl & Howe, in press). Near the beginning of my doctoral studies, however, I read a special issue of *Screen* journal (Lury, 2005), in which the issue's authors explored the narrative

uses of children in films more typically viewed by adults. These articles jolted me into re-imagining my own connection with childhood culture and my own interest in studying media phenomena purportedly created for a category (children) living in a different (non-adult) time and space.

Discourses of childhood as constituted in fictional texts

> [C]hildhood is not a matter for children. Rather, it's a set of images created by and for adults.
>
> – Shannon, 1997, p. 152

Conceptualized childhood can be connected to actual children in two ways: 1) using the concept of childhood to explain and understand actual children, and 2) adducing from actual children's behaviours and actions knowledge to support or challenge our conceptions of childhood (Bignell, 2005). Fictional representations of childhood are forms of conceptualized childhoods, but the difficulties in distinguishing between the child as construction and the child as real provide much debate in children's literature studies (Nodelman, 2008).

Jackson (1986) focuses on cinematic images of childhood in her aim of exposing the underlying cultural attitudes being expressed. She writes that children in cinema do not represent children in reality; instead, they are "stereotypes, caricatures, or symbols" of real-life children, which may reflect or influence societal and cultural attitudes toward the child (1986, p. 3). Kuhn (1982) compares narrative images of the child with the history of societal attitudes toward children. She, too, analyzes cinematic images as reflections or mirrors of culture, however, she cautions that it is difficult to interpret or generalize which social messages

cinematic images transmitted, because they could be "directly reflective, conflicting, or symbolic" (Kuhn, 1982, p. 3).

According to Galbraith (2001), the real issue that the field of childhood studies questions is "the meaning of *adulthood* in relation to childhood" (p. 190). Certainly, discourses of childhood do not function to govern children only; they also govern the children's parents, families, teachers and other adults in contexts that assemble child and adult.

Children's fiction hangs on the impossible connection between child and adult, where the adult comes first, as author and giver, and the child comes next, as reader and receiver, with neither entering the space in between (Rose, 1984). Does this argument hold for images of childhood created *not* for the child, nor viewed by the child, but instead, created for or viewed by the adult? Fictional representations of childhood, in popular literature or cinema, are *always* representations of adult's fantasies and interests. The images may be meant to secure the actual child who is outside the image, or to regulate the childlike characteristics in the adult's identity. Just as Rose warns us to be suspicious about the notion of children's fiction, there must also be something "impossible" about the creation of childhood images that adults view.

Nodelman (2008) takes Rose's argument further by referring to a doubleness in children's fiction, in which childhood is perceived both outwards and backwards of adulthood. Nodelman describes the ambiguity involved in children's literature, as a genre that is founded on the binary opposition between adulthood and childhood but that refuses to privilege one side over the other. Adults celebrate innocence and lack of knowledge in children's literature while, at the same time,

offering children knowledge in the books. Moreover, the adults aspire to be back in the space of innocence and lack of knowledge. This doubleness contributes to making a seemingly simple form of literature complex and ambiguous.

In the following section, I outline studies that approach how childhood has been constituted in popular fictional texts, including its connection with adulthood, the developmental perspective, innocence and assumptions of universality.

Adulthood and childhood as oppositional existences.

> [T]hese are structural oppositions in the strictest sense, in that each term only has meaning in relation to the one to which it is opposed.
>
> - Jacqueline Rose, 1984, p. 50

In talking about childhood and adulthood, we are already functioning inside a discourse that shapes and limits what we can say. For instance, our talk assumes that there is a marked distinction between childhood and adulthood, based on temporal differences in the lifespan. It assumes that childhood and adulthood function as separate states of existence. Critics, such as Rose (1984) and Lesnik-Oberstein (1994), compare the construction of childhood in relation to its differences and its similarities to adulthood with constructions of gender, in which woman and man are defined as mutually exclusive opposites. The child-adult opposition is based in such a binary system, in which signs only have meaning in opposition to other signs. These cultural and signifying systems then structure how we perceive and order the world.

Aligning this child-adult opposition with apparatus film theory, Lury (2005) describes how fictional representations of childhood can provoke emotive responses in adults in which they feel like children rather than protective adults.

For instance, many children's stories are structured as a dream, in which the child escapes from his or her world into an adventurous other world. Max in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) "sailed off through night and day … to where the wild things are." Dorothy in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900) is carried by a cyclone to the land of Oz. Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 1997) discovers that he is a wizard and is transported by the Hogwarts Express to the wizarding world. In order to follow the narrative of these escape fantasies, the adult who reads or views them must respond like the child.

> Seeing is what children do; showing is what adults do for children.
>
> - Karen Lury, 2005, p. 309

Lury (2005) uses the example of *The Sixth Sense* (dir: M. Night Shyamalan, 1999), in which the boy protagonist, Cole, *sees,* in a spontaneous, dangerous, and messy manner which he himself cannot understand. Seeing implies an unregulated gaze, a fascination, and a closeness between what is seen and what is felt. The function of the adult protagonist, child psychologist Malcolm Crowe, is to *show* Cole "how to cope with this gift of seeing" (Lury, 2005, p. 309). Showing is the directed and purposeful gaze which names, classifies and links cause to effect. The "trick of cinema" is to present showing as seeing and to recall the fears and pleasures of seeing (Lury, 2005).

> This child is the childlike being of the colonial project: at the same time a creature with the potential to become an adult and a creature alien from and opposite to adult humanity.
>
> - Nodelman, 2008, p. 181

Linked to the child-adult binary, the term othering or Orientalism has been applied to describe the relationship between adult and child (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002; Rose, 1984; Lemke, 1995). Othering addresses the sense that for some people (the colonized child), the world exists for others (the colonizing adult). The adult's purpose in Othering the child is, again, to define himself or herself as its opposite. The child is irrational and innocent, therefore I am rational and knowing. The child cannot be allowed to be in the subject position because it depends politically and linguistically on its representation by the adult, just as the Orient is unable to represent itself.

The time travel or the child-adult reversal genre in fiction reflects the theory of othering between adult and child. These tales often follow a child who escapes *temporally* from his or her world into an opposite (adult) world. An early version of this genre is F. Anstey's (1882/1941) novel *Vice Versa,* in which a boarding school boy switches bodies with his businessman father through the use of a magic Indian stone. More recent film examples include: Robert Zemeckis's *Back to the Future* (1985), in which Marty McFly travels into the past and the future, via an altered DeLorean DMC-12; Penny Marshall's *Big* (1985), in which 12-year-old Josh wishes in a fairground to an automated Indian magician to be "big" (30 years old); Gary Winnick's (2004) *13 Going on 30*, in which 13-year-old Jenna wishes with magic wishing dust to escape her adolescent pain and be "thirty, flirty and thriving"; and *Freaky Friday* (Mark Waters, 2003; Gary Nelson, 1976) which depicts an incompatible daughter and mother switching bodies (in the 2003 version, through eating tampered Chinese fortune cookies). The Oriental means of transport to an Other world is not coincidental.

The moral of the adult-child reversal tale is generally that the character, usually the child, learns through the liminal space of time travel something transformative about his or her present world. For example, the daughter (and mother) in *Freaky Friday* realize that life in the other's place (child/adult) is not as easy as they each thought, and Josh, in *Big,* realizes, nostalgically, that giving up his childhood and teen years isn't worth it, as he explains to his adult girlfriend: "Before I met you I was in little league and I rode my bike to school and I played with my friends and … I want to go home."

Childhood as development. The discourse of developmental psychology dominates the field of early childhood education with its view that childhood proceeds *naturally* through developmental stages and that the purpose of childhood is to progress to the future goal of the rational adult. Its authority is felt to the extent that the socially constructed nature of this performance of and around childhood is hardly noticeable, let alone questioned (James and Prout, 1997, p. 7).

On a biological level, there is a distinction between childhood and adulthood, as the biological immaturity of childhood is an undeniable fact. However, it is "the ways in which this immaturity is understood and made meaningful" or "the extent to which childhood as a text can be understood independently of childhood as a stage of biological growth and maturity" – the meaning and tenor of the distinction - that discourse affects (James and Prout, 1997).

As an example of a fictional representation of the developmental discourse, Francois Truffaut's film, *The Wild Child/L'enfant sauvage* (1969), depicts a scientist's adoption of a child who has been deprived of human contact. The wild

boy is an example of how Victorian education acts as the civilizing process linking ontology and phylogeny, ensuring the effective development of the animalistic child to the civilized adult. Or, *L'enfant sauvage* may be interpreted as an allegory of Romantic ideals of childhood, with the wild boy as the symbol of the natural child living on instinct and vitality, and the scientist as the educative and social force integrating the child into society.

Developmental theories are driven by adult concerns with the health and educational well-being of children, through the establishment of categories of normative behaviors. This developmental focus reassures the adults of "having acted responsibly on their [the children's], and our own, behalf*"* (Willinsky, 2004, p. 233). Again, some weight should be given to biological factors in understanding childhood, but sociologists argue that social factors deserve more consideration. In the 1990s, the theoretical space of childhood studies began to open itself to alternative voices, including sociological ones, to add to and challenge the assumptions of the uncivilized child and the rational adult.

Some children's stories challenge developmental assumptions by juxtaposing the child's difficulties in learning to cope on the most basic level with the adult's inability to function on a meaningful level. In Roald Dahl's books *James and the Giant Peach* (1961) and *Matilda* (1988), the children, James and Matilda, are depicted as stricken by poverty and cruel relatives. The parents and aunts, on the other hand, are characterized as stricken by selfishness and greed. Helen Keller, in Arthur Penn's *The Miracle Worker* (1962), deals with severe physical disability and misunderstanding, yet her struggle to communicate ("wa-wa") is paralleled with the adults' struggles: her military father is unable to accept

views that differ from his own paternalistic ones, and Teacher cannot come to terms with her own childhood suffering.

In other films, the child's presence forces the adults to differentiate themselves from childhood, to grow up. In the Czechoslovakian film *Kolya* (dir: Jan Sverák, 1996), a money-making scheme leaves 50-year-old bachelor and lady's man, Franta, as the new stepfather to a five-year-old boy, Kolya. This unexpected responsibility leads Franta to discover a life of grown-up meaning, responsibility, and, in this film, satisfaction. Robert Benton's *Kramer vs Kramer* (1979) touches on the impact of divorce on a child, but focuses on the parenting development of the father, played by Dustin Hoffman.

Childhood as universal. The universality of childhood assumes that all children are the same, the world over. Disney films are a prime example of the family film that aims for universal appeal. To draw in the broadest viewing audience possible, Disney's promotions openly address the "child in all of us," touting the ideology of childhood innocence and purity, and the universality of childhood. Disney films position both child and adult viewers as objects to be swept away by plot sequences with "rigid sexist and racist notions that emanate from the nineteenth century" (Zipes, 1997, p. 94). Essentially, the disenfranchised and beautiful heroine is rescued by the brave and handsome prince (with the occasional but still gender-stereotyping reversal). In this way, the universal child's ultimate goal is presented as heterosexual marriage in a world divided clearly into good and evil (Giroux, 1999; Zipes, 1997).

Steven Spielberg understood the Disney formula for the successful family film, namely, "the use of a broadly realistic setting into which one fantastic

element or ingredient is introduced" (see Sinyard, 1992, p. 32). In Spielberg's case, the ingredient might take the form of an extraterrestial named E.T., but the significance of the "child in all of us" is displayed in the scientist's response to his encounter with E.T.: "I've been wishing for this since I was ten years old."

Little space is left for addressing the variables of class, gender, and race. Take for example the social impact that Ezra Jack Keats' (1962) picture book, *The Snowy Day,* had when it was published in 1963. The book's hero, Peter, has dark skin, which is represented in the pictures but never focused on in the narrative. It was the idea that a children's book could be "a story about being a child" with an African American child protagonist that gathered public attention (Nodelman, 2008).

The child within the adult.

> Behind the fractured adult a child hides, estranged from his or her own history.
>
> - Natov, 2003, p. 2.

The adult reader and spectator might identify with the protagonist as the adult, the child, both, or somewhere in between (Wilson, 2005). Natov (2003) argues that adults who write for children are often motivated by the desire to reawaken the child within, and to regain contact with this severed part. Children's fiction may be a means of restoring a lost childhood to adults, "a sort of storytelling therapy for frustrated adults" (Nikolajeva, 2002, p. 306). For the adult reader, childhood stories may be portals to childhood, inviting us to "recuperate our losses," to reconcile ourselves with the parts from which we have separated

(Grumet, 2006, p. 221). In Günter Grass's novel, *The Tin Drum* (1959/1990), Oskar, on his third birthday, and in response to the duplicity of the adults he sees around him during the eve of the Second World War, decides to will himself not to grow up. Over the next two decades of the story, Oskar stays frozen in time as a three-year-old.

Sinyard (1992) questioned who films about childhood are made for, what meaning film artists and producers derive from their reflections on childhood, and what the producers' attitudes toward childhood reveal about our society's condition. He suggested that many filmmakers, from Bergman to Spielberg, have focused their films on childhood because "the one thing the audience all [have] in common is that they had all been children" (p. 7). Wilson (2005) writes about how the emotions of children represented in films resemble and connect to their adult counterpart. Charlie Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921) presents a number of doubling scenes between the tramp (Charlie Chaplin) and the five-year-old (Jackie Coogan). This eerie presentation of dualism, linking parent and child, emphasizes the mysterious connection between one's childhood and one's adulthood (and between parent and child).

Adult emotions are densely involved with the remnants of childhood experiences of attachment, happiness, need, and anger. In other words, childhood emotions shape adult emotions (Nussbaum, 2001). This accounts for the discomfort that representations of childhood emotions in fiction might provoke in the adult spectator. Robert Munsch's picture book, *Love You Forever* (1986), recounts the relationship between a mother and a son, in which the child and mother gradually shift roles as loving caregiver. This is a book that regularly reduces adults to tears.

A temporarily 'dispossessed' adult feels vulnerable while experiencing in story a child's lack of control. In this overwhelming experience, he or she may involuntarily return to the childlike state of helplessness.

The "capacity to generate emotion in audience" is a crucial element in melodramatic fiction (Williams, 1988, p. 44). Images of childhood act as representations of weakness, vulnerability, and moral goodness in ways that are inexpressible through language. Melodrama begins and ends, or wants to end, in innocence. It incites a moral feeling of righteousness achieved "through the sufferings of the innocent" (p. 62). As an example, children are effective symbols of innocent victimhood in films. When a director wants to register an immediate and amplified emotional response from an adult viewer, a zoom in to an injured or frightened child in a wartime situation is a reliable approach. These films compel adults to feel what children feel, and often depict the lesson that adults have something to learn (and must learn) from what children feel. The primary emotion during wartime is one of loss - loss of control, loss of mastery – a feeling familiar to children (Kroll, 2002). Pamela Kroll writes that "subjected to the wills and whims of more powerful authorities … the adult living in wartime does indeed 'quite naturally know' what the child feels" (p. 33). For example, in the film version of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Dir. G. Stevens, 1959), Anne is depicted teaching the adult (and viewer) how to cope through imagination, the ability to focus above all else on one's needs or desires, playful experimentation, openheartedness, and the drive to figure out how to master situations.

Contemporary filmmakers co-opt this sense of "involuntary emotion," or lack of mastery, in creating cinematic representations of childhood (Wilson, 2005).

In moving the adult through the "involuntary seizure of the emotions, in restoring momentarily an awareness of helplessness," filmic representations of childhood may serve to sensitize the spectator to the suffering or experience of childhood (Wilson, 2005, p. 330).

Innocence. The theme of innocence emerges as "the dominant fantasy in whose terms children have been variously represented, protected and desired" (Jenkins, 1998, p. 2). Romanticized as symbols of innocence, as investments in our future, or pathologized as symptoms of society's failure, childhood is central in cultural debates. The child invokes such myths or ideologies as the 'life-cycle', the 'family', the child as society's symbol to represent the 'future and the past' (Lury, 2005, p. 308). As with the family film, the child becomes the symbol of the heterosexual dream: normal men and women are expected to get married and have children. The concept of the child carries a "quasi-religious significance … our most convincing essentialism" (Phillips, 1998, p. 119). The myth of childhood innocence "'empties' the child of its own political agency, so that it may more perfectly fulfill the symbolic demands we make upon it" (Kincaid, 1992, p. 62).

The representation of childhood as a time of innocence invites both the adult and the child reader to experience "what it means to possess a child's relative lack of knowledge" (Nodelman, 2008, p. 78). In E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), the child, represented by Wilbur, is helpless and naïve about the realities he faces as a pig on a farm. The adult, represented by the wise spider, Charlotte, sacrifices her life to guide and protect Wilbur. Patricia Holland (2004) writes of the "the defining characteristics of childhood – dependence and powerlessness" (p.

143), that encourage adult readers and viewers to want to protect them. This desire to protect gives rise to the satisfactory emotions of compassion and tenderness.

Childhood is too often imagined by adults to be a "utopian space" (Jenkins, 1998, p. 3), pure, innocent and "waiting to be corrupted or protected by adults" (p. 4). This perception of childhood innocence situates children in spaces "beyond, above, outside the political," further adding to the concept of childhood helplessness or disempowerment (Jenkins, 1998, p. 2). Yet, the image of the innocent child so often bears the rhetorical force of political arguments, from economic reforms to the digital world. Children symbolize the "soft and smiling foils to a more grim and grownup reality" (p. 9). The assumption of innocence as children's most distinguishing characteristic leads to the belief that happiness should follow as their natural state (Heininger, 1984). An unhappy child "was and is unnatural, an indictment of somebody: parent, institution, nation" (Kincaid, 1992, p. 80).

Reversal of innocence. As described, innocence is a theme on which many writers of children's fiction base their narratives, whether it is the myth of innocence, violation of innocence, or loss of innocence. However, films with children as the source of horror, seen in Jack Clayton's *The Innocents* (1961), William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973), and Richard Donner's *The Omen* (1976), challenge and reverse the notion of childhood innocence. These films endorse, instead, the idea of original sin. Sinyard (1992) questions for whom spectacles of evil and suffering children, or the fascination with the uncanny and sinister child, are made and what they reveal about adult society's views of childhood.

In a more amplified way than in human development films, the evil child in horror films plays a disruptive role in their parents' seemingly stable worlds. As such, horror films may reflect the hostility that adults feel towards children, perhaps because actual children are 'impossible': "They want more than they can have. And, at least to begin with, they are shameless about it" (Phillips, 1998, p. 119). Another explanation is that the child's perspective brings the adult viewer back to an intense feeling of terror. Charles Dickens once noted that a fair portion of childhood is lived in an apprehensive state of fear. This terror is amplified in, for example, David Lean's *Oliver Twist* (1998), in which Oliver is made to sleep in the bedroom where coffins are kept.

The position of the adult reader in relation to the child protagonist

In the second part of the literature review, I examine some of the interesting and recent work on childhood and fiction that focuses on the viewing position that the child protagonist establishes for the adult reader and viewer. There is an imagined division between adults who read children's literature as either "child people" (teachers, parents, psychologists or those who begin with supposed knowledge of the child) or as "book people" (literary scholars, children's authors or those who begin with literary knowledge) (Townsend, 1971). Lesnik-Oberstein (1994) argues that both types of readers are, in fact, "child people," because they depend on the adult's imagination of the child. She writes that "[c]hildren's literature criticism is about saying, 'I know what children like to read/are able to read/should read, *because I know what children are like"*' (p. 2). This claim assumes that children are knowable as a generalized group with a limited range of characteristics.

The child protagonist represented in fiction and the child spectator behind the category of children's literature exist, in both cases, as a fantasy – "a projection of adult desire" (Rose, 1984, p. 60), or as McNee (2009) writes, "we cannot speak for children, [however], it is possible to enter their worlds as visitors" (p. 20). Literature has the unique disciplinary ability to capture narrative voice in representing and constructing the inner life of children as fictional child-characters. Literature offers "strategies of narration that allow an adult writer to coordinate his or her voice with that of a child character" (Sokoloff, 2004, p. 75). Children are unable to represent themselves in fiction, unlike other Others, such as minorities. When the child's voice is represented in literature, it is the adult who is constructing the child's thoughts, feelings, and needs. Echoing Rose's (1984) work, Sokoloff (2004) writes that "children characters in literature – whether in adult texts or texts written for children – often tell us more about adult concerns that are projected onto children that about children themselves," and that these constructions lie somewhere "between appropriation and advocacy, artifice and insight" (p. 74).

Nostalgia.

> I could, I suppose, try to read like the child I once was or, as some adult readers of children's literature claim they do, like the child that remains within me. But the child I remember or imagine still being within me, viewed through inevitable lapses of memory and the filter of later knowledge and experience, is not the child I was.
>
> - Perry Nodelman, 2008, p. 85

Nostalgia is derived from the Greek words "home" and "suffering", and can be felt as much more than a superficial phenomenon. It can be felt as a deep affect, particularly in the "history-free depthlessness" of postmodernity (Powrie, 2005).

Nostalgia is connected to the construction of the child within the adult. It results from a desire to return to a place that perhaps never existed, and to reclaim something we perhaps never had (Stewart, 1993). It is the adult's nostalgic versions of childhood that often shapes how he or she understands childhood (Nodelman, 2008).

Although there is only one childhood scene in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), it has been said that this is "the most important scene in one of the cinema's most important movies" (Sinyard, 1992, p. 135). The film begins with Kane's dying word 'rosebud', and the rest of the film narrates the search for the significance of the word, a word that we discover represents the whole of Kane's childhood and the loss of his mother's love. As Andre Bazin (1978) wrote: "Kane admits before dying that there is no profit in gaining the whole world if one has lost one's childhood" (p. 66). It is through the use of flashbacks that Charles Kane's childhood trauma is revealed. *Citizen Kane* plays on the notions that the roots of adulthood are contained in childhood, that we all carry traces of our childhoods and past selves, and that childhood is the investment in our future.

Bignell (2005) examined the conceptual category of the child, drawing on Lyotard's interest in the discourse of childhood as a formation in process. Bignell writes that "the concept of childhood is invoked as the determinant of adulthood, where childhood is projected retrospectively as an other epoch in which adulthood was already being prepared for but whose meaning can only be understood subsequently" (2005, p. 382). The concept of childhood inhabits the same discursive space as Lyotard's concept of postmodernism; each is 'projected

backwards' as the founding moment for a later state: a subsequent adulthood and a subsequent modernity.

The cinematic child often transforms a film's narrative. The flashback sequences in *Citizen Kane* (1941) act as vehicles to cinematically depict memory in a unified subject living across different spaces and times (Wright, 1996). Film directors, such as Bergman, Fellini, and Woody Allen, devoted considerable screen time to presentations of memories motivated by nostalgia.

Crossing liminal spaces. The representation of the child, particularly in films that focus on children, functions by offering the spectator a "different way of seeing," compared to the viewing positions offered by adult or teen lead characters (Powrie, 2005, p. 342).

Richard Coe (1984, p. 40) wrote that the Romantics were unable to distinguish between their actual child selves and the idealized, sentimentalized representations of childhood innocence. Through the concept of retrospection, Powrie (2005) argues that feelings of nostalgia and innocence function together in films with child protagonists (p. 348). Nostalgia is experienced by the spectator of the child film, mixed with either self-pity ("I wish I could find that state of innocence again") or with pity ("thank God my childhood was not like that") (p. 343). Either way, there is a retrospection, or a look backwards, at childhood as pure and free, and in opposition to the constrained and materialist adult world.

The etymology of innocence links the word to the concept of death: "the one who is not guilty of harming" or of bringing about death (Powrie, 2005, p. 343). This feeds into the utopian notion that children are incapable of causing or inflicting harm. In a form of temporality that crosses liminal spaces between

childhood and adulthood, Powrie (2005) describes adult viewers of child films as being invited to relocate themselves into some past place, one meant to be desexualized and free from violence, an experience that Powrie describes as an "oddly fractured spectatorial position" (p. 345). Reality and fantasy are mixed in this "in-between space" (p. 348). This is a threshold where adult viewers look backwards in nostalgic identification with the child protagonist ("I was once that child"), but also look forwards ("that child will be what I am now") (p. 348). The interruptions that are evoked by the child seen on the screen provide moments of connection between past selves and present selves.

> …it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.
>
> - Michel Foucault, 1967/1986

Powrie (2005) borrows Foucault's concept of "heterospection" to suggest that the child protagonist in films constructs and offers "a combination of dislocation in time and space" (p. 350). Heterotopic space is not just a fusion of utopian and dystopian spaces. It is a different space, marked by defamiliarization, in which the child's perspective defamiliarizes the adult's world (p. 351). Applying Freud's concept of the uncanny, or the *unheimlich*, heterotopic space makes the familiar unfamiliar. The child's point of view allows the spectator to inhabit both here and there, now and then, recognizable and unrecognizable. As spectators, we look back to our own past and look forward to our present viewing.

Foucault (1967/1986) described an epoch of space: simultaneity, juxtaposition, 'near and far', 'side-by-side', 'a placeless place'. The child

protagonist increases the film spectator's sense of being 'over there' (Powrie, 2005). In other words, the space of films is more liable to be experienced as a heterotopic space when the spectator is asked to take the viewing position of the child, of the past. Heterospection is "being-adult while also being-child, inhabiting two different but complementary space-times" (p. 350). Children in films allow the adult spectator to *simultaneously* experience (and not just view) innocence *and* escape from the pain of innocence.

The teacher as reader of childhood stories. In this final section, I shift the discussion to focus on the teacher as adult reader of childhood texts.

> Teachers are "storied intellectuals" in the sense that they are filled with the stories that they were told and that they themselves read, or were required to read, for example in school, and teachers reproduce that knowledge in teaching.
>
> -Strong-Wilson, 2003, p. 105

> We identify ourselves by means of memory; by way of memory, we compose the stories of our lives.
>
> -Greene, 1978, p. 33

In the above quote, Strong-Wilson (2003) emphasizes the significance of stories in the educational formation of elementary school teachers. Stories can be used as focal points or prompts through which to investigate one's memories and assumptions (Sumara and Davis, 1998; Gough, 1998). As teachers, our engagements with literature can "stir" or provoke us by "break[ing] us loose from our anchorage" (Greene, 1995, p. 111), moving us to find other ways of responding, telling our stories, and interpreting our worlds.

This dissertation enlists a reader-oriented approach, as the teachers in the study link fiction, imagination, memory, and action - "We see; we hear; we make connection" (Greene, 1995, p. 186). In a reader-oriented approach, the text is not conceived as carrying a pre-determined message that is injected into the reader/viewer, or recoverable through critical analysis techniques. Bazalgette and Buckingham (1995) refer to the academic focus on "how real audiences make sense of texts" and the contradictory ways texts address readers/viewers (p. 4).

Borrowing Kristeva's (1969/1986) term intertextuality, how "utterances from other texts intersect and neutralize one another" (p. 36), Greene (1995) construed of memory or the "I" of the reader as one such text that comes into play when readers engage with literary texts. The teacher/reader in this dissertation is situated as a "central player" in the reading process (Barthes, 1986). Reading consists of the reader making connections between her own lived experience (with all its social, cultural, psychic, and imaginative associations) and the newly encountered literary text.

According to Proust (1971), there is no truth in literature, only keys to help us unlock our interior rooms. This study uses literary and filmic narratives to help teachers unlock their subjective experiences as adults in a child-centered profession.

Conclusion

The literature review focused on the discourses of childhood constituted in literature and films, and the adult as reader of childhood fictions. The ambiguities and complexities unique to the situation of the adult positioned as reader of childhood texts reviewed included Rose's (1984) argument that children's fiction

always represents adult's fantasies and desires, Powrie's (2005) concept of heterospection, locating the adult viewer in the liminal space between the binaried childhood and adulthood, and the nostalgic ways adults read childhood texts. These aspects frame childhood texts as productive spaces in which early childhood teachers can hold complex conversations about the various discourses of childhood, including: innocence, Othering, universality, development, and remaining inside the adult.

Chapter 3. Methodological framework

Introduction

I have structured my research as a qualitative and interpretive project conducted in three phases of inquiry that are presented as conversations. As described in the introductory chapter, the research has been designed to address questions such as: "How do fictions of childhood evoke responses in early childhood teachers?" "What are some of the factors, including assumptions about gender and childhood, that underlie the devaluation of early childhood education?" "What do the early childhood teacher's responses to the stories reveal about her subjective teaching experiences?" "What identity issues does the early childhood teacher face as a child-centered adult?" "Why do smart, competent women choose to work in a field that is devalued?" and "How do they negotiate the lack of recognition they receive in society with the value they place in their work with children?"

Borrowing Alvermann and Hruby's (2000) metaphor of the "triptych," a three-panelled art form, the research was designed as three panels or methods, in which the panels' hinges hold the three methods together "by serving as transitions from one section of the report to the next" (p. 46). The first method was a focus group discussion with five early childhood teachers, the second was a case study presented in layered accounts, and the third was a co-constructed narrative inquiry in which I entered into the teachers' conversations. Margery Wolf's (1992) ethnographic study, reported in three tellings (a fictional narrative, a set of field notes, and an anthropological journal article), impressed upon me the extent to

which each method (or lens or voice) "yielded its own insights on the same phenomenon/event" (Strong-Wilson, personal communication, 2009).

I examined the multiple and complex ways that early childhood teachers construct meanings of childhood, and how these ways of thinking about childhood are reflected in their subjective experiences as teachers. I selected and adapted methods that would help me circle the issues from different perspectives, so that I could generate and accumulate ideas, and synthesize the threads of thinking.

In order to establish for the reader how the three phases of inquiry proceeded, I describe in this chapter the methodological strategies for data collection and analysis. I define focus group inquiry as a qualitative means of targeting the interactive nature of the participants' shared knowledge production. I then describe conversation analysis (CA) as a suitable approach for interpreting the discussions. Next, I explain the significance of voice and account in my second and third phases of inquiry: the case study and co-constructed narrative. Following this, I delineate each phase (the second and third) in more detail. For the purposes of the case study, I focus on the application of ethnographic strategies in exploring subjective experiences, and on Pinar's (1975, 2004) *currere* as a framework for studying one teacher's ongoing learning process. For the co-constructed narrative, I outline my rationale for using a semi-fictional, conversational format as my heuristic device in bringing together multifarious thoughts and responses. I also describe the purposes of evocative reports in academic research (Ellis & Bochner, 1996). In each phase of inquiry, one or more childhood text was used, both as a prompt to elicit the teachers' thoughts about childhood, and as a focus for interpreting childhood.

Methodology I. Conversation analysis: A focus group study

> [T]he hallmark of focus groups is *the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group"*
>
> - Morgan, 1988, p. 12 (his emphasis)

In this first methodology, I conducted three focus group sessions with five early childhood teachers. Focus groups are fundamentally "a way of listening to people and learning from them" (Morgan, 1997, p. 9). The individualist stance is rejected in favour of the "relational aspects of self" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 111). As Kitzinger (1994) writes, no one is a self-contained, isolated entity; "we are part of complex and overlapping social, familial and collegiate networks" (p. 117).

The group aspect of the interviews, as opposed to one-on-one interviews, allowed me to listen to plural voices as constructors and "agents of knowledge" (Fine, 1994, p. 75). It is in the data collection process, where talk is "a potent and *constitutive part*" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 21) of the situation, and not necessarily in the analysis or reporting, that the focus group method is distinct from the individual interview. In focus group discussions, the participants interact with one another as well as with the moderator. This group situation reduces the power of the researcher to influence the direction, content, and meaning of the conversation, and often shifts the power - again during data collection - to the participants (Wilkinson, 1998; Madriz, 2000).

An individual's opinions are shaped through everyday social processes, "such as talking and arguing with families, friends, and colleagues" (Williams, 1998, p. 120). The group conversation is a form of collective testimony that has been shared by women for generations (Madriz, 2000). Focus groups offer a

relatively naturalistic social context for conversation. The "fundamentally *social* nature of talk" is not difficult to appreciate given the messy interactions I observed in the teachers' group conversations: "telling stories, cracking jokes, arguing, supporting one another, and talking over one another" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 121). There is an ongoing interplay between the individual and the group, with individual participants shaping the group activities and the group context shaping its individual members (Morgan, 1997).

Data collection

The teachers shared a multiplicity of experiences, memories, thoughts, beliefs and opinions about the stories, childhood, and their practices as teachers and mothers. This made up the data set for this phase of inquiry.

The participants.

> It's nice to be sitting with professionals who understand you, and you understand them.
>
> - Maggie (focus group participant)

> When I sit with people who care so much about student life and family life … it's just so good to be plugged into that. It's not a question of agreeing; it's sharing a passion, and sharing an experience.
>
> - Catherine (focus group participant)

The group was composed of five teachers. Keeping in mind that the choice of participants shapes how the conversation develops, rather than using "impersonal recruiting strategies" (Madriz, 2000, p. 844), I invited participants with the intention of forming a "natural cluster" of teachers who specialized in early childhood education (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 106). My sources for recruiting the teachers included personal networks and recommendations from professors and

colleagues. I sought out a combination of teachers who worked in daycare, kindergarten, and early elementary school in order to provide a range of experiences within the umbrella of early childhood education. All of the teachers had completed at least one university degree in education, and lived in Montreal at the time of the study. The smaller size of the group offered a setting for participants to share a range of insights and experiences, while providing enough comfort for in-depth contributions that a larger group would unlikely afford.

Using pseudonyms, the following is a brief profile of the participants:

Hannah is a 30-year-old, full-time graduate student, completing a Master's degree in Education. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Arts and Education (Humanities and Mondern Languages Education), and six years of teaching experience: two years teaching English as a second language in francophone schools, and four years teaching French immersion Kindergarten. Hannah notes that one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching has been the development of relationships with students, colleagues, and parents. She values life-long learning in teachers.

Linda is currently in her 12th year as a French immersion, Kindergarten teacher in a private, Anglophone, girls' school. She also worked for five years as a pre-Kindergarten teacher in a University-based daycare center. At 41, Linda holds a Bachelor's degree in Education and a diploma in creative writing. Linda believes that good teaching must engage and sustain both the students and the teacher, and admires the playful and imaginative capacities of the young children she teaches.

Catherine, at 57, is near to completing her doctoral degree in Education. She holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Education. Catherine taught for 14

years in early elementary and secondary schools, as a specialist in remedial and literacy education, and in English and Drama. She has also taught as a part-time University instructor for 12 years, lecturing in English Literature, Communication, and inclusive education. As well as being a teacher, Catherine is an artist, a parent, a grandparent, a foster parent and a volunteer in a group home.

Merrill is a daycare teacher and assistant director in a university setting. In her 40s, she holds a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and a Master's degree in Child Study. For over 20 years, Merrill has been teaching 3 and 4-year-olds in daycare. She recalls how impressed she was, as a child, with the warm, caring, easy and joyful relationship that her mother, a teacher, had with her students.

Maggie, in her 40s, is a daycare director in a university setting. She has a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, 15 years of experience teaching 3-year-olds, and seven years as director. Teaching is Maggie's vocation and passion, and she feels a responsibility to ensure that the children in her center are respected and understood.

The texts. The texts used in the focus group sessions included two short film animations, two feature-length live action films, and one picture book:

1. Gene Deitch's (1973/1988) short, film animation adaptation of Maurice Sendak's (1963) children's picture book, *Where the Wild Things Are*
2. Sheldon Cohen's (1980) short, film animation adaptation of Roch Carrier's (1979) *The Hockey Sweater.*

3. Andrew Adamson's (2005) feature length, film adaptation of C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* entitled *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.*
4. Jane Campion's (1993) feature length film, *The Piano.*
5. Maurice Sendak's (1981) picture book, *Outside Over There*. Harper & Row.

Campion's (1993) *The Piano* targets an adult audience, whereas the other four texts are generally considered to target a child audience, although, in effect, they fall into a category that crosses both child and adult audiences.

My rationale for selecting these five texts was personal and idiosyncratic. I chose them because they evoked in me a range of strong, meaningful, sometimes pleasant and sometimes troubling reflections and memories about childhood. As suggested by Nikolajeva (2002), the stories touched a state of childhood that I connected to as an adult. However, the texts were also selected as critically respected childhood stories that would be familiar to the teachers in the study.

During the first focus group session, I invited the teachers to share childhood texts that were meaningful to them, and to suggest texts that we could view/read together in subsequent sessions. However, I sensed that, given the newness of this group scenario, the teachers preferred my taking the lead in bringing the texts to them. As such, when texts weren't suggested, I did not pursue it. Interestingly, after the last formal session, the teachers expressed interest in continuing our book reading/film viewing sessions around childhood texts, and plans are underway for the teachers to take turns in choosing texts for discussions.

By presenting my selection of texts to the teachers, I was also opening up my own readings to other teachers' interpretations. Grumet (1991) writes that using only your readings of texts as responses cuts out your own ground, and that things become closed to you by being close to you. While listening to the teachers' responses, I could not help but feel surprised at how different many of their readings were from my own, which, of course, offered excellent support for the 'reader-oriented' approach, or "how real audiences make sense of texts" (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 1995, p. 4), and the importance of the "I" of the reader that comes into play as an intersecting text (Greene, 1995).

The role of the moderator. Focus group data is not suited to generalizations, as the data is not quantifiable; rather, the goal is to generate insights (Wilkinson, 1998; Madriz, 2000). What compelled me in moderating the teacher conversations was how people who teach or care for young children make meaning of the concept of childhood. I sought the generation of ideas to explore the meanings of childhood produced in the teachers' discussions, rather than to test a theory or search for an answer. Myers and Macnaghten (1999) note that focus groups are usually designed to "elicit something less fixed, definite and coherent that lies beneath attitudes, something that the researcher may call feelings, or responses, or experiences, or world-views" (p. 174), which is what I aimed to let come through. The focus group was structured with the intention, also, of producing data of a multifaceted and idiosyncratic nature.

My goal, as moderator, was to create a semi-structured, informal setting in which the focus group participants felt comfortable to highlight *their* thoughts and memories (Wilkinson, 1998). This required a balance of: 1) grounding the

discussions around the texts, 2) using questions to probe further, to ask for clarifications, and to invite responses from quieter participants, and 3) most importantly, minimizing my intervention by listening to the conversations unfold. In the end, I didn't have to worry about deliberately relinquishing my control. Perhaps by virtue of the number of participants, or through the unique combination of personalities, the participants easily controlled the flow of interactions, and I simply needed to listen and gauge when a new question would help elicit further discussion.

The teachers were informed in writing of the general nature of my research. To open the first session, I reiterated that I was interested in how fictional texts prompted teachers to think about childhood. I noted that I was interested in their personal views and that, as experienced teachers, I invited them to share their opinions as experts. I also offered a few general discussion guidelines (e.g., "There are no right or wrong answers." "It is perfectly acceptable to agree or disagree with others."). Please refer to Appendix I for the interview guidelines.

The questions I prepared were open-ended, for example: "What did you think about the story?" "Did the story remind you of your own childhood?" and "Do you think it was an accurate or interesting portrayal of childhood?" The teachers' conversations frequently moved in directions and onto topics that I had not anticipated or included in my interview guide and, corroborating Madriz's (2000) experience in her feminist focus group work, these group-led conversations often generated the most interesting data and insights for the research.

The setting. The focus group sessions took place in a daycare classroom in downtown Montreal, when the center was closed. Each session lasted

approximately two hours. The classroom was the daycare's welcome room, in which the children are dropped off in the mornings. It was a large, high-ceilinged, sunlit room, and shelves of toys surrounding us. As the sessions took place on Sunday mornings, I provided coffee, breakfast pastries and fruit, and the center provided cups, utensils, and milk. The discussions were videotaped and audiotaped for transcription and analysis purposes.

Data Analysis

The focus of the data analysis was on the interactive and social ways that the teachers co-constructed meanings about childhood. My method of analysis combined a conversation analysis with readings of the teachers' responses. Meaning-making is a social practice (Lemke, 1995), and opinions cannot be isolated from the contexts in which they are generated (Myers and Macnaghten, 1999). In analyzing focus group data, Morgan (1997) warns of the dangers of "psychological reductionism" on one end, in which a group's contributions are understood to be "no more than the sum of the behaviors of its individual members," and of "sociological reductionism" on the other end, in which "the behaviors of individuals are treated as mere manifestations of an overarching group process" (p. 60). The teachers constructed narratives in a specific situation and setting, and the purpose of the analysis was to glean insights from *this* context.

I employed a form of conversation analysis that I derived and adapted from the literature on: interview analysis by Silverman (2000), Holstein and Gubrium (1995), and Gubrium and Holstein (1997); focus group analysis by Kitzinger (1999) and Myers and Macnaghten (1999); and discourse analysis by Potter and Wetherell (1987).

Transcription and analysis features. The following two tables depict the symbols used in coding and analyzing the focus group data:

TRANSCRIPTION FEATURES

Adapted from Psathas' (1994) *Conversation Analysis: The Study of Talk-in-Interaction*, p. 12:

underlining: Underlining indicates parts of utterance that are stressed

::::::: A series of colons indicates sounds that are stretched, e.g., so::::

- : A dash indicates that a sound is cut off, e.g., And- bu-

( ): Round brackets indicate pauses in the conversation, e.g., (.) is a gap of under one second; (1) is a one second gap; (2) is a two second gap.

[ ]: Square brackets indicate speech that is overlapping, e.g., That's [what I mean]
[Oh, the dog]

ANALYSIS FEATURES

Adapted from Liddicoat's (2007) *An Introduction to Conversation Analysis* and Have's (2007) *Doing Conversation Analysis: A Practical Guide, second edition.*

Turn-taking organization
TCU: turn constructional component (turn at talk)
Each TCU is indicated by a change in speaker

Sequence organization (adjacency pairs)
FPP: first pair part
SPP: second pair part
FPP 2: first pair part in second adjacency pair
SPP 2: second pair part in second adjacency pair
FPP insert: expands the first pair part
SPP insert: expands the second pair part

Conversation analysis examines the context, organization, and sequence of a discussion to make sense of the participants' contributions. It focuses on how the

conversation is organized and how each utterance is shaped by what was said before and after. This is not an intuitive way of understanding talk, but is meant to highlight the teachers' interactive meaning making. Conversation analysis identifies sequences of talk, turn taking, and how participants take on roles (such as speaker/listener, questioner/answerer), outcomes (such as laughter or silence), and back channel utterances ("mm hm," "yeah") (Myers &Macnaugten, 1999). I adapted transcription conventions to identify stressed syllables, pauses and stretches, and overlaps. My goal was to balance the collection of details required for my analysis with a transcription report that would not be laborious for the reader who is not practiced in such conventions. I also aimed to balance the report of the teachers' talk so that it contained relevant conversation features, while keeping in mind that listeners edit the speech they hear into "flowing, coherent and uninterrupted messages," whereas readers do not (Myers & Macnaugten, 1999, p. 184). For the reader's ease, I present only the transcription features in the chapter. Analysis features are reported in Appendix II.

Unit of analysis. From the discussions gathered during the teachers' shared viewings or readings of the five childhood texts, I selected five sets of conversation sequences to analyze. I limited my data to these five sequences, out of a much larger data set, in order to conduct an analysis with effective attention and detail (Silverman, 2000). My selection was based on what I considered to be representative of the group's high quality interactions, and what I felt revealed shared meaning making in understanding childhood as a discursive formation.

The analysis was driven by what Holstein and Gubrium (1995) call unmotivated observations, which required that I *allow* the data's meaning to

emerge rather than rush in to extract or categorize meaning from it. Feminist researchers place importance on the issue of voice, and how "to make women's voices heard without exploiting or distorting those voices" (Olesen, 2000, p. 231). As the researcher, my interpretation, including the selection, editing and stitching together of the teachers' contributions, makes the report *my* version of their voices, but I hope to evoke in the reader some of the richness in spirit that I was fortunate to hear from the teachers.

Voices and accounts

In this section, I shift to a description of how voices and accounts were pivotal in my second and third phases of inquiry. These aspects were approached deliberately in the case study and co-constructed narrative.

The early childhood teacher is not a unified or singular self. Identity is not about an ascribed status; rather, "identity is an ongoing project, most commonly an ongoing narrative project" (Goodson, 1998, p.4). Sumara and Davis (1998) speak of "unskinning" or "unfolding" boundaries as means of renegotiating one's identity. Boundaries serve a function in understanding the world, but they are always without "clearly demarcated edges" (p. 83).

Suspending one's tendency to assume the existence of coherence in self, and instead, accepting an orientation of polyvocality has encouraged researchers to experiment with new forms of qualitative research, including experimental and "messy" texts, in which multiple voices are present (Alvermann & Hruby, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Ronai, 1995; Wolf, 1992). Gergen and Gergen (2000) describe the "multiplicity of competing and often contradictory values, political impulses, conceptions of the good, notions of desire, and senses of

our "selves" as persons" (p. 1037). The concept of polyvocality is rooted in feminist concerns about voice, whereby the multiplicity of values, beliefs, and identities "both within ourselves as scholars and within those who join our research as participants" is recognized and represented as integral to the research (p. 1037).

> [R]eality, as the umpire said of the pitch, ain't nothin' until I say what it is.
>
> - Banks and Banks, 1998, p. 14

> In a profound sense, accounts 'construct' reality.
>
> - Potter and Wetherall, 1987, p. 34

The issue of how "voices are framed and used" leads us directly into the nature of account (Fine, 1992, p. 219). Writing served as an integral part of these two phases of inquiry. Laurel Richardson (2000) describes writing as a method of discovery, a "dynamic, creative process" (p. 925), a way of finding out about yourself and your topic rather than simply a "mopping-up activity at the end of a research project" (p. 923). As Banks and Banks (1998) state, "no text is free of self-conscious constructions; no text can act as a mirror to the actual" (p. 13). The researcher, rather than the data, is the instrument and she makes herself "more fully present" in the inquiry (Richardson, 2000, p. 924). Embracing the notion that writing generates ideas, much of the shape of the case study and co-constructed narrative was formed *en route.*

Language is the site in which individuals construct their sense of selves and give meaning to their worlds. Teachers create and re-create themselves as multifaceted individuals, and co-create themselves as individuals in social contexts. Under the poststructuralist stance, Ellis and Bochner (2000) encourage us to

understand ourselves through "multiple perspectives, unsettled meanings, plural voices, and local and illegitimate knowledges" (p. 735). The two phases of inquiry reflect how the voices may be derived from different facets in one person, or they may be voices of different individuals coming together in a shared or fictional conversation. In either case, all conversations involve talk-in-interaction in which the voices *do* things with words, including exploring, and struggling through our constructions of social meanings (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

How is this type of research meaningful? The persuasiveness of the presentation does not rest in its measurable accuracy but in its capacity to offer the reader "a feel for the subjective experience of others" (Miller, 1998, p. 67). Through language, we "word the world," persistently, but never completely or precisely (Richardson, 2000, p. 923). By examining the discourse of childhood through the heuristic of conversations, I argue that a deliberate focus on the polyvocal nature of early childhood teachers' understandings of childhood can offer insights that a voice claiming to be singular cannot.

Methodology II. Layered account: A case study in *currere*

The second phase of inquiry was a case study of one teacher's subjective journey in early childhood education. As I analyzed the teachers' shared personal experiences, I was intrigued by the extent to which their views on childhood were influenced by the memories of their own childhoods. Because the conversation analysis approach limited my focus to the teachers' interactions and the *how* of their meaning making, I felt that I could learn still more about how teachers construct understandings of childhood if I studied closely one teacher's personal journey.

The purpose of the case study was to examine one teacher's subjective experience in constructing childhood meanings and the ways these constructions intersected with her teacher identity. The inquiry revealed details of how personal experience is embedded in structural inequalities and, through this disclosure, opened possibilities for transformative actions. The relocation of the personal involves a critical engagement with experience, reflecting a "desire to move elsewhere from somewhere" (Kamler, 2001, p. 1).

Data collection

I created a composite character, Emily, as my case study through a combination of autobiography and invention, or memory and fiction. I was captivated by autoethnographic studies conducted by researchers such as Ronai (1995, 1997), Walkerdine (1991), and Tillman-Healy (1996). These authors had succeeded in evoking in me a resonant understanding of the researcher's subjective experience of learning, through what Kirsch and Ritchie (1995) describe as "fluid, multiple and illusive" locations of self (p. 8).

Carol Rambo Ronai (1995, 1997) is credited with developing the approach of the layered account in qualitative research. In *On Loving and Hating My Mentally Retarded Mother* (1998), Ronai wrote a disquieting personal narrative that skipped across time through the voices of the child daughter, the adult daughter, and the researcher. Each voice contributed, in Ronai's words, "to the dialectic that comprises my 'self;' yet each voice shapes the others, bending, merging, blurring, and separating again as I move through social space" (1997, p. 7). Valerie Walkerdine (1991) in *Schoolgirl Fictions* addressed fictions of femininity to track her journey from schoolgirl (and infantilized woman) to woman

through a collection of published and unpublished articles, fragments of personal notes, and poems. Lisa M. Tillman-Healy (1996), in "A secret life in a culture of thinness: Reflections on body, food, and bulimia," portrays her search for meaning in her bulimic lifestyle through narratives from a multiplicity of identities: woman, scholar, daughter, bulimic, and cultural critic.

What I borrow from these authors is the presentation of different voices through a pastiche of insights, an "overwriting, in which the author allows each overlay of description to erase, revise, and change her identities and activities" (Gergen and Gergen, 2000, p. 1038). Their work was powerful in its portrayals of the complex, multiple, and contradictory ways each of us understands and functions as a human being. In following these authors' paths, I constructed a deliberately "multivoiced representation" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000b, p. 158), which underscored the multiplicity of selves, the "layers of consciousness" – with often competing and contradictory beliefs - that constitute an individual (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

In my case study, I combined the autoethnographic approach described above with an adaptation of Pinar's (1975, 2004) curriculum approach, *currere*, to gather memories about one teacher's subjective experience. My appreciation for the autoethnographic studies and for the autobiographical approach that underlies Pinar's (1975) method of *currere* and Grumet's (1991) excavation did not preclude my ambivalence with sharing confessional stories about my own life, nor my stronger desire to protect the identifications of those close to me. This dilemma compelled me to search for legitimate strategies of evasion. I turned to Ellis and Bochner (1996), who, in *Composing Ethnography*, expressed their hopes of

"enlarg[ing] the space to practice ethnographic writing as a form of creative nonfiction, to take certain expressive liberties associated with the arts, but to feel the ethical pull of converting data into experiences readers can use" (p. 28). Ellis and Bochner claim that "[t]here are no hard-and-fast rules to follow" (p. 28). I also sought direction from Denzin's (1997) and Hollowell's (1977) work on composite characters in qualitative research, in particular, the defense for the use of composite characters "to present the life while protecting the privacy of perfectly decent people" (Hollowell, p. 31). Anan (2005) developed a hybrid form of ethnographic writing, drawing upon elements of memoir, fiction, folklore, and creative writing, and Rosenblatt (2002) describes a "blurring of fact and fiction" (p. 893), in which there are no certain ethnographic identities, only hybrid realities.

In borrowing these ideas to create Emily as my case study, I altered facts, people, and situations; however, I believe that the quality of the memories remains. Perhaps unfortunately for the reader, no sensationalist details were added, although the reader should keep in mind that memories are "notoriously unreliable" (Rand, 1995, p. 94).

Texts. I juxtaposed the memory narratives and my analyses of the narratives with scenes and readings of a *South Park* episode. The animated television episode, *My Future Self N' Me* (originally aired December 4, 2002), plays shrewdly with the notion of temporality as a key social construction in understanding childhood and adulthood. This characteristic of temporality was used primarily to evoke Emily's memories, rather than presented as an accurate portrayal of the ways children view time. It was also presented as a way of intersecting insights gathered from Emily's narratives with insights from a shared cultural narrative. I justify this presentation

through Pinar's (1975) comparison of *currere*, as a method of inquiry applied to an individual's recollected educational experiences, with literary textual analysis and with the belief that stories help us appreciate that individual subjects are also collective subjects. Goodson (1998) writes that "[a] story is never just a story" - stories are statements about beliefs and values and as such, they carry social and political messages (p. 12). Memories and cultural stories can both be understood as texts to be deciphered and excavated (Grumet, 1991).

As a satirical and irreverent text, *My Future Self N' Me* encourages emotional distance in the adult viewer. In one sense, emotional distance is a helpful device in evoking critical self-reflection of an ironic nature. At the same time, the narrative centers around a group of boys rather than a family, as is typically the case with animated series such as *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy.* This aspect of child narration encourages the adult viewer to identify with the child protagonist (Powrie, 2005). As such, the combination of distancing satire and child-centered narrative offered the adult viewer a broad range of ways to identify with the child protagonist.

Data analysis and account

I presented Emily's memory narratives, my analysis of her narrative sequences, and scenes and analyses of the *South Park* episode in a layered account (Ronai, 1995). The layered approach, described earlier as a form of experimental writing (Ronai, 1992, 1995, 1997; Richardson, 2000), marks different voices, speakers, intentions, theoretical levels, and lenses. I join together, or as Gubrium and Holstein (1997) write, "articulate" voices, lenses, and theoretical frames in one case study. Pinar's method of curriculum inquiry, *currere*, provided a generative

framework through which to analyze "the significance of subjectivity" in the study and process of education (2004, p.2). The analysis of scenes from *My Future Self N' Me* was grounded in film theory that specifically addressed the child protagonist.

In order to guide and enlist the reader's support as a "collaborator in making meaning" (Paré, personal communication, 2009), I offer guidelines to lead the reader through shifts and voices. Using print signifiers, memories are presented in *italicized* font style, dialogue from *My Future Self N' Me* is presented in Arial font, and I borrow Ronai's use of triple asterisks to indicate to the reader to expect a change in voice.

Methodology III. Narrative inquiry: A co-constructed dialogue between the researcher and the teacher participants

The third and final phase of inquiry was a co-constructed dialogue between myself, as researcher, and the teacher participants in the focus group study. As I read and re-read my focus group transcripts, I started to write responses to the teachers' comments. The responses emerged from different parts of my identity – the teacher, the curriculum student, the film viewer, the children's literature student, the mother – and I jotted down various questions, opinions and struggles next to the words of the interviewed teachers. I let these responses appear in fragmented ways. What began to take shape was a co-authored story, with my voices and the participants' voices joining together. Rather than silence the interweaving speakers, I decided to craft this inquiry in a dialogic style, as conversations between teachers, mothers, and literature, film and curriculum students. Grumet (2006) describes reading as inviting us "to mingle our thoughts,

visions, and hopes with someone's else's" (p. 207), and I see a similar mingling as my strategy in this final phase of inquiry.

Referring to authors who approach their area of research through purposely combining fiction with fact, and through intersecting different voices (Alvermann & Hruby, 2000; Ellis & Berger, 2002; Miller, 1998; Rosenblatt, 2002; Wolf, 1992), I constructed another "multivoiced representation" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000b, p. 158), this time through engaging with other people's responses to one childhood text, *Outside Over There* (Sendak, 1981). Wilkinson (1998) describes the purpose of the dialogic approach "to expose and openly acknowledge the role of the researcher as a means of exploring how knowledges are constructed in interaction between people" (p. 120).

Clifford and Marcus (1986) contend that naturally dialogic features of meaning making are often suppressed by the authoritarian voice of the social scientist. Qualitative researchers argue for new forms of ethnography that reflect the participants' representations, but also include the representations of the researcher (Ellis & Berger, 2002; Gubrium and Holstein, 1995). In "(Re)presenting voices in dramatically scripted research," Michelle Miller (1998) suggests that dramatically scripted accounts "can disseminate information with clarity, show rather than report on interaction, report self-reflection, engage audience empathy and rationality, and represent process" (p. 69). It is this evocative aspect of the dialogic method that can persuade the reader, often more than a traditional academic style. This method openly recognizes "the impossibility for authors to be objective" (Banks and Banks, p. 13). As with the layered account, the co-

constructed narrative provides possibilities for weaving together voices, accounts, theories, and lenses in the research process.

My goals in this phase of inquiry were: 1) to add myself into the conversation (Richardson, 2000), 2) to explore further how "each voice shapes the others" (Ronai, 1997, p. 7), and 3) to conduct a close reading of Sendak's (1981) elusive story, *Outside Over There.*

Data collection

The creation of voices. However unacknowledged, multiple voices are always present in texts. In this co-constructed narrative, I sought to deliberately separate and combine voices in order to highlight the polyvocal aspect of my inquiry. Lensmire (1998) compares two understandings of voice: as individual expression and as participation. Voice as participation is advocated by critical pedagogues, including Freire (1970) and Giroux (1988), as a form of critical dialogue or "a site of struggle where subjectivity and meaning are produced" (Kamler, 2001, p. 38).

The speakers. I found that my crafted, co-constructed conversation was unwieldy with eight speakers (five teacher participants and my own three voices of curriculum student, literature/film student, and mother), and considered ways of creating a more manageable group size of five participants. As the analysis of the focus group discussions demonstrated, the teachers frequently took clear sides in the conversations. In addition, the discussions often involved dialogues between two speakers. While being mindful of Morgan's (1997) caution against psychological reductionism in focus group reporting, my intention in this co-

constructed narrative was to respond to the *content,* rather than the interactive nature, of the teachers' contributions. I decided that, for this purpose, I could present the teachers' voices as distilled through two characters, Margaux and Claire, who would represent the teachers' often-opposing sides. The three other voices were ones that I drew out of myself to add to the teachers' conversation: Boots, a curriculum theorist, who would help redirect our discussion to issues of teacher subjectivity and curriculum; Sarah, a mother and a film/literature student, who would bring in mostly psychoanalytic strategies for interpreting the story; and the teacher, whose voice was added to Margaux's and Claire's. At times, I extended the teacher's dialogue in a speculative manner and, other times, I used my teacher's voice as a writing device to craft a sense of flow and evenness in the conversation.

Utterances by speaker line for Margaux and Claire are generally taken from one actual teacher's speech, rather than combining single lines. I also included in Margaux and Claire's voices selections from written reflections that the teachers wrote in response to the following prompt:

> Taking into consideration the films and book we viewed and read together, as well as our discussions, I invite you to write a reflective piece on:
>
> a) The ways you think about childhood and adulthood (child/adult perspectives/distinctions).
>
> b) How these ways of thinking are implicated in your teacher experience and practice (why am I here? How do these texts shed light on why I am here?).

The teachers' quoted speech is presented in italicized font. To demarcate my teacher voice from the focus group participants' teacher voices, my additions are

printed in regular font. For the co-constructed narrative, I removed pauses and filler words from teachers' conversation, so that the document reads more like a script.

Finally, Maurice Sendak, the author of *Outside Over There,* appears in one section of the dialogue as a guest. His contributions are citations from an interview with John Cech (1995) and are presented in quotation marks with reference to the interview. Sendak's unique insights as the book's author and as a thoughtful children's artist provided valuable ideas for the participants to consider while interpreting the story.

The voices.

MARGAUX: A teacher (composite of six teachers)

CLAIRE: A teacher and mother (composite of six teachers)

SARAH: A graduate student in children's literature and mother (me)

BOOTS: A curriculum theorist (me)

SENDAK: Himself

The texts. The texts that I responded to in this phase of inquiry included: 1) the story of *Outside Over There,* 2) the teachers' responses to the story and to the moderator's questions about childhood and early childhood education, and 3) the teachers' written reflections.

I chose the picture book, *Outside Over There*, because of its themes of childhood and adulthood, and how it resonated with the teachers, evoking the most in-depth discussion from all of the texts shared. Maurice Sendak identified three books, written and illustrated over a span of 18 years, as a trilogy set: *Where the*

Wild Things Are (1963), *In the Night Kitchen* (1970), and *Outside Over There* (1981). He described the set as variations on the theme of the "constant miracle of the child's emotional survival" (see Cech, 1995, p. 115). *Outside Over There* is the most tragic and complex of Sendak's trilogy.

Data analysis and account

Close readings of the story and the teachers' responses were based, in large part, in curriculum and film studies. The conversational format was the heuristic device I used to bring together the teachers' multifarious thoughts and memories, and my responses to their contributions and to the text. The purpose was to explore how different types of childhood and adult-child relationships are constituted and, potentially, re-constituted (James and Prout, 1997). Again, three studies were especially significant in guiding me in this means of inquiry. Margery Wolf (1992) reported an ethnographic study of the circumstances surrounding a Taiwanese woman's hallucinatory episodes in three tellings: a fictional narrative, a set of field notes, and an anthropological journal article. Wolf's work impressed upon me the extent to which each lens produced its own insights on the same phenomenon. Alvermann and Hruby (2000) write about their experimental and fictive approach in reporting a literacy project throug a conventional academic report, a fictive narrative, and the authors' reflections. Finally, and the format that my approach was most closely based on, I referred to a Ph.D. dissertation written by Michael Lysack (2004), in which Lysack created fictional conversations between Bakhtin, Vygotsky, White, and himself as a graduate student. This dialogic interaction of

different voices was inspired by Michael White's (1995) narrative therapy approach.

Conclusion

The methodological framework and phases of inquiry for my dissertation were designed to address how teachers construct understandings of childhood in response to a set of fictional texts, and how these understandings influence their subjective teaching experience and reflective practice. The goal of the research was to generate insights through multiple approaches that highlighted the polyvocal ways of understanding human nature, within ourselves and with others. As a final word, in order to fulfill these aims, it is important to keep in mind Ellis and Bochner's (1996) encouragement to researchers to present people "as complicated and vulnerable human beings who act and feel in complex, often unpredictable ways" (p. 7).

Chapter 4. Focus group study: Teachers' interactive constructions of childhood

> You observe the scene; you are yourself, the child; you are one of your parents; you are both your parents; you occupy all these positions at once.
>
> - Annette Kuhn, 2002, p. 188

In this chapter, I report on the analyses of conversations from three focus group sessions that I conducted with five early childhood teachers. I analyzed the discussions primarily through what conversation analysts call unmotivated observations, an exploratory approach, in which the focus was on *how* the participants formed their ideas, rather than a search for preconceived categories of content. Conversation analysis was applied to capture the interactive nature of the teachers' meaning making, and to explore how ideas about childhood develop, operate, and conflict in a social context of early childhood teachers. The teachers shared a multiplicity of experiences, memories, thoughts, beliefs, opinions, and stories that influenced how they generated knowledge. Childhood is a complex discursive formation, and I aimed to re-present the participants' voices and their subjective experiences, as much as possible, in their multivocal, collective, and co-constructed ways.

The conversation analysis was combined, in a secondary way, with textual interpretations of the teachers' responses, in order to also examine some of the ideas that the teachers contributed.

Transcription features

I include the transcription codes for clarification, and the abbreviations used for the speakers. For the transcription with analysis features, please refer to Appendix II.

TRANSCRIPTION FEATURES

Adapted from Psathas' (1994) *Conversation Analysis: The Study of Talk-in-Interaction*, p. 12:

underlining: Underlining indicates parts of utterance that are stressed

::::::: A series of colons indicates sounds that are stretched, e.g., so::::

- : A dash indicates that a sound is cut off, e.g., And- bu-

( ): Round brackets indicate pauses in the conversation, e.g., (1) is a one second gap; (2) is a two second gap.

[ ]: Square brackets indicate speech that is overlapping, e.g., That's [what I mean]
[Oh, the dog]

Speaker abbreviations

C: Catherine
H: Heather
L: Linda
Ma: Maggie
Me: Merrill
S: Sandra

Texts

The analyses will be reported as follows:

1. *The Chronicles of Narnia*: Part I in seven sequences; Part II in seven sequences

2. *The Hockey Sweater* and *Outside Over There*: Seven sequences

3. *Where the Wild Things Are*: Seven sequences

4. *The Piano*: Four sequences

Analyses

***The Chronicles of Narnia,* Part I**

The first set of discussions analyzed took place after the teachers viewed Andrew Adamson's (2005) feature length film, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, an adaptation of C.S. Lewis's (1950) *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.* In this set of sequences, the teachers are discussing the scene in which Lucy discovers the magic wardrobe and walks through it to the land of Narnia, where she meets the fawn, Mr. Tumnus.

Sequence 1 of 7

(I am turning off the DVD player as I speak)
S: So what did you think about (2) that:: clip?
(5)
(soft laughter, clearing throats)
Me: Her innocence
(2)
S: Inno[cence]
Me: [and] her curiosity-
L: that was my word
Me: and open
Ma: yes, that's [ex]-
Me: [an]-and wanting to get to know who this other (1) being was.
Ma: Trust
Me: Mm hmm
(2)
S: Innocence and openness to new [experiences]
Ma: [Mm hm, mm hm]
C: Her sense of wonder
Ma: [Mm hmm]
L: [Mm]

I start with this particular sequence because its hesitant quality provides a comparative point for the teachers' more interactive conversations that follow. If I were to consider only the content of the teachers' contributions in the above

sequence, I would gather a number of descriptors of childhood: innocence, curiosity, openness, trust, and sense of wonder. Myers and Macnaghten (1999), however, caution against treating focus group data as one would survey data; instead, they urge the conversation analyst to consider the "situatedness of opinion" (p. 174) or the "why just this was said just then" (p. 173). The silences in the conversation - indicated by seconds in the parentheses, which, as moderator, I tried to repair through prompts and acknowledgements – indicate the forced or hesitant quality to the conversation. The responses that the teachers offered seemed secondary to the efforts demonstrated to move the conversation forward. This led to an almost predictable list of childhood traits that one would find to describe either the screen character, Lucy, or children in general.

The sequence unfolded like a traditional classroom situation, in which I asked the question (as the teacher) and the group members took turns giving answers (as the students). The competitive edge in Linda's response ("that was my word") to Merill's description of "curiosity" led further to this sense of the teacher looking for the right answer.

The conversation continued:

Sequence 2 of 7

C: Thought the actress really got that-
Ma: Yes, [captured it.]
C: [Face is raptured]. I-I hadn't seen that film (.) so. I have fond memories of the book (.) so (breathes in) yeah (.) she really got that moment.
S: Yeah (2) So, wonderment (1) innocence.

Catherine filled out her meaning of the "wonder" by connecting it, first, with a positive review of the film actress's performance and, second, with how the image evoked "fond memories of the book." The reference to her memories subtly

pulled the group to Catherine's childhood experience of the story, and offered a more nuanced and individualized understanding of the term wonder.

In the next sequence, I prompted the teachers to connect Lucy more explicitly to their constructions of childhood.

Sequence 3 or 7

S: Do you think it was an (1) interesting and accurate picture of childhood?
(1)
C: For <u>some</u> children.
Ma: For some (.) [I guess]-
C: [<u>Yeah</u>.]
Ma: I can see some children not::: being afraid and not:::
L: Yeah
Ma: going near that [fawn at the door (unclear)]

The word "accurate" in my question suggested a universal quality to childhood, a perspective that Catherine and Maggie were careful to avoid. However, Catherine's response, "for <u>some</u> children," indicated her opinion that Lucy captured an accurate *possibility* for childhood. Her emphatic "<u>Yeah</u>" was, then, a challenge directed at Maggie's more tentative "for some, I guess." This set up a transition place in the conversation, in which Maggie could reasonably be expected to take her turn and respond to the challenge. Maggie did this, and defended her position by drawing an impression of a child who, unlike Lucy, was *not* willing to approach Mr. Tumnus, the fawn. Linda supported Maggie's argument, and then Merrill took up the image of the fearful child that Maggie proposed and returned this image back to Lucy:

Sequence 4 or 7

Me: [Which she wasn't] at first, with the sounds (.) but then when she (1) collected herself (.) for lack of a better word (.) then it was (play voice) Oh:::
L: (laughs)

Me: What do we <u>have</u> here? [laughs]
Ma: (play voice) [Let's see what we] can do.
S: When she met the fawn?
Me: Mm hmm
S: Right

Merrill was referring to Lucy's initial fear turning into curiosity and wonderment. At this point, single word descriptors, such as innocence, fear, and wonder were no longer used. Merrill more effectively communicated her meaning of "curiosity" through playfully mimicking the child's voice and facial expressions. She, in fact, became the child, Lucy, in Powrie's (2005) sense of "being-adult while also being-child." The group responded with interest and laughter to this embodied identification.

I asked Merrill to clarify that the scene she was referring to was the one in which Lucy and Mr. Tumnus meet. Catherine then redirected the group to another scene:

Sequence 5 of 7

C: But even going into the attic room
Ma: Mm hmm
C: And seeing this strange shrouded thing:: I mean, it could be frightening
Me: Mm hmm
C: But she just look- (makes apt expression)
L: (small laugh)
C: Something new

Catherine picked up Merrill's approach of presenting this sense of wonder through embodying Lucy.

In the next sequence, it became clear that Catherine moved the discussion to the scene in the attic in order to refer back to her own childhood memory of having experienced this same scene in literary form:

Sequence 6 of 7

C: Which is how I read the book, I re- I loved that book, it's one of my books, right?
Ma: [Mm hmm]
Me: [Oh::?]
C: From my own childhood? And <u>that</u> particular moment I remember it as if it happened to me (1) I re-read that book <u>so</u> often.
Ma: [Mmm]
C: [I] love:: the idea of opening the door
L: Yeah
C: to a room
Ma: [Yup]
Me: [Mm hmm]
L: [Yeah]
C: and then opening another door and it's all ordinary (.) it's just completely ordinary (1.5) and then you walk into magic.
Ma: Mm
L: Mm hmm
C: I <u>love</u> books like that.
Me: [Mmm]
C: [But] that was one of the (1) the ones (laughs) that [stayed with me]

Catherine tried to appeal to the others' emotions by bringing them closer to a concrete memory of what that moment in the story – when Lucy opened the door in the attic room – meant to her as a child. Her first strategy was to pose the question, "it's one of my books, right?" and second, she shared her memory of identifying with Lucy as she "walk[ed] into the magic." Her statement "I remember it as if it happened to me" emphasized the extent of the identification she felt with Lucy. Further, her statement, "that was one of the ones that stayed with me," implied both an adult connection to her childhood, in that the memory *still* lived inside her, and a temporal distance from childhood, because the childhood moment "*stayed*" with her, which implied that other moments had been "severed" from her (Natov, 2003, p. 2).

By evoking these childhood memories, Catherine successfully appealed to my sense of emotions, perhaps because it stirred my own childhood memories of escaping into magic through stories. The other teachers, however, were less persuaded. This was indicated by the ways the last two sequences (5 and 6) unfolded: Catherine was speaking in an extended turn, taking the role of the speaker in first pair part throughout the sequence, while the other teachers responded with what conversational analysts call back channel utterances or continuers ("Mm hmm" or "Yup"), which functioned to let Catherine know that they were following her trajectory, without necessarily offering a sense of agreement. Catherine appeared to acknowledge this polite and uncommitted response, and laughed as she concluded her point.

Maggie then entered the conversation to argue for an alternative position, picking up on Catherine's strategy of persuading through the memory of being a child.

Sequence 7 of 7

Ma: [It's funny] um:: (3) I see it a little different- like, ah-I don't think I would be that little girl that would [open the door]
L: [(small laugh)]
Me: No (.) I would go and get my sister
(laughter from group)
Ma: [Yeah (.) I wouldn't be that little girl]
C: [Interesting]
Me: [I would push her through]
(laughter from group)
C: [I <u>was</u> that little girl, oh yeah]

The evidence that Catherine, Maggie, and Merrill used to try to persuade each other to their positions was how *they*, as children, would or wouldn't have

followed the same actions as Lucy. In a sense, they were appealing to memory as a determinant of truth (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003), and co-constructing ideas about childhood through comparing their child selves with the fictional child portrayed.

Discussion on *Chronicles of Narnia,* Part I

The first set of sequences yielded a number of points. First, in response to the question of whether Lucy represented an accurate or inaccurate picture of childhood, there was an impression that the strength of the teachers' own memories of "being a child," the grounding of their beliefs in their own personal experience, was so powerful that none of them were prepared to be swayed by the opinions of the others. This resulted in a collage of memories, with some overlap between those of Maggie and Merrill.

Second, in the above segment, Catherine, Merrill, and Maggie's identification with Lucy, as demonstrated in their statements, "I don't think I would be that little girl," "I *was* that little girl," "I wouldn't have walked through that door," and "I would go and get my sister," supported Powrie's (2005) claim that adult spectators who watch child protagonists on screen often take up the position of "being-adult while also being-child." Boundary spaces between adulthood and childhood were crossed with ease, as they embodied the child with the purpose of supporting their positions.

Third, a collapsing and simultaneity of time (past, present, and future) was at play. Catherine brought forward a childhood experience from the past, in referring to "when you walk into magic." Maggie's statement, "I don't think I would be that little girl," referred to a present or future possibility, in which she spoke about the actions she would take as a child in the here and now, which

Powrie (2005) described as a "simultaneous experience" and Pinar (2004) as living "simultaneously in the past, present, and future" (p. 4).

Finally, Billig (1996) characterized thought processes as argumentative, so that speakers tend shape their talk as arguments in response to the oppositions that they interpret in discussions, and to take sides. How a conversation context shapes knowledge production was observed as a dichotomous rendering of Lucy developed in the group: as ready for the magic versus reckless.

***Chronicles of Narnia*, Part II**

Directly into the next set of conversation sequences, Maggie significantly shifted the focus from being a child to being a mother:

Sequence 1 of 6

Ma: [And then I'm thinking of my daughters]
S: Yes
Ma: And how (.) as a mother, I would probably say to them, (play voice) Don't ever
[(laughter from group)]
Ma: [go there where you're] not sure (laughs) y' know

Maggie switched roles from being *not* that child (Lucy) to being a mother (of children who might be Lucy or not Lucy). She was now in the position of warning the child to be wary of the dangers that *she* would have sensed if she was the child. What is striking is the effortless way that Maggie made these boundary and temporal shifts. Perhaps we do this all the time, but it's an extraordinary feat. Within these shifts, what remained constant was the particular meaning that Maggie ascribed to childhood, which I would interpret as a time to be protected.

Sequence 2 of 6

L: That's funny
C: Wow:::

Ma: And I don't know,
C: [Okay::]
Ma: [It's jus-] (1) it's funny, aye? how-
S?: But you wouldn't have (gone in as a child) either, right? [unclear]
Ma: Yeah (2) [like]-
S: Yes
C: Wow:::
L: (small laugh)

Again, Maggie received a combination of support and challenge in response to her expressed point of view. I unintentionally interrupted her next thought with a request for clarification. This brought Maggie back to being the child, and this time, she offered memories of her own mother's warnings into the discussion.

Sequence 3 of 6

Ma: I would have probably (2) um (1) had my mother (laughs).
(laughter from group*)*
Ma: (laughs) Thinking about her (.) and y'know (.) (play voice) <u>Don't</u> talk to strangers.
(small laughter from group)
Ma: Don't, don't, uh y'know, you're not allowed to be there::: so you don't-
L: [(laughs)]
Ma: [And] the respect I had for my parents, where, y'know, I would respect whatever it is they had to- y'know, like I-I just wasn't a (2) a <u>dare</u>devil kind of child (.) like I-I really (.) uh::: [and I-]
S: [So you] saw her as being quite brave
Ma: <u>Yeah</u>, an-and <u>fas</u>cinating and, um:: (1) y'know (.) a-all I guess not afraid, curious, trust, openness to others,

Maggie mimicked her own mother in the same tones and with the same spirit of caution that she pretended to deliver to her own daughters. She moved from the perspective of the child protagonist, to herself as child, to herself as mother, to listening to her own mother in a fluid time travel, reflecting Kuhn's (2000) statement that "you occupy all these positions at once" (p. 188). The group encouraged Maggie to continue with their laughter.

Maggie tried to expand and explain *why* she would act the way she would (or did), that is, differently from Lucy. She proposed two explanations: 1) the unquestionable authority she felt her parents deserved, which was reflected in the parental authority she portrayed herself as holding, and 2) the belief that she wasn't a "daredevil" child, implying the idea of inherent difference in childhood: "not afraid, curious, trust, openness to others."

Sequence 4 of 6

Ma: but <u>also</u>, um:: (1) she was so open to the fact that he was <u>different</u>
Me: Mm hmm
Ma: And then- and then, the realization that (1) y' know that <u>she's</u> different to <u>him</u>
Me: Mm hmm
Ma: That they're both on the same (1) y'know, they're both–
Me: [Experiencing the same]
Ma: [New to each other] y' know
Me: Yeah.
Ma: an-and how:::
S: That recognition
Ma: And that acceptance.
Me: Mm hmm

Difference is a critical aspect in adult conceptions of childhood (Nodelman, 2008). Maggie referred to the unfamiliarity of the figure of Mr. Tumnus, the fawn, and Merrill quickly connected to Lucy's realization "that she's different to him" and "that they're both on the same." Interestingly, in this scene of *Narnia,* the adult is depicted as the Other, which is a reversal of the more typical view of the child as Other. The viewer knows that Mr. Tumnus is an adult through his depiction by the adult actor, James McAvoy, and through the title of "Mr."

Together, Maggie and Merrill attempted to make sense of Lucy and Mr. Tumnus's encounter. Merrill pointed to the similarities in their situations: "experiencing the same"; whereas Maggie focused on their differences: "new to

each other," "that acceptance," "a stranger." The tensions between Mr. Tumnus and Lucy's similarities (as two alien Others) and differences (as adult and child) were not resolved, and in the following segment, Maggie returned to her own response as (if) a child.

Sequence 5 of 6

Ma: And yeah, y' know, I don-I'm not sure that I would have been so (1.5) open to a stranger and just walk away with someone (.) like I just (1) that to me is like wow:: (laughs). Th- No, [there's no way]
C: [She was ready for the] magic-
Ma: [Yeah]
C: [She] knew something right from the very [beginning]-
Ma: [Yeah]
C: -of that sequence
Ma: Yeah, yeah.
C: She was, she was ready.
Ma: I was more of a chicken (.) I still am (.) [so]

Catherine challenged the interpretation of Lucy as brave and not heeding the dangers of the unfamiliar, by reframing Lucy's actions as being "ready for the magic." In Catherine's view, childhood (or life) was a time for adventure, something that Lucy was ready for "right from the very beginning of that sequence." Maggie's back channel response of "yeah" showed that she was listening, but not agreeing, which she stated in the last line: "I was more of a chicken" (in the past) and "I still am" (in the present).

Catherine, prompted by Maggie's earlier comments, then shifted from her childhood perspective to a mother's perspective:

Sequence 6 of 6

C: [But it's interesting] you said you would be- you wouldn't- you- (1) how you <u>felt</u> about yourself (the back-up tape recorder clicks off at the end of the tape) as a kid y-you reflect- it reflect- Do you want me to st-? (I shake my head) It reflected in your- in what you say to your own

daughters, because just as you said that, I thought, and I did tell my kids, "Go through the door. Anytime." I'd – yeah. "Go. Take the risk. Do it."
Me: [Wow]
C: [They]- they didn't, but, but-but that's intriguing.
Ma: Yeah.
(4)
S: That's interesting. It's, um, different positions of watching it too (.) as a protective parent or as a child. It's interesting.

Referring to Maggie's experience of childhood emotions being reflected in her parenting, Catherine expanded on how her own memories of being "ready for the magic" were reflected in her practices as a mother. Merrill, who shared Maggie's more cautious memories, expressed surprise or disbelief, to which Catherine responded, in a reassuring manner, that her children did not follow her advice. Maggie continued to display a sense of uncertainty.

I attempted to repair the four-second gap by framing the discussion as spectators assuming different viewing positions; however, theoretical re-framings seemed to halt rather than inspire further discussion, and I only succeeded in ending the discussion.

Discussion on *Chronicles of Narnia,* Part II

Regarding the construction of childhood, what developed was a debate between understanding childhood – in the face of the unknown or the unfamiliar - as a time of fear, care, and caution versus childhood as a time of readiness to experience magic. The ways of knowing, in this set of sequences, were grounded in the teachers' own contexts as children and mothers, and in their relationships with their children, mothers, and sisters. In *Bitter Milk* (1988), Grumet proposes that "there is a dialectical relation between our domestic experience of nurturing children and our public project to educate the next generation" (p. 5). Arguing

against a curriculum that is motivated by the purpose of relinquishing the child from the symbiotic relationship with the mother, in order to be claimed by the language and rules of the father, Grumet encourages teachers and curriculum theorists to consider a middle space. She writes that women are urged to "bury our memories of this relation [of preoedipal symbiosis] we knew as children and again as mothers," complicitly supporting the paternal project that denies the adequacy of self-knowledge based in identification, connectedness and differentiation "with this other, this child, 'my child'" in favor of knowledge based in assumptions of predictability and bureaucracy (p. 11).

The teachers' conversations demonstrated that such ways of knowing are not easily buried. Their lively descriptions of memories and personal stories of identification and connectedness demonstrated a wealth of convictions. Early childhood education may be one of the few formal educational spaces in which the traditionally domestic values of nurturance and emotional connectedness are allowed entry. It may be the only curriculum space in which a middle ground between the private and public domains is admitted, in which teachers are not expected to hide their traditionally feminine strengths, and in which it may be possible to closely examine *how* "our relations to other people's children are inextricably tied to our relation to our own progeny, actual and possible" (Grumet, 1988, p. 28).

Radstone (2000) notes that there is the tendency to "abandon 'outmoded' conceptual distinctions" between, for instance, subjectivity and objectivity, or the private world and the public world; however "memory work tends, rather, to hold these terms in tension" for the purpose of connecting individual and group

memories with cultural, historical, and societal practices (p. 11). In identifying with the child, the teachers were returned to feeling childhood emotions, ones felt under their own idiosyncratic circumstances (Wilson, 2005). Their knowledge was offered in personal and subjective forms, but by opening their views to others to challenge, they were forced to reflect on the contextual nature of their knowledge. In fact, the most effective prompts to elicit discussion in one another were utterances of surprise or disbelief, forcing the other to defend her position.

The amount of interaction, in the form of argument, support, sub-group consensus, and joking in the latter part of the sequence contrasted with the more forced quality of the first part. The exchanges in the latter part involved more overlaps and fewer gaps in conversation, as well as longer turns. Linda and Hannah were not as vocal in this sequence as they are in other sequences, however, as Kitzinger (1994) writes, their role as audience played a shaping role in "the ways in which research participants tell stories *to one another*" (p. 113). Telling a story to an attentive and supportive group of colleagues is a different experience from telling a story to one person, and the variety in communication (role playing, joke telling, storytelling, laughing) in the group process that Kitzinger (1994) described was observed in these sessions.

Hockey Sweater* and *Outside Over There

In the following conversation, reported in seven sequences, the teachers were asked to compare the child protagonists from two stories: ten-year-old Roch in Sheldon Cohen's (1980) short, film animation adaptation of Roch Carrier's (1979) *The Hockey Sweater* and nine-year-old Ida in Maurice Sendak's (1981) *Outside Over There*.

Note how the teachers applied text analysis strategies to interpret the stories and form their arguments on the meanings of childhood.

Sequence 1 of 7

S: How about the two stories that we looked at today. If we juxtaposed the two of them together (.) do you see any connections?
(2)
C: You know, the only thing that struck me was that (2) for this little boy (1) with the Hockey Sweater, um (1) even if people weren't accurately paying attention to him, they were really very present in [his life]
L: [yeah, the adults were there] (quietly)
C: This-th-the adults were really there:::
Me: Mm hmm

My phrasing of the question "If we juxtaposed the two [stories], do you see any connections?" set up a dichomotous comparison, and Catherine responded by noting the contrast between the adults (mother, curate, and older siblings) in *The Hockey Sweater* and the adults (mother and father) in *Outside Over There.* Linda and Merrill supported Catherine's position and prompted her to continue.

Sequence 2 of 7

C: He might have grown up to disagree::, but they were [there for him]
Ma: [Mm hmm]
Me: [Yup]
C: that was une[quivocal]-
Ma: [present] (quietly)
S: -They didn't have the same priorities as [him]
Ma: [Mm hm]
C: NO, [but th- th-
Ma: No [but they were there] It's okay.
Me: [they were there] (quietly)
C: They were there :: and-and, uh, for the children in *Outside Over There*, the parents didn't seem to be (1.5) present [presences]
Me: [Mm hm]
S: Right (quietly)
C: They were absent presences. That really struck me.
(1)

The teachers were united in emphasizing the need for the adult's presence: "they were there." Catherine expanded on her point through many lines while the rest of the group listened, agreed, and showed attentiveness. While the teachers' strong responses to the depiction of Ida's mother's lack of presence will be discussed further in chapter six, I want to step out of the conversation analysis for a moment in order to address the notion of the child's *need* as a rhetorical device for constituting meanings of childhood.

Conceptualizing the child in terms of his or her psychological needs is regarded as "a progressive and enlightened framework for working with children" in Western societies, used to prescribe care and education, and to assess the quality of the adult-child relationship (Woodhead, 1997, p. 63). While not denying that children have certain requirements for health and care, the meaning of "needs" is complex, and Woodhead writes that its indiscriminate use in policy documents in education, childcare, and social work supports a protectionist relationship between adult and child, in which the adult is the dominant provider and the child is the passive recipient. Woodhead suggests that we replace the notion of empirical needs with the concept of children's needs as a cultural construction, that is, needs that are established through the lenses of cultural ideologies and personal values. In other words, to say "The child *needs* the full time love and understanding of his mother/parent" is a factual statement whereas, "The child *should have* the full time love and understanding of his mother/parent" implies a value judgment. The teachers expressed a shared and unequivocal position, an "apparently unproblematic taken-for-granted certainty," rather than expressing a value choice (Woodhead, 1997, p. 77).

In the next sequence, Hannah and Linda responded to the question of comparing the two stories by identifying two points: 1) the significance of the child's perspective, and 2) the child's imaginative abilities.

Sequence 3 of 7

H: I think in both of the stories, uh, we can see the reality of the child. Like, the (1) what they're expe::riencing, their pro::blems, and th- like, their reality, their having real problems and (1) um, just considering from their point of view (1)
S: Okay:: yeah
H: what they're facing (.) we can see that in both stories.
L: Maybe also how they use their imagination [again]
S: [Mm hmm]
L: (playfully) He's looking at himself be::ing this [pla::yer]
[(soft laughter from group)]
L: This huge [sto::ry]
Ma: [Great hockey player]
L: And she-[she was the same]
Ma: [And all kids thought] that. They all thought that -
H: The chi::ld's world and their reality
(sounds of agreement from group)
L: So he's making up his stories just as (1) [sh-she] is.

In both *The Hockey Sweater* and *Outside Over There*, the authors construct the voice of the child, and it is this internal voice that Hannah was sensitive to. Hannah had been quieter than the other teachers, and I tried to prompt her to continue. However, this line of thought was not picked up by the others. Linda took the opportunity to offer a different response to the question. Hannah then restated her point about the child's world (emphasizing the child in stretched tones), strategizing by noting it in the context of Linda's depiction of Roch seeing himself "be:::ing this pla:::yer." Linda's next comment ("so he's making up this story just as she is") was an extension of her own statement earlier, rather than a (preferred) response to Hannah's.

Sequence 4 of 7

S: [ye::ah] So a very sensitive portrayal
[(soft sounds of agreement from group)]
[of the child's either inner or outer world]
C: And how separate it is from the adult's
L: Oh yeah
(sounds of agreement)
C: Even the <u>well</u>-intentioned, present adults
(sounds of agreement)
C: <u>do</u> <u>not</u> <u>get</u> <u>it</u> for [<u>one</u> second]
L: [(laughs)]
(sounds of agreement)
C: They don't get a <u>pie::ce</u> of what he's going through (1) [which]
S: [that's interesting]
C: is really <u>tough</u> to know as an adult but it's a <u>fa::ct</u>
Ma: [Bu-]

When I entered the conversation to propose a summary, pointing to how the child's inner and outer worlds were sensitively portrayed in both narratives, Catherine latched on this thought and linked it with her earlier point about the adults' presence. She noted that the child's inner (and outer) world was separate from the adult's, and emphasized that this was the case even with well-intentioned adults. The various threads began to gather into more complex conversations about childhood and adulthood. At the same time, there continued to be a sense that idiosyncratic teacher positions were evoked and that, individually, they were not prepared to depart from these positions: Catherine on the issues of presence and difference in the adult-child relationship, Linda on the significance of the child's imaginative abilities, and Hannah on the child's inner reality.

Sequence 5 of 7

H: [But] it's interesting that as an adult he remembers this so clea::rly and <u>he</u>:: is able to understand [so]
Ma: [Yeah, yeah]
(2)
H: Yeah

(1)
S: Yeah, so childhood can be about how childhood lives within us still
(sounds of agreement softly)
S: as adults, and he carries [that] with him
H: [Mm hm]

The other teachers were either unable to connect with, or were resistant to Hannah's idea. This is worth noting, as dispreferred responses in conversations are, according to Psathas (1994), often meaningful. Hannah, with my support, was making the case that the presentation of the *child'*s reality was worth focusing on, as was Carrier's ability to present "so clearly" his childhood memory. These are fascinating points. In *The Hockey Sweater*, we haven't actually entered a child's life; what we've entered is an adult's memory of his childhood. In other words, this is *not* actually a child's voice; it is an adult's voice (a very commanding male voice) construing that of the child. In distinguishing between the author/memoirist and the narrator-child depicted, we can address how Roch, the author, is using Roch, the child, as a narrative device for communicating meanings to an audience.

As I speculate about why this line of thought did not engage the other teachers, my thoughts are that the argument may have required further clarification or illumination, perhaps through examples or personal memories. In addition to challenges, an effective way of swaying the others or of maintaining their interest seemed to be through storytelling, either a humorous retelling of the story or a personal story.

As I tried to repair the gap in the conversation by summarizing Hannah's points - childhood as carried inside the adult - Catherine expanded this idea, and connected it with her thoughts about being a parent who carries childhood memories inside her.

Sequence 6 of 7

C: I remember as a kid (1) thinking that when I grow up I don't want to forget what this feels like
L: (laughs softly)
C: And I didn't [forget]-
Ma: [Mmm]
C: -what it felt like <u>for</u> <u>me</u> (.) but of course it didn't mean I was necessarily so sensitive-
Ma: [Mm hmm]
Me: [Mm hmm]
C: -to my own kids-
Ma: [Mm]
C: [-cause] they had their own childhood.
(sounds of agreement)
S: O::kay
C: It really struck me as an adult, <u>oh</u>, I remember what this meant for me as a kid but I don't know what its meaning is for my son or daughter.
S: Mmm
C: I'd like to think I do (.) but (breathes in) I try not to be that delusional.
(soft laughter)

Catherine described her insight into how separate her own vivid memories of childhood were from her children's experiences, elaborating on her earlier statement of how separate the adult's world is from the child's. The other teachers listened and quietly supported Catherine. Whereas in the *Narnia* discussions, the teachers seemed to fuse their memories of childhood experiences with memories of motherhood, Catherine was now positioning herself in relation to her memories in a more distanced manner, reflecting critically on the connectedness between her experiences of childhood and motherhood. As Grumet (1988) describes, Catherine was "inspect[ing] the boundaries of her own ego" (p. 11) and "extricating herself from her own childhood and her own children" (p. 19).

Maggie responded to Catherine's personal story with a humorous tale about a daycare mother.

Sequence 7 of 7

Ma: [(chucking)] We have a parent here (laughs) who (1) um, really, um, she was- well- her intention was, um, for Christmas morning (1) she had to have, um, these speci- Christmas- like, um-
Me: Oh, oh (softly)
Ma: -cups with Santa Claus on it, okay? Like she used [to have when-]
S or C: [aww, that's sweet]
Ma: -she was a little girl, and have hot chocolate (1.5) have the hot chocolate on Christmas morning so she wanted (.) to do the same thing (.) for her child. So sh- she – this is her husband (stifling laughter) telling the story to one of the teachers-
L: (soft laugh)
Ma: -how (1) he (.) he (soft laugh) was telling the teachers how his wife was going cra:zy looking for [these cups] with Santa Claus on it.
L: [(laughs)]
(soft laughter from group)
Ma: So she ended up ordering th- ordering them on E-Bay.
L: Oh my goodness [(laughs)
Ma: [And then] um, finally, these-these cups, which he goes co::st a fortune
L: (laughs aloud)
Ma: Um, didn't co::me (1) [Only came after] [y'know]
L: [(laughs)] [Oh my god]
Ma: And she was try-she wanted so::: much (1) t-to do that cause for-as, for her- for her as a child (1) that's what she lo::ved, [y'know]
[unclear as many speak softly]
Me (?): So [she wanted to]
C (?): [she figured]
Ma: [And he's gonna-] he's gonna to do the same thing, he's gonna to love it also like as much as I::: loved it (1) And so, y'know, the husband's saying well they never came we never had them for Christmas morning, we had them after, and he didn't care (laughs)
(laughter from others)
Ma: He didn't care (laughs)
(laughter from group)
S: Isn't that interesting how you have your memories and you want to recreate that for the people you love
Me: Mm hmm
S: [and but you don't know if they're-]
C: [But you can't, actually] You can't
Ma: It didn't work. [It didn't work.] (unclear as others speak at same time)
C: [That's right. You can't] You make new ones.
Ma: It didn't work out. But he didn't care (.) I mean, he-he enjoyed it afterwards (others laugh softly) He just (laughs softly). But it was funny, I-just funny cause ah-I know the parent and I can just (1) y'know, imagine her on the computer looking for the perfect cup
L: (laughs)

(others laugh)
C: We're so well-intentioned.
Ma: Yup
C: (laughs aloud)
Ma: It's funny

Maggie told this story as an amusing way to extend Catherine's statement that parents cannot know what experiences mean to their children. Whereas Catherine concluded her position by noting that, while she'd like to think she could know what experiences felt like for her children, "I try not to be that delusional," the mother in Maggie's story did (or was presented to) believe that she could use her own memories to create the same experiences and feelings of joy for her child.

What was described was the mother's nostalgic desire to bring her child back with her to reclaim a childhood moment. What we heard was Maggie's interpretation of a situation that was twice removed, in that the father told the story about the mother and their son to a teacher, who then recounted the story to Maggie. We don't know, for a fact, how the mother or the son responded. This distance from the mother allowed the teachers to appreciate the irony of her predicament, her mistaken conviction, earnestness, and eventual failure. Grumet (1991) writes that there is, often, an unconscious acceptance of family tradition, because as children, we don't see the work behind the practices – the holiday dinners, the gifts – and they seem so essential and so tied to our parents' identities. The mother tried to use her childhood memory, "half-remembered and half-anticipated" (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, p. 225), to shape her actions as a parent, and to affect her child's experiences in the present. Doane and Hodges (1987) write that "nostalgia is not just a sentiment but also a rhetorical practice" (p. 3), or as Mitchell and Weber (1999) describe, "nostalgia can act as a mechanism of control,

calling for the return to an earlier time, when everything … was in its proper place" (p. 221), when Santa Claus cups resulted in feelings of warmth and family connectedness.

Discussion on *The Hockey Sweater* and *Outside Over There*

As cited earlier, Grumet (1991) remarks that "[w]e fail to distinguish the world we received as children from the one we are responsible to create as adults" (p.79-80). In the last two sequences, the teachers were working through this distinction.

How can one's memories be used productively in the present? Radstone (2000) describes liminal aspects of memory work as crossing between remembering and transforming. Memory work's potential for transformation lies in "the reinterpretation and re-contextualisation of memory, in the service of revised understandings of individual or collective selves" (Radstone, 2000, p. 12). Annette Kuhn (1995) writes about "refusing a nostalgia that embalms the past in a perfect, irretrievable moment," and rather, using memory to construct new ways of understanding one's past and one's present (p. 14).

The negative aspect to this way of thinking about memory work lies in, for example, the daycare mother's loss of an idealized past, in which her nostalgic remembering is reframed as a "useless longing" (hooks, 1989, p. 17). However, when the memories are those of suffering, then memory work can "vanquish repetition" (Radstone, 2000, p. 12), and remembering the past can be usable in helping to "illuminate and transform the present" (hooks, 1990, p. 147) – a use of the past not to relive one's life, but to reinvent it (Moore, 1994).

Where the Wild Things Are

The following seven conversation sequences focused on Gene Deitch's (1973/1988) short, film animation adaptation of Maurice Sendak's (1963) children's picture book, *Where the Wild Things Are.*

Sequence 1 of 7

S: What did you think of this story? (1) Did you like it?
C: I loved it.
L: (laughs)
C: I love that story (.) Maurice Sendak's writing of that story is so true to how children enter dreams, leave crisis, enter dreams (breathes in) and how emotional time passing is – I-I forgot about that – how time can be five minutes or five ye::ars (breathes in) and it's your emotions that-that make the time stretch or shrink, and uh- it was just lo::vely to see that. It reminded me of good things, good things
[laughter]
(3)

Catherine offered two valuable points: first, the use of stories to deal with or escape crises, and second, the effect of emotions on how time is lived. She implied personal memories by stating, "It reminded me of good things."

Sequence 2 of 7

H: I also really liked it. I find it so imaginative [and]-
Me: [Mm hm]
H: -like the idea of the fo::rest, and going into the fo::rest and everyth- these wild things that (.) he's playing with and they're (.) just being wi:::ld and it's an adventure. And then- in the end, riding on the boat (1) was it for a year and a day?
S: Um-
H: -riding on the boat for a year and a day back to the comfort [of his room]
L: [(laughs softly)]
H: -and I think that (.) that's what children (.) need is the comfort? at the end?
C: and the dinner's still hot
(laughter from group, unclear with many speaking, someone says, [and the food])
C: [I love that]
H: Yeah, [so] (1)
S: [Yes, yes]
(2)

Hannah emphatically added to Catherine's sense of dreams by pointing to the child as imaginative and adventurous. The ending of the story that Hannah and Catherine addressed, likely one of the most recognized endings in a children's book, was one that teachers were all moved by: the importance of comfort in children's lives, represented by warm food. Hannah expressed this as a need, similar to the child's need for an adult's continual presence, but the response was not argumentative, perhaps because there was no child depicted without food, or perhaps because food is a need that crosses the boundary between childhood and adulthood. Hannah listed her responses in a similar way to the first *Narnia* sequence: the child as imaginative, playing, being wild, adventurous, needing comfort.

Sequence 3 of 7

Ma: I looked at it a little differently (.) um:::, I just, uh:: obviously the imagination of the child and so forth (breathes in) but I <u>feel</u> that (.) um:: that little boy had con<u>trol</u>
Me: Mm hm
Ma: He had con[trol]
C: [Oh] interesting. Oh::: [ye::ah]
Ma: [Y'know] (.) and that- he can go in and out of things (.) <u>stop</u> them from doing– so h:e has a <u>choice</u> of what he (.) wants to do an-and y'know what he likes, what he doesn't like, how <u>far</u> he wants to go and so forth (breathes in) y'know and that (.) even though uh y'know, he got punished went to his room cause he tried to do something that was like scary (breathes in) he didn't <u>mean</u> it to be (1) scary, he didn't <u>want</u> to hurt anybody he's jus- (.) he was just playing just in his own little (.) y'know, and then he went on to imagine (.) y'know what he <u>really</u> wanted to do- it's just to have fun, just to experiment and try different things, but (.) that <u>he</u> <u>had</u> a choice, [sto-]
Me: [It's] (.) It's interesting that you say that (.) cause I see it the same he has control (.) and when he was sent to his ro::om, right bef- there's a smirk on his face, right before he imagined [the forest-]
[(laughter)]
Me: -Oh fine, so now I'm <u>here</u> (1) doesn't bother <u>me</u> (.) [and then he goes on a little adventure]
Ma: (play voice) [I'll do what <u>I::</u> want to do]
(unclear as others speak at the same time)

S: yeah, right, or- [(unclear)]
Me: [But then he's still-]
Ma: [Mm hmm]
Me: (.) you know (.) then it comes down to he's still (.) safe in his [own (1) home]
Ma: [Mm hmm]
S:: [Right]
L: [Mm]
Me: and supper's there and it's still (2) hot for him to eat. But …
(1)

Another dichotomous discussion developed. On one side, Hannah and Catherine described the child as emotional, leaving crisis and entering dream, imaginative, adventurous, and seeking comfort. On the other side, Maggie and Merrill described the child as controlling, smirking, manipulative, pleasure-seeking, and having a choice – the *active* child or the child as agent.

This dichotomy touched on a couple of childhood discourses: the binary between the child as innocent versus sinful (or disruptive and requiring control), and to some extent, the child as passive versus active. Maggie accepted Hannah's description ("obviously"), but her main interpretation of Max was that he "had control," that he had "a choice." Merrill expanded these ideas by suggesting that Max had a "smirk on his face," a more playful reading of the child. Using play voices and embodying the child ("doesn't bother *me*" and "I'll do what *I* want"), Merrill and Maggie extended and supported their positions. As noted earlier, there was no debate about the ending's message of comfort through the important symbol of a warm dinner.

In the next sequence, I prompted the teachers to connect the story with their memories of childhood.

Sequence 4 of 7

S: Did the story remind you at a::ll of your own childhoods?

(2)
Ma: To some point yes (.) y'know where (.) you wanted to do (.) something different you want to try to– [play voice] "No:: you can't do- you're not allowed to do this no you're not" y'know and then (1) and as a chi::ld yeah y'know you'd go to play-
Me: Mm hm
Ma: - you would do y'know uh y'know you would pretend:: that you were (.) this n' that we would cre::ate our own [uh:::]
L: [Mm]
Ma: -plays:: and uh:: props and y'know take out (.) uh tablecloths and buil– and do things with [them]
Me: [Or-]
Ma: - or clotheslines and y'know uh (.) broomsticks, and uh, y'know (.) dress up and y'know, find a way (.) you would find a way to (.) to do what you really wanted to do, y'know (1) But (1) y'know within a certain …

The childhood memory that Max evoked in Maggie was clearly connected to the way she interpreted his actions in the preceding sequence. She talked about her own experience of being a child dealing with the authority of her parents and, assuming the positions of child and parent, illustrated how she would have responded by playing, imagining, and finding a way "to do what you really wanted to do," which is how she described Max's actions. While Maggie's response was somewhat orchestrated by my question, the connection is undeniable.

The lengthy first pair parts demonstrated that the teachers were often more focused on expanding their personal positions than they were in interacting with the others. There seemed to be a continued reticence to move from one's childhood position, which, again, resulted in a collective pastiche of personal views.

In the next segment, Catherine responded to the question of childhoods evoked by the story by drawing a personal connection with her earlier interpretation of Max as leaving crisis and entering dream.

Sequence 5 of 7

C: It's funny when you asked that question uh:: you reminded me that when I first read the book, it was as an adult::, um (1) my late 20s early 30s, uh, and:: um:: I'd heard of it but I'd never read it (1) And my first reaction was it was a very da::rk book (1) it reminded me of very dark (.) parts of my child- and I think he's been criticized for looking at some dark (.) sides of childhood which I think are [there]
Ma: [Mmm]
C: I don't think there's- (1) I don't think children can't ta- handle it but um (.) I was a wild:: thing (1) [growing up]
L: [(chuckles softly)]
C: I really was- I was skipping school in grade one, I was a wild thing.
Me: Oh [my::].
C: [And] I-
L: (laughs)
C: when I re- yeah:: (laughs), if you'd had my grade one teacher too you would have [skipped school too (laughs)]
[(laughter from group)]
C: And um:: and um I just found (.) that he plumbed something very deep (.) with that book. I read all of his other books at that (.) that were already out then too cause I thought (.) he's touching on something in childhood that's [different]
S: [Mm hm]
C: than a lot of (breathes in) writers touch on, and um:: I thought it was intriguing that you could have a story that was an enjoyable adventu::re? that really intuitively tapped into how kids will re::act to "I'm sent to my room? O::kay, watch what I can do in my imagi[nation."]
Ma: [That's right.]
C: And still they want to come home so there was that but also:: (.) um that there are monsters (1) in kids' lives
S: [yes]
Ma; [Mm hm]
C: and sometimes they're not so easily esca::ped? (1) or else they do stay here or something they can always be threatening again at another time::.

Catherine candidly communicated her sense of identification with Max, and with Sendak's intuitive ability to "plumb something very deep" in childhood. Wilson (2005) writes about the "involuntary emotion" that cinematic representations of childhood elicit. She writes that "in restoring momentarily an awareness of helplessness" in the adult viewer, filmic representations of childhood may serve to sensitize the spectator to the suffering or experience of childhood (p.

330). The adult viewer sympathizes with Max's punishment and frustration, and takes pleasure in his fantasies of power.

The identification of the viewer performing as voyeur is described as one of the pleasures of the cinematic experience. Identification involves "the experience of being able to put oneself so deeply into a character – feel oneself to be so like the character – that one can feel the same emotions and experience the same events as the character is supposed to be feeling" (Ellis, 1982, p. 43). We identify with the child's emotions (as former children) while also wanting to take care of the child (as parents or teachers today). We share Max's humiliation of being sent to one's room, and we identify with and become this small boy facing his wild things. Catherine takes this identification further, and connects it with her own "dark parts," her own childhood monsters.

While the teachers were familiar with the picture book version of *Where the Wild Things Are,* Catherine described Max from what film theorist Phil Powrie (2005) describes as an "oddly fractured spectatorial position" (p. 345), a moment of connection between past selves and present selves. As we get pulled into and prompted to return to our own memories of childhood ("I am that child"), we function in this space of juxtaposition, "near and far," which pulls the adult in to simultaneously experience what Powrie described as innocence and an escape from the pain of innocence.

Sequence 6 of 7

C: Um:: and it's interesting my son never liked the story.
Ma: Hmm.
C: And I wonder (.) just now (.) as we talk I wonder if my own ambiguity about the story communica– cause usually he loved whatever I read to him–(.)
Ma: Hmm.

C: b-but the images were strong for him and [were a bit frightening]
Others (unclear): [Mm hm mm hm]
C: and he didn't really like [it]
Ma: [And] there are children that are frightened of that.
C: Oh really? [Cause-
Ma: [They look at it and –
[(unclear as others speak at same time)]
C: Cause those really are:: [monsters-
Ma: [they sort of look] y'know -
C: Yeah (.) [yeah]
Ma: [And] if you give it a chance (.) [it'll]-
C: [Yeah], yeah

Maggie was sensitive to Catherine's uncertainty about her presentation of Sendak's book to her son, by proposing that there are, in fact, children who are frightened of the stories. Here, she and Catherine worked through this issue of Sendak's work by interacting, asking for clarification, and, together, constructing a more complex understanding of Sendak's monsters, both in the book and outside ("if you give it a chance, it'll-" "Yeah"). A sense of tacit understanding was felt.

Linda connected this line of thought to her classroom of girls in Kindergarten:

Sequence 7 of 7

L: I would have a hard time reading this because I'm in a girls' setting and they're always scared of everything [(laughs)]
[(laughter from others)]
L: I have only girls (.) and th-they're scared of a::nything (1) A::nything. Mu::sic. A story with one little scary thing that I would not even picked up (1)
(sounds of surprise from others)
L: I wouldn't even notice and they're all [play voice] "uhahhh, d-don't say that (.) I'm scared"
Others: Interesting

In part, Linda offered a moment of relief following two poignant sequences. It is, however, interesting that this discussion of frightening imagery and dark

emotions in childhood would lead to an observation of girls as being "*always* scared of *everything.*"

Discussion on *Where the Wild Things Are*

Where the Wild Things Are elicited discussions that focused, first, on interpretations of the child as innocent versus controlling, imaginative, and seeking comfort. Second, the discussions addressed the adult spectator's identification with childhood emotions. How can the adult teacher use these insights into childhood emotions to "illuminate and transform the present" (hooks, 1990, p. 147)?

Imagination. The teachers' discussions reflected a respect toward children's imaginative abilities, be it to escape monsters in their lives or to just "do what you really wanted to do."

I will diverge momentarily with a brief textual analysis of story *Where the Wild Things Are.* Max deals with his socially unacceptable, aggressive impulses by removing himself from his present reality - both in time and place, as he travels over a year and a half to far, far away - and playing out his frustrations in a safe fantasy world. The Wild Things, as projections of Max's own aggression, are anthropomorphized metaphors. By staring the Wild Things down, Max masters his aggressive tendencies (he is dubbed the "King of all Wild Things"). Following his cathartic purge in the wild rumpus, he is able to again recognize that he is a child and that he wants to be back "where someone loved him best of all." His mother's interminable love is revealed through the hot dinner in his room, as alas, she is unable to follow through with her original threat of sending him "off to bed without his supper."

By imaginatively returning the teachers to their own childhood contexts, they were returned to spaces that called for "attentiveness" (Greene, 1978). Situating the reader as central in the reading process, Greene (1995) linked literature with imagination, memory, and action, as literature provokes us by "break[ing] us loose from our anchorage," so that we can find other ways of performing our positions as teachers, as adults, as gendered beings (p. 111). Reflective teaching practice calls for an "attentiveness" to teachers' experiences and ongoing formations (Greene, 1978).

When Catherine hinted that her own ambiguous feelings toward *Where the Wild Things Are* may have been communicated to her son, we can speculate that she was indeed breaking loose. This attentiveness to our experiences can help us consider how we evaluate or celebrate children's intentions when they escape into fantasy, or how we understand Kindergarten girls' fears as constituted or socialized.

The Piano

The next four sequences focus on Jane Campion's (1993) feature length film, *The Piano.* Note that Hannah and Linda were not present for the first part of the discussion.

Sequence 1 of 4

S: How would you describe the relationship between the mother and the daughter?
(1)
Me: Well [sometimes it was very]
Ma: [I didn't <u>see</u> mother and daughter]
(1)
Me: <u>child</u>like (.) [they were playing together]
Ma: [Ye::ah exactly]
Me: And then (1) at other times the mother was u::sing the child to (1) get what <u>she</u> wanted.

C: But what you just said you didn't see them as mother (.) and daughter. [You didn't]
Ma: [Nope]
S: Oh you didn't?
Ma: Nope
C: I rea- [I-I th-]
Ma: [Nope]
C: When you said that I realized you know what (.) I didn't either.
Ma: Nope. It was more like uh (.) uh (.) sort of uh (.) um (.) a relationship where they supported each other, where they just (.) [held each other] –
Me: [It was more equal]
(unclear others talking)
Ma: Held each other up and (.) just going through life (.) and e::ven, even at the end (.) when finally she left (1) They left (.) they got rid of the pia::no, they got rid that–that (.) she got rid of that-that part of her life that was just so:: da::rk and um then they went back and she was learning to speak again (breathes in) still, even-even then, after all that experience, I still found her to be very immature (2) very immature –
(others express interest: ohhh)
S: Very self-absorbed [ye::ah]
Ma: [And] as a woman (.) like I-I don't think she even (1) I don't know:: I d- it's-it's as though she just (.) remained a chil- even her behavior y'know (stamps her feet) y'know, "I want it like this. I w-" y'know (stamps her feet) I wan– y'know (.)
S: okay::::
(sounds of agreement from others)
Ma:- she threw her cup down and she jus::: y'know. Her daughter didn't even do that (laughing).
S: So [she was-]
Ma: [Her daughter didn't] even do it that way.
S: So she was:: something of a child herself (2). Oh, that's neat.
Ma: Obviously [something-]
Me: [She's stuck]
Ma: Yup, exactly. Things that happened in her life-

The three teachers, Maggie, Merrill and Catherine, developed a line of thought together describing Ada as a childish, immature woman. My role was as audience, but I was surprised at the force with which the teachers judged Ada as unworthy of motherhood. This was not my response to the movie. While their views recalled an earlier teacher discussion on the child's needs, in implying that Ada was not present as a mother for Flora, this discussion focused much more on

the mother's immaturity and childish/childlike behaviors. What was seen as a reversal of child-adult roles, or a 'parentification' of the child, impacted the teachers to the extent that they denied even the existence of a mother-child relationship. As with human development films, such as *The Miracle Worker* (dir. A. Penn, 1962) and *Kramer vs. Kramer* (dir. R. Benton, 1979), Flora's presence in *The Piano* made the teachers anxious for Ada to grow up.

Some developmental notions of childhood were revealed. The implicit meaning of childhood that Maggie applied was the insolent child: one who stamped her feet and engaged in tantrums. The message was that a real adult would have grown out of this phase of development and would have behaved in a more mature and rational way. Merrill's remark that "she's stuck" reinforced the idea that adults should develop beyond behaviors that are found in the space of childhood. When Maggie noted that even after "they got rid of her piano, that part of her life that was just so dark" and "things that happened in her life," the teachers shared an understanding that Ada's needs were not met as a child, which resulted in this type of underdeveloped adult.

The next three sequences addressed the scenes in which Flora and Ada enlist the help of George Baines, a white settler, to bring them to the Maori beach where Ada's piano was abandoned when they arrived in New Zealand.

Sequence 2 of 4

H: And (2) when her mother's playing the pia::no? and then she's just like dan::cing on the bea::ch and doing cartwheels and (.) it's so:::: beautiful that's just a [really really a beautiful image]
Ma: [Yup, yup]
S: It is
C: And there's tons of gorgeous images in that film.
(sounds of agreement)

H: It's very artistic.
(7)

The image of Flora dancing on the beach evoked strong feelings of beauty and magic. This is likely the archetypal scene in *The Piano*: the image of the innocent (girl)-child is a powerful one, "the dominant fantasy" in how childhood is represented (Jenkins, 1998, p. 2).

The discussion halted, and, after a long pause, I suggested the contrast between this scene and the preceding one in which Ada and Flora waited rigidly for Baines to bring them to the beach.

Sequence 3 of 4

S: Yeah, it's an interesting (1) um:: movement too from (1) seriousness (1) the dark clothes (.) to that freedom on the beach.
L: That's (.) I think to me that's the difference between children and adults (1) basically. It's that they can go to this place (.) and they don't even (.) know. We have the judgment that stops us from doing that.
S: Yeah:: (softly) (3)That's interesting (2) although the mom was able to go there in a sense (.) through her piano.
L: M-maybe her but not everybody else around.
S: Right (3) yeah the fellow looked a little perturbed.
C: (Laughs softly)
(3)
S: When you say we have judgment, what kind of [judgment do you mean?]
L: [Well we have (.) you know (2) um-]
H: Inhibitions?
(small laughter from others)
L: No (.) maybe it's just the reasoning, the reasoning part of us (.) that's [more what I mean]
S: [So we rationalize] everything.
L: Yes, yes

As with Max in the *Wild Things,* a respect for children's imaginations was expressed. In this case, Linda contrasted the child's imagination with the adult's sense of responsibility and reason. Her perspective echoes the view, described by

Jacqueline Rose (1984), of the adult's limited imagination in contrast to the "blissfully irrational, not-yet-fallen, not-yet-limited children" (p. 167), and a confirmation of the adult's rationality.

Sequence 4 of 4

S: If the girl, Flora, wasn't there, how would that make for a different type of a (1) scene?
(2)
L: It would not be as beautiful for sure.
(soft laughter – not amused but knowing)
S: Okay so there would be less beauty involved in [the scene]
L: [I think so]
S: -if it was just a woman asking a man to bring her down to the beach to (1) get to the piano
L: Because now we like the movie, why we liked it, this part, is because of the little gi::rl.
Ma: Yeah (softly)
L: Without it, it's just – puhh, I guess (laughs). It's magic (1) to have her there.
S: So she brings in a magic quality?
L: Yeah.
(sounds of agreement)
Me: Because if it was just the mother, or just the woman playing the piano (2) how would it be (2) for the man to listen to it, what would he have gotten from it? It added so much watching the child dancing (.) to the music and seeing that (1) beauty and that magic.
Ma: And seeing him:: [(1) slowly (1) change]
L: [Yeah (.) Yeah, yeah, yeah]
Ma: I think that's (1) how-how the child (.) has had that effect (1) on him [and it's going to]
Me: [Would the music] have done it on its own::? Or did he need to see the chi::ld?
L: Or a mix of both?
Ma: Yeah
Me: Mm hm
C: Yeah a mix of both cause the way the mother and child y'know their heads go like this (moves hands in same direction) (sounds of agreement from the others) and he was looking at that (more sounds of agreement, unclear) so there was some call there to him to go down to the beach just from the way they were, their relationship.

The number of inserts, building on one another's turns, showed the amount of interaction the teachers engaged in around the issue of what the child

brought to the scene. Walkerdine (1997) writes about the cultural and erotic gaze that society is trained to place on the little girl – vulnerable, innocent, and beautiful – as part of gendered socialization. The image of Flora dancing and free, as figure of child, was somehow inseparable from the figure of the mother enraptured in her piano playing. Grumet (1988) wrote that "the extension of a mother's own ego identity to another who is her child is a doubling that fosters and intensifies reflexivity" (p. 11). Atwell-Vasey (1998) describes the "overlap of experience between mother and child." While earlier, the teachers were remiss to see any positive qualities in the mother-daughter relationship, in this scene, they concluded that the combination of the mother and daughter was stronger than the image of the daughter alone.

Discussion on *The Piano*

The teachers' conversations around *The Piano* were more detached than with the other texts, which is interesting as this was the one text they viewed or read that is not directed to a child audience. What may have complicated the discussion is the nontraditional ways that Campion represented the mother, the daughter, and the father figure, Baines. The teachers' intense disapproval of what they interpreted as the mother's childishness was directed at the equality in Ada and Flora's relationship that did not fit with an expectation of adult-child or mother-child, and they were critical of the mother's inability to differentiate herself from childhood.

At first glance, there was little sense of identification with the characters, and the teachers' conversations seemed to proceed as film reviews or character analyses. However, the revulsion that was expressed and the dismissal of Ada's

maternal competence may have represented a reverse identification. When thinking about the highly charged nature of the teachers' loathing for Ada, it was difficult to imagine that Flora was not an actual child; rather, she was a "projection of adult desire," whose thoughts, actions, feelings, and movements were constructed by an adult (Rose, 1984, p. 60).

Conclusion

The teacher participants in the focus group sessions interacted, argued, persuaded, disagreed, supported, and shared as they constructed versions of childhood. They identified with the child protagonist by comparing their remembered child self with the fictional child, by moving effortlessly within positions of childhood in the past, present, and future, and within positions of adulthood in the past, present, and future. They argued as mothers. They extricated themselves reflexively and critically, in identifying the separation between one's childhood experiences and the experiences of one's child.

Without trying to summarize the complex threads in the teachers' discussions, I will note in this conclusion some of the findings that developed into three groups: the use of memory in identifying with the fictional child, crossing boundary spaces in between adulthood and childhood and within the past, present and future, and the conversational process in the teachers' interactive meaning-making.

Memories in identifying with the child. Understandings of childhood were grounded in the teachers' own contexts as children, mothers, and sisters. The teachers returned to their own childhood contexts, to spaces that called to them for attention, or perhaps, "attentiveness" (Greene, 1978). There was an impression that

the strength of their beliefs being grounded in memories of childhood was so powerful that they would not be moved from their positions. Their knowledge was personal and idiosyncratic, however, they were willing to open their views to others to challenge, which forced them to reflect on the contextual nature of their knowledge.

Boundary spaces. There was a collapsing of normally disconnected spaces in time and in lifespan positions. The teachers embodied the child, as they identified with the child protagonists: "I *was* that little girl," "I don't think I would be that little girl," "I wouldn't have walked through that door." Time (past, present, and future) collapsed together as memories were brought forward and actions based in memory were used to refer to present and future possibilities.

The conversational process. The teachers shaped their talk as arguments in response to other teachers' positions (Billig, 1982). Dichotomous renderings of the fictional children were developed: ready for magic versus reckless, imaginative versus disruptive.

Chapter 5. A case study: "My Future Self N' Me"

> We fail to distinguish the world we received as children from the one we are responsible to create as adults.
>
> - Madeleine Grumet, 1991, p. 79-80

> Stigmatized as "women's work," teaching rests waiting for us to reclaim it and transform it into the work of women.
>
> - Madeleine Grumet, 1988, p. 58

This chapter presents my second phase of inquiry: a case study of one person's account of her trajectory into becoming an early childhood teacher. I used a hybrid form of ethnographic writing, drawing upon elements of memoir, fiction, and creative writing, as a way of examining and relocating the personal as "a critical engagement with experience" (Kamler, 2001, p. 1). The purpose of this inquiry was to examine how teachers might return to and evaluate their own childhoods as part of a larger project to support actual children today, rather than conflating children with their own childhoods (Pinar, 1975; Grumet, 1991; Greene, 1995). I conducted a close reading of one teacher's account of ambivalence, contradiction, discomfort, complicity, and blurred selves in growing up (or back or down) as an early childhood teacher.

An initial version of this chapter was published under the title of "*My future self n' me: Currere* and childhood fiction in education" in Churchill's (2008) edited book, *Rocking your world: The emotional journey into critical discourses.* I wrote it at the time with the purpose of combining my interests in childhood texts with the method of *currere,* part of my experimentation with research approaches for my dissertation. When I took up the approach of conversation analysis and

analyzed the teachers' discussions, the findings from the focus group analyses urged me to look more closely at one teacher's memories. An adaptation of Pinar's *currere* seemed to be the suitable approach to take, so I returned to the chapter *"My future self n' me"* and decided to rewrite it by taking a step back, treating it as a case study in memory work, and expanding the memories to focus on teacher formation.

I juxtaposed the memory work with a fictive childhood text, *My Future Self N' Me*, an episode of the animated television series *South Park* (originally aired December 4, 2002). The *South Park* episode was used primarily to evoke Emily's memories, and is also presented as a way of intersecting insights gathered from Emily's narratives with insights from a shared cultural narrative.

I present Emily's memory narratives, my analysis of her narrative sequences, and scenes and analyses of the *South Park* episode in a layered account (Ronai, 1995). As noted, this is a deliberately "multivoiced representation" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000b, p. 158), in which I underscore the multiplicity of selves or the "layers of consciousness," containing often competing and contradictory beliefs that constitute an individual (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

In examining the meanings of childhood that were communicated, misunderstood, defined and re-defined, I illustrate how "different discourses of childhood constitute childhood (and children) in different ways" (James and Prout, 1997, p. 24), how gendered, racialized, and classed discourses intersect with assumptions about childhood, and how discourses of childhood govern not only the child, but also the adults in the child's world in slow, hidden, and often marginalizing ways.

The following print signifiers are meant to guide the reader through shifts and voices: memories are presented in *italicized* font style, dialogue from *My Future Self N' Me* is presented in Arial font, and triple asterisks indicate to the reader to expect a change in voice.

***

My Future Self N' Me

In this episode, eight-year-old Stan's parents hire an actor from a company called Motivation Corp. to appear as Stan's future self in what is presented to Stan as a time warp. The actor plays a sloppily-dressed, paunch-bellied, unemployed, drug-addicted 32-year-old (with beer and cigarette constantly in tow) juxtaposed next to a pure, sharp-minded, and untainted Stan as child. Stan's parents use "Future Stan" (Loser Stan) as leverage to convince Stan that the only way to avoid this future is to study hard in school and to stay clear of drugs and alcohol.

My Future Self N' Me plays cleverly with the notion of temporality as a key social construction in understanding childhood and adulthood. The episode is also replete with satire, toilet humour, and crude language, as the show's creators, Trey Parker and Matt Stone, parody to an extreme adult assumptions about childhood. The satirical text encourages emotional distance in the viewer, and at the same time, the narrative centers around a group of boys, a combination that provides a range of identifications through which the adult viewer can engage with the text.

***

Scene from *My Future Self N' Me*

[Bus stop. Stan arrives with future Stan]

STAN: Hey guys.

KYLE, CARTMAN: Hey.

FUTURE STAN: Whoa, Kyle and Cartman! It's so cool to see you guys.

CARTMAN: Who's this asshole?

STAN: This is my future self. He came during the electrical storm last night and is caught in a time matrix. He's me when I'm 32.

KYLE: Wow. That's pretty cool.

CARTMAN: Then how does he know our names?

KYLE: 'Cause, artard, he's Stan from the future. He knows everything Stan knows.

CARTMAN: Ohhh. Wait. Stan becomes this douchebag?

FUTURE STAN: Yeah, I spent a lot of my teenage years on a slow downward spiral experimenting with drugs and alcohol. [Cartman has a hearty laugh]

STAN: Shut up, Cartman!

CARTMAN: That is so awesome!! Thank you God! [bows deeply] Oh praise God!

***

Memory is a story, a text to be interpreted, analysed, and "mined for its meanings and its possibilities" (Kuhn, 2002, p. 186). While many aspects of childhood can only be understood in its afterlife, memory has layers, be it invention or tradition, reflection or representation, subjectivity or objectivity, fabrication or authenticity (Radstone, 2000). Memory may be "notoriously unreliable," but accuracy – in this case, of childhood events – is not what matters (Rand, 1995, p. 94); it is the transformations of childhood experiences into adult memories, and the complex relationship between the child self and the adult self, that concerns us in curriculum studies. In other words, it's the consequences of the stories that we tell about ourselves that matter (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

A memory is a person's account of "a particular point in time," but this account isn't fixed (Goodson, 1998, p. 11), and the stories we tell about ourselves change over time.

These thoughts reassured Emily.

***

As a child, Emily used to pick out random adults on the street and feel a jolt of fear that, one day, she could become that person. It may have been the lower status job that the adult had, or the "douchebag" way the adult looked, dressed, or spoke. She lived with an elusive sense that any wrong move carried the potential to thwart her future life. Maybe she was hardwired for gratuitous anxiety, but she preferred the explanation that she successfully internalized the societal and parental messages surrounding her that childhood was, first and foremost, a preparation for adulthood.

***

Time and the developmental model

Emily described her appropriation of the belief that childhood was a developmental, preparatory, and fragile process, the purpose of which was to develop into the rational ideal of adulthood, a discourse naturalized by the traditional, developmental approach. She operated with an internalized sense of being an object for socialization, lesser than adult, but with the promise of "progressing towards the goal of mature adulthood" (Mayall, 1994, p. 2). Vygotsky (1962) described the child's development as functioning on two planes:

interpsychically (between the child and others) and intrapsychologically (within the child).

***Currere*: Becoming temporal**

Grumet (1988) and Pinar (2004) urge teachers to enlist their reflexive capacities in reconceiving their own situations of childhood and adulthood, with the purpose of "exceeding one's biographic situation" (Pinar, 1975, p. 412). Self-mobilization and social reconstruction are necessarily dual processes. In other words, one teacher's story can help us understand and, perhaps, change some of the social structures in which many teachers' experiences are embedded.

In *currere*, curriculum theory focuses on the inner experience of education, something related to Apple's (1990) hidden curriculum, which, for Emily in the first vignette was an induction of fear in the future and a learned constraint: a means of ensuring that she reached the adult stage in a manner acceptable in her particular context. Proponents of the developmental model have available this leverage of control, the option to intimidate children with supposedly accurate predictions of failure or Future-Loser Stans. By unearthing assumptions in their thinking about childhood, teachers can ask new questions: What other ways are there to conceptualize childhood (and adulthood)? How are our own childhoods implicated in our work with, and decisions to work with, children?

***

Emily and her sister were discouraged from aiming for careers that would interfere with what was constructed, for them, as their primary adult responsibility: motherhood. "You should find work that will serve you well as a mother." "If you get a demanding career, you'll have to interrupt it, anyways,

when you become a mother, so there's no point." "Get a nice job that you can go back to, once your kids have grown up." Her brothers were expected to become doctors or rocket scientists, which they did, but Future/Loser Emily was presented to Emily as the negligent mother, one who allowed personal aspirations to get the best of her.

***

Femininity, feminization, and the early childhood teacher

> The great purpose in a woman's life – the happy superintendence of a family – is accomplished all the better and easier by preliminary teaching in school. All the power she may develop here will come in use there.
>
> - Catherine Beecher, 1845

Raymond Williams (1977) distinguished between pasts that belong to archaic traditions and pasts that belong to residual traditions. Archaic traditions end with an extinct era, whereas residual traditions continue, at some activity level, in present cultural practices. With an estimated 98% of those working in preschools being women (Cochran & New, 2007), it would be difficult to argue that traditions of femininity in early childhood education are archaic. In fact, the rhetoric of maternalism in teaching has been well-documented, and I present a few elements pertinent to Emily's story.

Maternalism, described as cultural understandings of the role of motherhood by society, assumes that women have a natural capacity for caring and nurturing children, and that a mother is the most important source of care in a child's life, a relationship to be defended at all costs (Ruddick, 1982). Referring to the Antebellum era, Grumet (1988) wrote that teaching was a practice in which

young women could partake to bridge the gap between their adolescence and motherhood, a place where "the good daughter had found a way to advance women into the public sphere without disturbing the dominance of the patriarchal authority" (p. 40). Women were prevented from participating in practices that would develop their own growth and "made to feel that fostering [these pleasures] in others [was] the only valid role for all women" (Miller, 1973, p. 40). Dominant culture sanctioned daughters to be trained for powerlessness, trained "in the ways and desires of obedience" (Ruddick, 1982, p. 104).

In 1905, G. Stanley Hall, known as the father of child study, argued that women should be "educated primarily and chiefly for motherhood" (Bell & Offen, 1983, p. 162). Friedrich Froebel, credited with establishing the Kindergarten, recommended that the early childhood teacher be trained to act as "the mother made conscious" (Steedman, 1995, p. 149). Many women chose teaching to "move beyond the confines of 'women's work,'" but entered the profession in order to not appear to be sacrificing their feminine roles (Miller, 1986, p. 117).

Today, the values of early childhood education are often "grounded in notions of privilege and middle-class values" (Canella, 1998, p. 167), such that childhood settings are assumed to offer an atmosphere of exploration, language, and play, paralleling the ideals of middle-class mothering. This link between the ideals of middle-class mothering and ideal teaching practice supported a corresponding assumption that women have no commitments in life beyond or greater than responding sensitively to children (Steedman, 1995).

For many teachers, the naturalization of teaching, through the maternalistic discourse that teaching is based on a mother's instincts, undermines the

professionalism of their work (Moss, 2006). This is compounded in early childhood education, in which the discourse of "attachment pedagogy" (Singer, 1993) assumes that, in the absence of the ideal mother-child relationship, the non-maternal care must be modeled on that relationship.

***

Scene from *My Future Self N' Me*

[Motivation Corp.]

DIRECTOR: So, everything is working out with your future actor? Your son seems to be responding.

RANDY: I think he's pretty scared alright.

SHARON: It's just a little weird having people lying to our boy like this.

DIRECTOR: Well, you know what us ultra-liberals say, when it comes to children and drugs, lies are OK. The ends justify the means. We'll take smoking, for instance. The truth is there's no hard evidence that second-hand smoke can kill, but we believe it's okay to lie about it as long as it gets people to stop smoking.

SHARON: Well that makes sense.

DIRECTOR: So it is with everything here at Motivation Corp. It's okay for us to lie and tell kids that all marijuana supports terrorism. Or that one pill of Ecstacy is gonna kill them. It's not necessarily true, but the ends justify the means.

RANDY: Well, I think when this is all over, our son is gonna thank us.

***

The child's point of view is an effective means of exposing the absurdity and hypocrisy of the adult world. Bart and Lisa Simpson, the boys in South Park, Charlie Brown and Linus continue to succeed in this feat. Children, in the discourse of innocence, are clean slates who have not had enough experience to be corrupted. If *they* make these scathing criticisms from their innocent positions, we take it as all the more true – "out of the mouth of a babes" - even if they're fictional children.

Although presented in inflated cartoon style, Stan's predicament with his manufactured Future Self is not that far from many children's experiences of being warned, "If you don't listen to us, you'll end up: a) in a bad job, b) unhealthy, c) a drug addict, d) generally unsuccessful" - or, in Future Stan's case, all of the above. The humour in Stan's predicament is that it exposes the irrationality of the values taken for granted by the adults surrounding him. Roles are inverted, and as viewers, we laugh at the parents' extreme shortsightedness.

The threat of not living up to one's potential, or to one's assumedly predestined station in life, is often exploited by parents and schools. The child, impermanent in the life cycle, is "always in the process of becoming something else" (Kincaid, 1992, p. 5). In many ways, childhood, transitional and temporary as it is, becomes the symbol on which adults place their anxieties about the transient nature of life and time. In addition to rationalizing the tedium of the typical school experience, the threat of failure reassures the adult of the validity of his or her own pursuits and paths.

***

Emily's parents came to Canada to study in the university. She had a positivistic upbringing, where scientific explanations were deemed the only legitimate explanations. Inside, Emily hated the scientific ethos.

***

When the teacher passed out the report cards, Emily would sit quietly at her desk and count the number of E's (Excellent's) she received to make sure she was on track. One of the girls in the class would inevitably conduct an informal survey, "How many E's did you get?" "How many E's did you *get?"*

***

Emily's father used to take her aside and warn her that men don't like women who are smarter than they are.

***

For many children, school is the place where success is measured and dispensed. According to Pong (2003), the belief that school success provides students with their major channel for future socioeconomic mobility is often amplified in immigrant families. The theory of meritocracy, closely related to the notion of universal childhood, underlies parents' trust in the education system: that an individual gets out of the system what he or she puts into it. According to the merit ideology, everyone has an equal chance for success, which neatly denies the effects of sexist, racist, and class-based discrimination (McNamee & Miller, 2004). Emily's similarities to Stan, in the sense of being "a colonial project" as the child Other, is amplified through the additional layers of gendered and racialized Othering (Nodelman, 2008, p. 181).

Eisner (1994) writes that "[e]ducation is not the same as schooling, nor is it the same as learning" (p. 36). What many children learn in the name of education is miseducational: to be neurotic, to be fearful, to be sexist, to be racist. Grumet (1988) urges teachers to name their contradictions and to reconceive of their commitments to education. Some of the miseducation revealed in Emily's memories include: 1) that intelligence is a measure of one's ability to fulfill a series of teachers' objectives, no matter how disengaging; 2) that the meaning of learning is in its measurability; and 3) that she would, eventually, need to doubt either her

ability to become her Future Self, based in the rhetoric of maternal femininity, or her sense of personal accomplishment.

Traditional feminist theory describes women's powerlessness as imposed both internally (such that femininity is lived as identity to women) and externally (such that femininity is understood publically as desirability) (MacKinnon, 1983).

***

Time travel as genre and as memory work

"My Future Self N' Me" follows a classic fantasy/adventure genre with the premise of time travel or child-adult reversal: the child typically escapes temporally from his or her problematic world into an adventurous other world.

Radstone (2000) describes how the particularity of one's memory, in its complex production and mediated through cultural messages and unconscious processes, can be the starting point to investigate liminal spaces; something transformative for individual and social practices can be learned.

***

Emily loved being with her mother: sitting on the couch with her, watching her cut steamed chicken, being cycled on the front of her bicycle, driving to the grocery store. One day, Emily asked her sister and sister's friend if she could play with them. They replied, "No, your Barbie doesn't have a sleeping bag, so you can't play." As happens, Emily was the dejected little sister, and she explained her sadness to her mother. Emily's mother sewed her a Barbie-sized sleeping bag using leftover, forest green, cotton material. Emily accepted the bag, with

satisfaction, and thought toward her sister, "I have my own sleeping bag. I don't need you."

Emily is aware that this is not an unusual tale of sibling disagreement. It's the sense of self-sufficiency that she garnered from her mother's actions that she remembers.

***

Her music teacher in Grades 5 and 6 was Mrs. Tulley, a woman in her early 30s, with chin-length, straight, brown hair. She wasn't flashy but she was presentable, smart, and confident. The music curriculum focused on playing the recorder, something that Emily enjoyed. Mrs. Tulley would order music sheets for the recorder that arrived with orchestral accompaniment. The scores and smaller-than-standard records came in small square packages. Emily suspected the teacher ordered these just for her, because when a new package arrived, the teacher would tell her and they'd open the package together after school. They'd play the scores with the music accompaniment. Each time a new package arrived, the music became more complex. Sometimes, they played in the hallway after school, and other teachers would come over to say how lovely it sounded.

In school, Emily thought of herself as better than the other children, meaning less childish. She used to look down at the other kids and think that they just weren't aware of how they appeared to grown-ups. But when she was with Mrs. Tulley after school, playing the recorder, being a child was okay. They played their recorders and they talked. Emily doesn't remember what they talked about, just that they talked.

***

Up until this point in the chapter, maternal discourse and early childhood education have been defined in terms of social powerlessness under the Father's Law (Ruddick, 1982). However, these two memories of women in Emily's childhood, who were interested in the *quality* of Emily's experiences, give us hints as to why Emily might choose the teaching profession. The vignettes also illustrate the sorts of curriculum that are not based in Tyler's prescriptive rationale of aims, design, and evaluation. Eisner (1994) writes that educational experiences (as opposed to noneducational or miseducational experiences) "contribute to the individual's growth" (p. 37).

In the above scenario, we begin to see the hybrid nature of Emily's identity: the self-sufficiency, the trust in adults, the pleasure in being a child, the lapses in assuming the position of the adult colonizer (Fanon, 1952/2008) looking down on other children. A person is a contradictory text and, in excavating a story, it is in the "spaces where the pieces don't quite meet" (Grumet, 1991, p.122) that critical work happens.

***

Scene from *My Future Self N' Me*

STAN: Thanks for staying after school and tutoring me Butters.

BUTTERS: Sure thing, Stan. But how come you care about school work all of a sudden?

STAN: I told you, I can't stand my future self. I have to do whatever I can to not become a loser like him.

BUTTERS: Well, studying is the golden key to the imposing door of success.

STAN: I just can't stand having my future self around all the time. It's driving me crazy. Maybe if I get smarter I won't become him and I won't have to share my room.

***

Christian Metz (1982) described the cinematic apparatus as inviting the audience to align their perception with the viewing perspective of the camera, as a "proxy for our eyes," making it seem as though the film is one's own perception (p. 92). The cinematic apparatus becomes an extension of one's self. In *My Future Self N' Me,* the adult viewer is drawn into understanding the film from the perspective of Stan, the boy protagonist. In most shots, the camera takes on the perspective of the "narrating authority" and this is the viewing position that the audience members must identify with in order to make sense of the narrative (p. 133).

Stan will "do whatever [he] can to not become a loser like [Future Stan]," and the *currere* teacher/learner will, perhaps uncomfortably, re-enter the past, to make sense of it, "to capture it as it was, and as it hovers over the present" (Pinar, 1976, p.55), extending one's self back in order to change the present.

***

Her career was expendable, although if someone told her that in those words, she probably would have questioned it more. And yet, she felt was expected to perform, even if it didn't really count.

When it came time to attend college, Emily entered a Health Sciences program. She hated it. She liked her literature and anthropology electives, but school wasn't about pleasure; it was career-training. She graduated with a double degree in Health and Pure & Applied Sciences. Emily didn't know what she wanted to do, so she entered University in a double major program: Physics and Physiology.

***

As a small child, when the family watched TV sitcoms at night in the living room, Emily would curl up on the couch while the older kids lay down on their fronts, covering the brown, carpeted floor with their splayed, pyjamaed bodies, gazing at the television set. Was it Happy Days? *Instead of watching the TV, Emily would watch her eldest brother and see when he would laugh. That was her cue that it was time to laugh. She laughed.*

***

The unconscious appropriation of the master's code (Fanon, 1952), the "colluding in one's own powerlessness" (Ruddick, 1982, p.104), is what makes hegemonic practices effective. It takes place everyday in what we consider the most ordinary of circumstances. The socialization process – gendered, racialized, classed – happens slowly and subtly. This is why excavation is required.

In Emily's vignettes, she functioned within structures that legitimated only certain ways of knowing, and privileged masculine gendered knowledge as establishing the norms of authority. We all desire to "better understand the human condition," but that the ways we understand the world depend on our beliefs about the nature of truth (Banks and Banks, 1998). If truth is assumed to be found in measurable accuracy, then the persuasiveness of one's beliefs rests in quantifiably assessed reliability and validity. Such empirical paradigms traditionally leave little space for validating subjective, textual, or emotional truths. Gillian Swanson (2000) traces the subjective self, or the interiorized self of memory, as inscribed in private, relational, and unstable femininity "against the imagined unified persona of the public masculinity, the citizen-subject" (p. 112).

What the *currere* teacher/learner needs to grasp is that she may, just as unknowingly, be extending her own subordinations and contradictions to her students in her present work.

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Emily loved her cash register toy. She'd punch in the numbers, press the button, and "ding!" The surprise of the cash register door whipping open never ceased to thrill her.

***

Emily remembers especially the Greek myths and the fairy tales she read and re-read endlessly. There were two paperbacks of Greek myths, with pen-and-ink illustrations of the gods and mortals, and different collections of fairy tales: Hans Christian Andersen, Grimms, Japanese Fairy Tales. She loved the myth of Arachne, who dared to challenge the goddess, Athena, and was transformed into a spider as punishment. And the genie, imprisoned in the lamp, who wanted so much to be free that he vowed to reward the person who set him free; only, after hundreds and hundreds of years of waiting, he resolved to destroy the first person to open the lamp. And the tale of the cake that ran away from the old woman.

***

It isn't difficult to understand the appeal of tales of power and punishment to children, whose lives are often filled with unseen frustrations, socially-unacceptable rages, endless boredom, and dreams. Bruno Bettelheim (1976) first described the value of fairy tales in children's lives, as symbolic means for working through internal struggles.

Elizabeth Goodenough (2003) writes about the significance of secret spaces, however humble, in childhood. These are spaces where children can escape the eyes of parents, teachers, siblings, and peers, sanctuaries where they can "remain attuned to the need for secluding the symbolism of their inner lives" to, as the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, wrote, "selve" a beginning (Goodenough, p. 9). Goodenough describes how secret spaces are part of "the lifelong process of negotiating boundaries between what is real inside themselves and the world outside" (p. 8). Childhood stories are part of a teacher's educational formation (Strong-Wilson, 2008), a secret space where teachers can return to "recover their own landscapes" (p. 48).

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Curriculum models

The pedagogical practice of Reggio Emilia, developed in the Italian city, subscribes to research as an everyday practice, conducted by the teacher, the child, and the parent. Research is "a habit of mind, an attitude, … [that] constructs new knowledge, it makes for critical thinking, it is part of citizenship and democracy" (Rinaldi and Moss, 2004, p. 3). In line with Greene (1978), Pinar (1976), and Grumet (1991), the Reggio teacher, as researcher, is a reflective practitioner and learner.

In schools, what too often gets lost in the Tylerian structure of aims, designs and evaluations, in the ideology of meritocracy, and in the future-directed developmental models is the student's sense of self-directedness, or what Catherine in the focus group described as a readiness to experience the magic. It's no wonder

that children need secret spaces away from adults, who structure school systems while maintaining a belief in childhood as a utopian space.

***

She decided to switch from Physics & Physiology to Education. One thing she remembered is that the graduation sashes the Education graduates wore were blue and red: blue representing sciences and red representing arts. She wasn't used to thinking that the two colours could mix.

The Elementary Education program director met with her and said, "We don't want flunkies from the sciences in our program." Emily wasn't expecting that and responded, "I wasn't failing." Did he assume that if she wanted to switch to Education, it must have been because she wasn't able to keep up with the hard sciences? The next time she met with the program director, he smiled and said, "I remember your lovely freckles."

***

Emily liked the philosophy, psychology, and sociology of Education courses, but it offended her that some of the professors of the curriculum and instruction courses treated the students like elementary aged children. These courses didn't feel like a university level education.

***

> Now women do not become babies just because they care for babies; nevertheless, we write manuals for elementary teachers as if they were six years old.
>
> - Madeleine Grumet, 2006, p. 219

Historically, a pervasive belief in the lack of intellectual rigour and substantive content has weighed on teacher education programs (Carini & Kuh,

2003), and the cultural context of Education as a low-status scholarly pursuit is only amplified in early childhood education (Hargreaves & Hopper, 2006).

Blackwell (2003) argues that teacher education programs carry a mythological rather than scholarly ethos; "[e]veryone knows what teaching is," through our own childhood experiences in classrooms and through our experiences as parents teaching our children (p. 262). We feel so confident that we know what teachers do that we doubt the need for specialized scholarly education beyond subject matter knowledge, "just a soupcon of formal training" (Blackwell, Futrell, and Imig, 2003, p. 357). This sort of thinking, Blackwell contends, contributes to Education's lack of status compared to fields such as medicine and law. Doctors and lawyers are presumed to cover a body of knowledge that is exclusive to their profession; however, "we don't generally believe teachers have knowledge others do not have" (Blackwell, 2003, p. 362).

***

Emily graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Few Elementary school teaching positions were available, so she decided to work at a child care center, just for the summer. This center, in a lower socioeconomic district, illustrated the sorts of problems that child care settings are criticized for: children were herded in front of the television to watch episodes of Barney*, then fed, diapered, put to bed, and strategically cleaned up right before pick-up. Understaffed, the director's brother would quiet the children down with his booming voice. As soon as the director discovered that Emily had a good hand at recreating cartoon figures, she was pulled out of the children's area to draw Sesame Street characters for the window display – marketing to parent consumers*

who grew up watching Bert and Ernie. Emily was unable to connect with the children or to articulate the variables that led to her overwhelming sense of chaos. She left the job quickly.

***

This dissertation addresses the devaluation of early childhood teachers, however, the truly abhorrent state of too many early childhood settings is undeniable, and complicates my ability to advocate for the field and my commitment to it.

The traditional division in early childhood settings is between child care (daycares, nurseries, *crèches*) and early education (nursery schools, prekindergarten classes, preschools) (Moss, 2006). The distinction between care and education is another social construction, with care work naturalized as domestic (read: women's) labour, and education given a higher status. The distinctions between child care and early education are based, in part, on social structures in which child care workers are sometimes paid lower wages than preschool teachers, but in many cases, the only difference is the half-day versus the full day. Moss (2006) describes how many Nordic countries (naming Norway, Sweden, and Denmark) have moved beyond this traditional child care/education division by integrating curriculum for children from one to six years of age in their Education systems.

***

Emily's next job was in an early childhood setting in a university community. The director hired exclusively teachers with Bachelor's degrees in Education. Emily savored her job in this privileged, middle-class setting. She

would come in for hours on the weekends to set up her classroom materials and prepare her lessons.

***

One child in her group was a little girl named Anna, who had strawberry blond hair, round cheeks, and a scowl on her face every September morning upon arrival. At morning drop-off, Anna and her mother would speak to one another quietly, while her older brother looked around. When the mother gave Emily the sign, Emily would take Anna's hand and walk the tiny, bawling powerhouse to the group. Emily remembers Anna crying as the other children were busy in the various learning centers; she remembers her crying as she sat with her lunch box open in front of her at the lunch table; she remembers her crying outside in the playground with her big coat on. Emily stayed with her throughout. One teacher commented to Emily that she was very good at talking about "nothing" with the children, which Emily knew was not meant as a compliment. One morning, Anna arrived at the center and instead of crying, she ran to Emily with a big grin on her face. Anna was ready to be chatty, strong-minded, and happy.

Emily suspected that the children who cried the most in September were not the unhappiest ones, but the ones who had the strongest personalities. Their crying was not as much a reflection of sadness, but of indignation and anger. Once they settled in, the big criers found other ways to make their desires known.

***

Anna's story carries traces of Emily's childhood experiences with her teacher, Mrs. Tulley, and how the adult's caring presence ("just talking") was a sustaining relationship. Grumet (1988) wrote that "most of our classrooms cannot

sustain human relationships of sufficient intimacy to support the risks, the trust, and the expression that learning requires" (p. 56). Grumet found that most classrooms introduced little nurturance into the school atmosphere, observing instead an increasingly technical and impersonal approach. For many teachers, the nurturing features of teaching conflict with their goals of professionalism. The insight that Emily gathered from her work with helping children adapt in their journeys from home to their first public setting was a more nuanced understanding of the nature of resistance in children, and represented a desire to better understand the nature of childhood and childhood learning.

Nikolajeva (2002) wrote that "childhood is something irretrievably lost for adults …. [and] can only be restored in fiction" (p. 306). But, could this sense of reclaiming childhood through images of children also apply to working with children? Children's author, Karla Kuskin, was praised as being able to "think herself into a child's skin" through her own memories of childhood (Pendergast and Pendergast, 1999).

***

She wondered how she could derive so much satisfaction from work that commanded such little professional respect. Sometimes she felt as if she was a white man who had chosen to work with young children, as if she needed to take up that position to be able to question whether she *was at fault for valuing her work in early childhood education, or whether there was a problem in the social structures that devalued it.*

Emily was conscious of how tricky it was to negotiate the work inside an early childhood setting with its appearance on the outside (where all you saw were women walking a line of kids to a park).

She started a master's degree in Education.

***

As Emily discovered a desire for working as an early childhood teacher, she had to struggle to determine, under all those contradictory *layers* of social, parental, and internal messages, what direction to choose, and to figure out which choices represented an appropriation of patriarchal codes and which represented her own knowledge and values. Ruddick (1982) writes that "[f]eminist consciousness will first transform inauthentic obedience into wariness, uncertain reflection, and at times, anguished confusion" (p. 105). Feminist consciousness can also reveal the deceit in social reality, and incite a person to reject these features in society (Bartky, 1977).

Emily decided that the weaker choice, the one that maintained her in the structures of society that she wanted to reject, would be to obey the obvious societal constructs of success, or to prove against parental expectations that she was as good as the boys. It wasn't a question of capability; it was about "selv[ing]" a beginning (see Goodenough, 2003) or recovering her own "landscapes of learning" (Greene, 1978).

***

In *My Future Self N' Me,* Stan takes his situation to heart and studies hard, until he learns that his classmate, Butters, also has a Future/Loser Self. Stan and

Butters discover their parents' conspiracy with Motivation Corp., but when their parents refuse to concede to the truth, the boys make plans.

***

Scene from *My Future Self N' Me*

CARTMAN: Listen! Parents understand one thing, and that's consequences. They need to see consequences from their actions, or else they'll never learn. What my company does is inflicts those consequences upon the parents in a very real and very direct way.

***

Stan didn't fall for the conspiracy that his parents bought from Motivation Corp. Emily thought of consequences differently, however. She wondered how unearthing the contradictory and complicit ways we maintain our own marginalization can help us understand, rather than just criticize, the duplicity found in others.

***

As she pursued her doctoral degree in Education, Emily's experience in the graduate program was that having taught in high schools was well-received; having taught in elementary schools was received too; but let it slip that she was a preschool teacher and she was greeted with patronizing nods of "oh, you were a preschool 'teacher'" as she soaked up unmistakably condescending looks and watched her audience conjure up images of picture books, parks, crayons, stay-at-home moms, and ethnic nannies. Suddenly, time warp style, she was launched back into being an insecure eight-year-old seeing her current self (the preschool teacher) as a failed future.

***

Scene from *My Future Self N' Me*

STAN: Butters, don't you get it?! Those assholes aren't our future selves! Our parents hired them to make us more motivated!

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Layered selves. The feelings of anticipation and fear that Emily felt toward her future self as a child stayed with her. How much colluding and rationalization was still present if Emily was so quick to feel like her Loser Self?

The point of *currere* is not to fill the gaps in Emily's story. She was content in her practice as a teacher. She was engaged in making a positive difference in children's lives. She was also anxiously motivated by her "ascribed status or place in an established order" (Goodson, 1997, p.4), as a child worried about her future career and as a professional concerned about gaining legitimacy and respect in her discipline. Part of our ability to "distinguish the world we received as children from the one we are responsible to create as adults" (Grumet, 1991, p. 79-80) requires a willingness to reflect on and accept the contradictions within a person. A critical disposition forces us to accept our hybrid natures, and that the boundaries that we've believed to be essential are in fact negotiable. What must be asked is not "*Who* am I?" but "*When, where, how* am I?"" (Trinh, 1992, p. 157). Rose (1984) argues that there is "no childhood which is simply over and done with … neither childhood nor meaning can be pinned down – they shift, and our own identity with them" (p.17-18).

Finally, Emily's discomfort and ambivalence in working as a preschool teacher is not truly separable from the more systemic attitudes. The number of poor quality early childhood settings also complicates how one examines the

devaluation of early childhood education, one that sustains a system that disenfranchises groups of children and their teachers. There are very real structural inequalities at play (Goldstein, 1997)

***

Conclusion

> Curriculum is our attempt to claim and realize self-determination by constructing worlds for our children that repudiate the constraints that we understand to have limited us.
>
> - Madeleine Grumet, 1988, p. 169

Understanding curriculum. What can Emily's and Stan's stories offer to teachers in early childhood education? We are often governed by fear. If we don't take the time to reflect and to acknowledge the ambivalences lived by early childhood teachers, there is the risk that we will continue to perpetuate ways of teaching that are romanticized, but desperate and defensive (Boldt et al., 2006).

Childhood learning means many things. Learning is not something a parent or teacher can do for a child. Sometimes secret spaces are required. Sometimes an adult's caring presence is required. Sometimes, as Sendak pointed out, children have to figure things out on their own, even if they have all the wrong information (Cech, 1995).

Memory work and childhood. My Future Self N' Me is about an eight-year-old boy confronting his supposed future self and uncovering the manipulative agenda imposed by the adults around him. The idea of one's self moving over time is helpful in understanding our conceptualizations of childhood. Development is a linear concept with a clear start (the child is unformed, a mush of sensory-motor responses to the moment) and a clear goal (the adult is the rational end point, which

the child strives to achieve through predetermined stages). Time is linear in that it moves forward chronologically, but, in another sense, time is fluid. A teacher lives in the past, present, and future, through memories and imagination.

What role does an adult's memories of childhood play in his or her ability to teach children? Childhood memories are often remembered in ways that explain one's present as a logical outgrowth in a "mixture of history and myth" (Rand, 1995, p.114) and anticipate a future that reassures the existence of "a continuity of experience over time" (Crites, 1971, p. 302).

Our intentions as teachers, which manifest as our pedagogical actions and utterances, get mixed in with these vague but powerful ways of remembering, thinking, and feeling about childhood. It is our professional responsibility to make sure that our intentions are based on informed thoughtfulness and reflection rather than taken-for-granted values that we've inherited from our own experiences or from uninterrogated cultural influences. This is not a practical solution, however, because our ways of thinking about childhood are not fixed, definite, or coherent. They lie "beneath attitudes, something that the researcher may call feelings, or responses, or experiences, or world-views" (Myers & Macnaghten, 1999, p. 174).

When faced with the complementary projects of striving to understand oneself and of striving to act for social change (Pinar, 2004, p.4), I respond by citing Rose (1984): "the only way out is … to go back (or down) in place and time" (p.43).

***

Scene from *My Future Self N' Me*

STAN: Aw, stop it, you guys! I know all about Motivation Corp.! All I've been trying to get you guys to do is admit that you lied to me!

RANDY: Oh... Well... Son, we've just been trying to make sure you know how dangerous drugs like pot are.

STAN: I've been told a lot of things about pot, but I've come to find out a lot of those things aren't true! So I don't know what to believe!

RANDY: Well, Stan, the truth is marijuana probably isn't gonna make you kill people, and ...it most likely isn't gonna fund terrorism, but... Well son, pot makes yuu feel fine with being bored and... It's when you're bored that you should be learning some new skill or discovering some new science or... being creative. If you smoke pot you may grow up to find out that you aren't good at anything.

STAN: I really, really wish you just would have told me that from the beginning.

Chapter 6. Narrative Inquiry: A Co-Constructed Dialogue

Everywhere I go I find that a poet has been there before me.

- Sigmund Freud

> In every adult there lurks a child – an eternal child, something that is always becoming, is never completed, and calls for unceasing care, attention, and education. That is the part of the human personality which wants to develop and become whole.

- C. G. Jung

> They scream for help; the parent is in the room, and the parent doesn't know how to help. This is my vision of childhood: children are so close to security, but they are profoundly alone … and they don't know how to communicate the particular terror that's eating them.

- Maurice Sendak

In this chaper, I present my third and final phase of inquiry, a co-constructed conversation, in which I joined my voice (as teacher, mother, and student of curriculum studies and children's literature and film) with the teachers' voices from the focus group discussions. The purpose of this approach was to reach a better understanding of the complex ways that we experience childhood, through a dialogic conversation. The haunting story, *Outside Over There,* was a generative prompt for the participants to "attend to those disquieting feelings, histories, images and associations that are often ignored about teaching" (Taubman, 2007, p. 5).

Whereas in chapter four, I extracted conversational sequences from the teachers' focus group discussions and analyzed these sequences in terms of interactive meaning making or the *ways* that the teachers co-constructed their understandings of childhood, in this chapter, I assembled content from the

teachers' discussions around the picture book *Outside Over There*, and combined them with my own responses to the teachers' thoughts and my own readings of *Outside Over There*. This was how I constructed a semi-fictional conversation. To distinguish my own responses from the teachers' contributions, I present in italized format the sections of dialogue that are directly quoted from the teachers in the focus group sessions.

***Outside Over There:* Summary**

Maurice Sendak's picture book, *Outside Over There*, centers on a girl named Ida who is perhaps nine or ten years of age. The narrative begins with Ida carrying her considerably heavy baby sister, while she and her mother look out over the sea. Two goblins covered in cloaks watch the three. The first lines of the story read, "When Papa was away at sea and Mama in the arbor." Ida's mother sits in full Victorian dress, in a slouched position, disconsolately and ineffectively gaping towards the sea. Ida stands next to her mother, holding the crying baby.

In the next double page ("Ida played her wonder horn to rock the baby still – but never watched"), Ida is in the baby's bedroom playing her wonder horn, with her back to the baby, when two goblins climb into the bedroom window and kidnap the baby sister. They leave in the baby's place a baby made of ice. Ida hugs the ice baby, to find it melting. Upon the discovery, she shakes a determined fist toward the window, through which the goblins escaped, and cries out "They stole my sister away! To be a nasty goblin's bride." She dons her mother's over-sized rain cloak, and climbs out the window "into outside over there." Her "serious mistake," we are told, is that she climbs out backwards.

Ida floats in the sky until her father's song tells her to turn around, which she does, and finds herself "smack in the middle of a wedding." The illustration depicts five crying babies, all replicates of the baby sister – the goblins. Ida charms the goblins "with a captivating tune" on her wonder horn. The goblins dance against their will, first slowly, then in a series of double-paged illustrations, "pranced so fierce, so fast they quick churned into a dancing stream." Ida finds one baby sitting in an eggshell, "crooning and clapping as a baby should," and knows that this is her sister.

She carries the baby home, where her mother is holding a letter from her father, which reads "I'll be home one day, and my brave, bright little Ida must watch the baby and her Mama for her Papa, who loves her always." Ida obeys, and in the final page is shown helping her sister take first steps.

The voices

MARGAUX: A teacher (composite of six teachers)

CLAIRE: A teacher and mother (composite of six teachers)

SARAH: A graduate student in film and literature studies and a mother (me)

BOOTS: A curriculum theorist (me)

SENDAK: Himself

THE CONVERSATION

Opening remarks

BOOTS: I've asked you to read Maurice Sendak's *Outside Over There* so that we could discuss the story today. Do you have any initial thoughts or questions?

SARAH: I wasn't present for the first two sessions, so would you mind giving me a sense of how the discussions have developed so far?

BOOTS: Yes, of course. In my research, I'm exploring how literary and cinematic narratives of childhood might evoke reflections in teachers on how they understand childhood. As these discussions progressed, I became more sensitive to how early childhood teachers are hounded by this sense that they feel less valued in the field of education, compared to, say, college teachers, high school teachers or even later elementary grade school teachers. And behind this sense of marginalization lies a comparison between preschool or kindergarten teachers and substitute mothers. (To Claire and Margaux) Is that accurate?

CLAIRE: Absolutely. Preschool teachers suffer from this image of the babysitter, regardless of how much teacher education or experience they have (Kim, 2005).

MARGAUX: When I worked as a supervisor in a child care center, I used to despise it when people suggested they were qualified to teach in early childhood programs because they were parents, as if teaching young children required only a mother's sensibility and not a professional course of study. It lowered the professionalism of the field. There's a pervasive discomfort in likening early childhood education to parenting.

CLAIRE: Or to being like children. *There's this assumption that you're not really a person, that somehow it's contagious to be working with four-year-olds. Your brain is like a four-year-old because you have empathy for a four-year-old. It somehow takes away from the fact that you have a full adult sensibility as well.*

BOOTS: Exactly, so today I want to explore one literary representation of childhood as a way of approaching the teacher's subjective experience of early childhood education. We live in a society that both sentimentalizes and diminishes childhood, and then extends that appraisal to mothers and early childhood teachers.

What I want to look at is how the *adult* in the early childhood education equation understands childhood as a concept, and I'm using Sendak's story to elicit thoughts. I know you study children's literature and films, and that you're a mother, so I was hoping that you might shed some light on the subject.

SARAH: Okay, I get it.

BOOTS: And if anything resonates with you as a mother, too, Claire, please feel free to share those thoughts.

CLAIRE: Sounds good.

Initial responses

BOOTS: What did you think about the book?

CLAIRE: *I didn't realize how brilliant Sendak was. When I looked at this book again, I thought of the imagery and the deepest darkest fears of a child that a child cannot articulate- And I was struck by what a genius he is. I thought back to the other two books, and I thought, man, he's got kids' number, in a deep dreamlike way, like he's got into the subconscious of kids and I could see why parents and teachers hesitate to use him, because our subconscious is pretty powerful.*

MARGAUX: *I was a bit shocked at first. I was uncomfortable with it.*

BOOTS: What made you uncomfortable?

MARGAUX: *I felt for her. I felt for the little girl so much. I have a problem with* Ida being *asked to be the adult, being put in that adult role* by *the father's saying, "Take care of your mother and the baby."*

BOOTS: What do you think Sendak was trying to say with that?

MARGAUX: *That sometimes, we really put too much pressure on our children.* Parents are supposed to take care of their children, not the other way around. *And*

children do take on responsibilities whether they're asked to or not. There are lots of kids whose temperaments are, 'I want to be the grown-up. I want to be the mother or the father.'

CLAIRE: *I identified very strongly with the older girl who had a younger sister, who she needed to protect, and who she had to protect on her own. She just had to do the work that – and I just identified with that. I think children often feel protective of their younger siblings and proud as well. Proud and protective, and they like taking care of them. Just like she does. But, the mother is strangely absent.* She'*s just not there.*

SARAH: Mmm, Ida's mother is portrayed as this self-involved parent. She's lost in thought, oblivious to her children and their needs. But it's as if we don't even question equating maternal self-involvement with ineffective parenting, as if child care naturally requires selflessness.

MARGAUX: Are you suggesting that Ida's mother is somehow doing a good job as the adult caregiver?

SARAH: I'm not sure that Ida or her baby sister are actually endangered in the story.

MARGAUX: But *these two daughters were really left to protect each other. They were left abandoned.* I think the mother *endangered* the children. *Both kids could have disappeared forever.*

SARAH: I guess I read the story as starting realistically and then moving into fantasy, so that the dangerous parts took place in Ida's imagination. I mean, the story follows a fantasy narrative structure in which Ida is taking care of her baby sister and then she's thrown into this fantasy, where her inner struggles are given

symbolic form (goblins, outside over there). Once she's made some sort of internal resolution, the story returns to reality.

BOOTS: So, Ida needs to deal with her struggles in her imagination. In the beginning of the story, in the realistic world, "outside over there" is the world of the father, but as the story progresses into fantasy, "outside over there" symbolizes Ida's internal struggle, that is, "inside over here."

MARGAUX: Still, her struggles can be taken seriously.

SARAH: Yes, I'm just thinking that Ida's mother's momentary self-involvement might not be that bad, or that unusual.

MARGAUX I don't know. Ida goes through a lot in this story.

BOOTS: What are Ida's internal struggles?

CLAIRE: The way I read it, and I had to read it many times, Ida is trying to become her own person. She's maybe nine, and that's when kids start individuating from their parents. But it's a painful time for the whole family, with the father away at sea and the mother despondent. Ida is part of a long tradition of older siblings taking care of younger children, and naturally there is antagonism in being forced into this role.

SARAH: I think Ida's conflict lies in how to balance her caretaking responsibilities with her own desires (symbolized in her wonder horn). She's struggling with her own internal messages about who she should be. She's also struggling with the messages she's received from her parents about who she should be, and they're very gendered messages.

Ida's internal struggle (messages from the mother)

BOOTS: What are the messages from Ida's mother?

SARAH: One message is that of oppression – probably maternal oppression - embodied by the baby sister. The three female characters (mother, daughter and baby sister) are "inside over here," whereas the father is "outside over there." The girl learns to care for babies. It's normal. It's expected. This is why the fantasy that follows is so extraordinary. Maybe the mother's present burden of caring for a baby represents Ida's future burden. The mother is shown engaging in some narcissistic behavior; we assume she's dwelling on her own problems while passing on her oppression to her eldest daughter.

CLAIRE: So Ida isn't given the possibility of reflecting over her own problems (trying to become her own person), as she's burdened with the responsibility of caring for her sister.

BOOTS: When you say "passing on her oppression to her eldest daughter," is that the mother's unspoken way of telling Ida that who she will become is the mother? I mean, is Ida, in fact, her mother-in-training?

SARAH: Yes and no. I suppose I'm looking at the combined message of mother and daughter. There's an expectation in society that mothers have no identities outside of caring for their children, even if this only lasts when the child is a newborn. You jump at this image of Ida's mother, disconnected from her child. I did when I first read the story, but who's to say this isn't just a snapshot and that in the next instance, the mother <u>is</u> there for her children? It's too easy to vilify the mother, and why? Because she's sad? Because she's having a self-absorbed moment? Because she feels stuck at home? Maybe the mother wasn't always this way. Maybe she used to be like Ida, planning to become her own person.

CLAIRE: But, the mother *looks depressed and disengaged, just longing for the father*. And *why would the father write to his daughter to look after the mother and the child? Why not write to his wife and say, 'Look after our children'. They both have stepped away from that. Their father's gone- we don't know why - and their mother is emotionally gone, which is actually sometimes scarier, if a parent is present in the house and yet not available. It's harder to figure out, it's harder to understand. Who do you go to? Because the body's there. Whether you can articulate that as a kid: Where's mom? Where's dad? If they're there but not there.*

SARAH: Right. I'm trying to read this from the mother's perspective, but yeah, I agree that the parents are too absent.

Ida's internal struggle (messages from the father)

BOOTS: What are the messages from Ida's father?

SARAH: I think that Ida's missing father is given a disproportionate degree of importance because of his inaccessibility and distance, whereas the mother's proximity further denigrates her ineffectiveness and lack of subjectivity. The father represents a kind of liberation that Ida cannot attain as long as she is bound by her mother's circumstances.

BOOTS: At this point, the reader doesn't know that Sendak will use "outside over there" to mean Ida's internal world. So, we can follow Jessica Benjamin's (1988) description of the problematic "split between a father of liberation and a mother of dependency," in which identification with the father is assumed to be the "route to individuality" as he lives effectively, we assume, in the external world (p. 133).

SARAH: The mother isn't recognized as "an independently existing subject" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 165). She is devalued, and as the mother is deprived of her

own subjectivity, the girl's identification with her mother results in a loss of self. It's as if the mother is warning Ida, through her lifeless demeanor, to choose the identity "outside over there" over the loss of self "here." So, Ida searches for her father to guide her. She idealizes him and accepts his authority as providing her with the only effective identity that appears to be available to her. In the end, Ida is offered the same identity (and protection or harm) that her mother would provide her, in that the father writes to her to "watch the baby and her Mama for her Papa."

[long pause]

BOOTS: Psychoanalytic types of interpretations are valuable, but the danger is that they seem conclusive, instead of leaving space for other ways that the story might resonate with readers.

[pause]

BOOTS: What connections with your own lived experiences does this story evoke?

Evoking memories

CLAIRE: I have to say that as a teacher and on a more personal level, *the one author and illustrator I avoided was Maurice Sendak. Even when I had students who brought his books to school, I avoided discussing them. Only* after we started analyzing his books together in these sessions *did I begin to understand why he had always been so troubling to me, and why I couldn't include him in my teaching. As we talk about the plots, sub-plots and images of Outside Over There, I am pulled back emotionally into my earliest years. The sense of dutiful, protective, too much-adult-responsibility-is-being-asked love that Sendak's older sister feels towards her baby sister was an agonizing reminder of life with my younger sister.*

BOOTS: I'm sorry if my choice of stories evoked any difficult feelings and memories.

CLAIRE: No, it's okay. As we discussed how our responses are connected to our teacher practices, *I re-saw how my creation of literate classroom communities that centered on books as sources of hope, empowerment and escape connected to my hunger as a child for that center in my own life. Away from school, I hid in books. I escaped to books. I learned everything I needed to know about who I was and what I wanted in books.*

More than half my public school career has been in grades one, two and three. From that first job in Kanawake*, I discovered a gift for creating literate, welcoming classrooms with and for all my students – the kind of classroom I wished someone had created with me when I was their age. My students and I built our learning around the worlds of books and art, whatever grade I was teaching,*

BOOTS: So, the story, or more accurately, your identification with the protagonist, Ida, evoked troubling memories of your childhood, but also memories of how you turned to stories to find escape, hope, education, and identity. The books were *there* for you, and in a sense, they took care of you. Somehow, you found the strength to bring this way of taking care of yourself as a child (when you were far too young to be expected to take care of yourself) to all of your students today by creating literate and empowering classroom communities. As you say, you built the kind of classroom you wished someone had created for you when you were a child.

CLAIRE: Yes.

[pause]

BOOTS: This is the sort of difficult awakeness and attention to our experiences that a reflective practitioner is asked to live.

CLAIRE: [small laugh] My goblins, I suppose.

The goblins

BOOTS: [laughs] Well, monsters do take a central role in Sendak's picture books. What did you think about the goblins?

MARGAUX: *The goblins with the hoods on, with the dark faces was what I found the most frightening about* the story. *At first I thought it was death, before I read anything, because for me this is a symbol of death.* Maybe *it's her fear of* her father *dying. What's the worse thing that can happen? You can lose a parent, and this is following her, this worse thing that can happen*.

CLAIRE: *-just like maybe the father's disappearance feels like forever to the elder daughter.*

BOOTS: So, the goblins represent a threat, a child's fear of losing a parent.

SARAH: But, they're watching Ida and the baby.

MARGAUX: *It's intriguing, just as you mention that, I hadn't realized that, at the very first page,* the goblins are watching the girls. *The picture kind of previews the whole thing. And outside over there is the goblin, literally outside over there.*

SARAH: Yes, right from the title page, the goblins are there, hidden by grey cloaks. They watch Ida and her sister, waiting for the moment when Ida takes her eyes off the baby. Can I go with a psychoanalytic interpretation again? I'm taking a class on cultural analysis.

BOOTS: [laughs] Sure.

SARAH: In Ida's fantasy segments, she both wishes for her sister (her oppression) to be removed and at the same time feels compelled to care for her. The goblins, however, are ready to strike. They act as both Ida's superego (always watching Ida, waiting for her to make a mistake, ready to inflict its punishment, inciting her to do the right thing) and her wish-fulfillment (her destructive tendencies toward her sister). Actually, I think the goblins represent mostly the side of Ida that wants to destroy rather than care dutifully for the baby sister, the side that she can't face head-on and therefore must externalize in symbolic form.

CLAIRE: What's interesting is that it is only when Ida plays her wonder-horn, something for her <u>self</u> (and even then, with the premise "to rock the baby still") that she takes her eyes off the baby. In any real-life situation, a caregiver taking his or her eyes off of a baby for one moment would be acceptable and expected. It wouldn't present a danger to the baby.

SARAH: But Ida's goblins are always watching. They're ready at a second's notice to take the baby away. Since Ida has conflicting desires, that would mean both fulfilling Ida's wish and punishing her.

MARGAUX: That's a lot for a nine-year-old.

CLAIRE: But children do have monsters in their lives. *I think the adult world looks more filled with goblins than we want to know, from a child's perspective. If you just read the words without the pictures, it's not such a terrible story. It's a very standard kind of fairy tale. A baby gets stolen by goblins – yeah, Rumplestiltskin, whatever. And um… whatever.* [group laughs] *Kids accept all that. They're so amazing. They're so matter of fact.*

BOOTS: The child "*see[s]* the world differently" (Lury, 2005, p. 308). Lury writes that "seeing is what children do; showing is what adults do for children." Do you remember the child, Cole, in *the Sixth Sense*? He sees dead people in an unintelligible way that the psychologist tries, but fails, to explain to the child. Ida sees goblins. Ida's mother and father are supposed to *show* Ida how to cope with her ability to see what she feels, but they're not able to.

SARAH: You know, the goblins are not the only ones watching Ida. Her father, the original superego, watches her even while he is "away at sea" and catches her "serious mistake" of climbing out the window backwards, while attempting to fix her first mistake and rescue her sister.

The mistake: "backwards into outside over there"

BOOTS: In the rescue sequence, Ida pulls on her mother's rain cloak, symbolically donning the mother's role. But the cloak is clearly too big for her; this is too much for Ida.

MARGAUX: *And then she made a terrible mistake, she climbed out backwards. And the backwards has some significance.*

CLAIRE: Sendak calls her "foolish," but it's hard to think of her as foolish or to decipher what this mistake is. It isn't obvious to the reader that, when rescuing one's baby sister from kidnapping goblins, one shouldn't step out backwards from one's window. What can be more frightening than not being able to know when you're about to make a serious mistake?

SARAH: I think the mistake is that she wasn't facing what she needed to face. And if she's going into her internal world, contradictorily called "outside over there,"

then what she needs to face is herself. In her Papa's song, she is told to correct her mistake by 'turn[ing] around again.'

CLAIRE*: And she did, so you can make a mistake, and it can be okay.*

MARGAUX*: And also that image when she's floating in the sky, in the text, it says she's made a mistake, but in the pictures, you don't see that she made a mistake. Just looking at the pictures, I don't have a sense that the elder sister is so frightened or overwhelmed. Just looking at the pictures, from how she's painted. From the text, I felt anxious for her, and I felt her horror at what had happened. But just from the pictures, she seems to go through this very calmly and –*

BOOTS: Right, there's a contradiction between the text and the images. If it *is* the fantasy world, the internal world, then the father's voice can't be real. It's just an internalized voice of patriarchy.

SARAH: It bothers me, still, that the missing father continues to be idealized as the path into the world. His voice comes over us with such unquestionable authority and logic. Why did she need his presence to know to turn inward? And how is it that he seemed to ignore her other "serious mistake" of wishing her sister erased?

The goblin babies

MARGAUX: *That melting baby freaked me out. Oh my gosh, the shock of the ice baby, the goblin* when Ida discovers that the goblins leave in the baby's place another baby "all made of ice."

CLAIRE: This is the one time in the book that Ida displays anger.

BOOTS: That's true. What is she angry about?

CLAIRE: At being tricked by the goblins.

SARAH: Or at failing to keep up with her unreasonably demanding superego.

CLAIRE: Or her wish that her sister be taken away.

SARAH: Or maybe the dripping and staring ice thing she discovers in the embrace reminds Ida of her unresponsive mother.

MARGAUX: That's creepy.

Unexpected visit

[There's a knock at the door]

BOOTS: Oh, Maurice Sendak!

[Sounds of surprise]

SENDAK: Hi Boots. I got your e-mail and thought I'd drop by.

BOOTS: That's great, come join us. We're trying to untangle some of the ways we make sense of childhood, and we're talking about your Ida.

SENDAK: I can only stay a few minutes. There's an exhibition at the museum and I'm scheduled to speak.

BOOTS: No problem.

[Sendak sits down and takes a pastry]

BOOTS: I know you've spent a lot of time thinking about childhood and your work, so can you share some of your thoughts about how you capture childhood in your books?

SENDAK: Well, "[s]ome people ask, 'How do you do it, Mr. Sendak? Why do you have this recollection? You must have some special love for children.' Nonsense! I can reach back and touch it, but most of us can't either because we don't want to, don't know we can, or are terrified by the mere thought of it…Childhood is nothing you look back on, as though you go through a silly time machine. It is imminently available because it has never stopped" (Cech, 1995, p. 29).

MARGAUX: So when you write your books, presumably for a child audience, how do you conceive of childhood?

SENDAK: "I really do these books for myself. It's something I have to do, and it's the only thing I want to do. Reaching the kids is important, but secondary. First, always, I have to reach and keep hold of the child in me" (Cech, 1995, p. 25).

SARAH: So your childhood memories stay with you.

SENDAK: It's "not only about my childhood then but about the child I was as he exists now" (Cech, 1995, p. 19). I have a "great curiosity about childhood as a state of being," an "endless fascination and absorption with childhood" (p. 215). "[The child] is the part I trust, that gives, the part that deals with the work. That's the part where the work comes from'" (p. 215).

SARAH: You're so candid about your relationship with your childhood. Does this ever leave you feeling exposed?

SENDAK: "Reaching back to childhood is to put yourself in a state of vulnerability again, because being a child was to be so. But then all of living is so – to be an artist is to be vulnerable. To not be vulnerable means something is wrong. You've closed yourself off to something. How can you be a good artist? How can you possibly take things that happen in the way that is put upon you as an artist without being vulnerable? It's taking advantage of what we are congenitally – that is, people filled with childhood things" (Cech, p. 29).

MARGAUX: What about Ida? She's such a tragic figure.

SENDAK: "I thought of Judy Garland when I painted [Ida's] face. I wanted to express … that she was dependable and she would bring the baby back, but the eyes are filled with tragedy at the fact that she will always live in a home where

there is another child, and that her mother never, ever will give her the time of day. And it's all written on her face … it's suffering in the way children suffer …. Parents … place these burdens on [children], and they do the best they can. That's what moves me about children, immensely" (Cech, 1995, p. 238).

CLAIRE: How would you describe Ida's conflict?

SENDAK: "She's stuck with taking care of her sibling which she loathes like rat poison. She's stuck with this mama who's in a dream and papa who's away at sea, and this happens in most families, or in many families where the oldest child is dumped. Okay, she'll bear with it, she's brave, she's normal, but there comes that moment when she hates the little bugger, and she wishes her dead. And there's this instant where the mother isn't looking and when she wishes this kid dead, and the fantasy occurs, just like that – it's over in two minutes, and she's back in the arbor with her mother – her mother never noticed; the baby's safe" (Cech, 1995, p. 229).

MARGAUX: And the goblin babies?

SENDAK: "I wanted to capture "a portrait of a child who is plagued by fantasies in which she imagines threatening, "menacing" qualities in the everyday world around her. She 'sees everything, wears a look of grave intelligence …*but gets it all wrong'"* (see Cech, 1995, p. 221). I'm fascinated with children's abilities to "find solutions that work despite having, from an adult perspective, all the 'wrong' information" (Cech, 1995, p. 233).

[The telephone rings; it's the taxi. Farewells are said, and Sendak leaves. The teachers take a coffee break.]

The goblin babies (continued)

BOOTS: We left off with the goblin babies.

CLAIRE*: I think the goblins are a very grim symbol at the beginning, but again, when they reveal to be babies, that's a wonderful magical transformation. I find that just extraordinary, artistically, the way that happens. But, I don't like the image either.*

MARGAUX: *I found it intriguing that the goblins, when their hoods are off, look like babies. I found that, man, you could think about that for a long time. It was one of the first turn-offs for me going back to the book. Oh come on, this is supposed to be a kid's book and you have these –*

CLAIRE: I'm not convinced it's a kid's book.

MARGAUX*: Does she make them babies so she can rescue her sister?*

CLAIRE*: That's a good question.* I don't know. Were the goblins babies the whole time or were they just that form because she needed them to be?

MARGAUX: *In the beginning, they're doing things that babies can't do, you know, they're carrying the ladder, they're climbing up, they're taking the baby, they're sitting in the boat. See, they don't look like babies here* [showing pictures of goblins]

CLAIRE*: No, no, not at all. They're not the right size.*

MARGAUX*: Yeah* [flipping through pictures] *you see them, they don't have faces, they're taking the baby away, and she's floating in the sky, they still don't have faces, and then when she encounters them, they're babies. So she can overcome it, and rescue her sister because they're just like her sister. They're just babies.*

BOOTS: Dennis (2003) described animated beings as having the ability to merge and deconstruct divisions such as child/adult and human/animal – or, in this case, child/monster - as situations warrant (Dennis, 2003).

CLAIRE: *Well, it's interesting that they didn't become babies until she was smack in the middle, right in the middle of the worst thing, these horrible things that took her sister-*

MARGAUX: *It's creepy.*

CLAIRE*: So she turned them into babies so she could get rid of them.*

BOOTS: They're shape-shifters.

CLAIRE*: They're shape-shifters* [laughs]

BOOTS: Sarah, I'm sure Freud would have something to say about the goblin babies.

SARAH: (laughs) Freud (1955) described doubling as one of the most uncanny phenomena in life and in fiction, "arous[ing] deep and creeping horror" (Rollin, 1999, p. 36). An important aspect of the uncanny is that it confounds everyday situations. It arises from the sense that something is strange but familiar, not explicable, but fully present. The discovery that the five "nasty goblins," when uncloaked, are in fact all replicates of Ida's baby sister is the most terrifying moment in the book. I think the purpose of this uncanny scene is to show that something is haunting Ida. Ida is unable to break free from her mother's presence or lack of presence. Her identity is linked with the oppression in her life that is symbolized by the relentless responsibility that should be her mother's. There is nothing unique about a big sister being expected to take care of her little sister; it's as ordinary as going to school.

BOOTS: [laughs]

SARAH: Ida may have unconsciously wished her sister removed but what does she arrive at when the baby is taken away? Erasure is impossible. The blank slate is

that which remains or continues to return following a "process of erasure." Lacan's real is this remainder that cannot be negated, that "ineradicable stain" that "guarantees that nothing escapes history" (Copjec, 2002, p. 93). The sister, or what the sister represents, cannot be negated. She returns five-fold as the goblins, "teeming with emptiness, as a swarming void," with a "wiggling vitality" and "indestructible life" (p. 96-97). Something is definitely haunting Ida.

BOOTS: What is haunting her?

SARAH: Her inevitable future. Her mother's present.

MARGAUX: What, being a mother?

SARAH: Or an early childhood teacher.

CLAIRE: [laughs]

BOOTS: How can we relate this discussion about the uncanny to our reader position as teachers and to our conceptions of childhood?

SARAH: Freud (1955) wrote that this deception allows repressed notions to return. The reader participates in the uncanny experience and is deceived by a fictional world in which events "situated in an everyday reality" are "all of a sudden invaded by an estranging element" (Borghart & Madelein, 2003, p. 2). Just as Ida can't handle her most ordinary of situations, and she can no longer rely on her unconscious signals, perhaps as readers, we wonder, too, whether we can handle our ordinary situations.

BOOTS: As early childhood teachers, we are burdened with seemingly ordinary situations. Being dismissed as babysitters, for instance. This is unfair and we also feel abandoned, to an extent, in the field of education. What exactly are our

goblins? What are our difficult emotions that we're afraid to face head-on? Can we use Ida's story to defamiliarize our situations?

[pause]

BOOTS: Maurice Sendak said that going back to childhood means putting yourself into a state of vulnerability. It's terribly frightening to be propelled back into that time. It's okay if we read the story from the perspective of the adult wanting to take care of Ida, which is how we usually conduct ourselves as parents and teachers, but to actually identify with Ida and her child emotions is terrifying. As teachers and parents, maybe we need to see ourselves as artists, in Sendak's sense of "being filled with childhood things."

CLAIRE: After hearing about Sendak's relationship with his own child self, I'm starting to think differently about why I chose the teaching profession, and continue to work with young children. I wonder about how much I want to take care of that child that I was and that no one noticed. It's always been important for me to make sure that the children I work with feel safe, but it seems wrong to think that I chose to work with them to care for that child still living inside of me.

BOOTS: Yet, Sendak said that "[f]irst, always, I have to reach and keep hold of the child in me." (Cech, 1995, p. 25). It's all he has to go on. He creates his books for himself, first, but <u>then</u> he does it to reach children.

CLAIRE: Is it right for a teacher to carry such thoughts in her as well?

BOOTS: These are the kinds of disquieting feelings and associations that Taubman (2006) urges teachers to not ignore. Having a part you that wants to learn for your self as child does not preclude your ability to teach children effectively. But identifying these facets in yourself will probably help you distinguish your

childhood experiences from your students' experiences. Grumet (1998) questioned how having been a child, or being a parent of a child, affects how you conceive of your work with other people's children.

CLAIRE: I suppose.

BOOTS: It's also important to recognize that we each carry inside ourselves multiple voices that combine, compete, and overlap in unique and evolving ways. Grumet (1998) also wrote that "there is no one way of being concerned with children" (p. 6). What we offer to the abstract collective known as childhood can take shape in different ways. Sendak chose to write children's stories. You chose to teach children. Each of us creates and recreates one's self continually. We cannot exceed our own "biographic situation" (Pinar, 1975, p. 412) until we can conceive, with awakeness, of our own situations.

[pause]

MARGAUX: Speaking of disquieting associations, *I found it a bit bizarre, this goblin's bride business.* I mean, *where's he going with that? I thought it was sexually really overt.*

SARAH: Ida's baby sister is going to be married or merged with the rest of the goblins. Even if the goblins represent only the side of Ida that wants to destroy her sister, Ida can't win: if she lets the wedding happen, that destructive part of her will have won, and her sister will be destroyed in the sense of being banished from Ida's love and care. At the same time, her sister will only return to haunt Ida, and this time it will be five times more powerful.

BOOTS: What does Ida or the reader learn here?

SARAH: Internally, Ida needs to act. She was forced by a preoccupied mother and absent father to care for and to love her sister, to sacrifice her own desires and development. It's too much and she needs to work through her internal conflicts, and when given the ultimatum internally, the side of her that truly loves her sister wins. She uses her talent - her wonder horn - to dissolve the goblins, to dissolve her desires to destroy her sister. And then she finds her sister, "cozy in an eggshell, crooning and clapping as a baby should."

Ida's self

BOOTS: What is her resolution?

SARAH: I don't believe there is a resolution for Ida in this story; she simply suffers a loss of self.

MARGAUX: That's pretty heavy. She has no self?

SARAH: From an external perspective, she never actually acquires one to lose, but internally, I'm sure she's working on something.

BOOTS: Winnicott (1971) writes that we are in both places – inside the world of fantasay and outside the world of external reality – at the same time. Jung (1969) proposed that an individual's ability to understand himself or herself has to do with bringing one's unconscious to consciousness. He called this process of developing awareness "individuation" in which people make the connections between unconscious and conscious through archetypes. One of the most significant archetypes that Jung identified is the archetype of the child, which offers a way to rise over repression, darkness, and ignorance: "[t]he child represents the strongest, the most ineluctable urge in every being, namely the urge to realize itself" (1969, p. 96).

SARAH: Ida is struggling to become her own person, to realize herself through this "slow, imperceptible process of psychic growth, … the conscious coming-to-terms with one's own inner center" (von Franz, 1964, p.161), but this isn't something we'd see in the external world.

BOOTS: Let me pick up on something for a moment. Margaux, earlier you talked about Ida, the child, being put in the adult's role. Sarah, you talked about Ida's mother, the adult, once having been Ida, the child. As we interpret the story together, and construct Ida (as child) and her mother (as adult), how do your readings speak to how you understand childhood?

CLAIRE: It's interesting that the spectrum of childhood is presented in this book: the baby sister is the girl at the beginning of childhood, and Ida is the mature girl at the end of childhood. In a sense, Ida is in the space in between adulthood (mother) and childhood (baby sister).

BOOTS: Mm, perhaps this space she's straddling, the one that supposedly divides adulthood and childhood, is valuable for our questions.

CLAIRE: If we assume a temporal divide, then that would suggest that early childhood teachers are in a state of adolescence, which seems simplistic, but there might be some significance there. We've been talking about the comparisons to babysitters that early childhood teachers contend with, being perceived to be child-like, or less than adults, themselves.

SARAH: Maybe, adulthood isn't a completed state. Bignell (2005) writes that adulthood is constructed, over and over, while retrospectively also constructing childhood. Lacan's mirror stage theory drew on Freud's concept of the divided subject. The self begins 'in a moment of recognition and misrecognition" (Hobbs,

2004, p. 8), in which the child realizes that it (mostly he) is a separate identity from the mother, and from there on, the child is never a fully formed or complete subject (forever searching for this lost sense of oneness [he] experienced with [his] mother (Creed, 1998; Turner, 1999).

CLAIRE: So, we keep moving between being child, adolescent, and adult, just as Ida is learning.

BOOTS: Ida is also dealing with losses. Learning involves loss. As children learn new ways of being (for instance, to tie their shoelaces, to walk home on their own, to read), they also have to give up ways that worked for them in the past (the adult caring their shoelaces, the adult walking them to school, being read to). Put another way, "The more we give up - the coherent self, the omniscient parent, the caregiver's solace - the more sophisticated our representational strategies become" (Silin, 2006, p. 232).

CLAIRE: That continues throughout the lifespan.

Tools

BOOTS: What does Ida learn to do in order to get through her internal struggles?

CLAIRE: She uses her wonder horn. *It's interesting that 'the goblins hollered and kicked, they're just babies like her sister' and then she plays her horn, and you know she's in control. That is really interesting, similar to Where the Wild Things Are. She knew she was going to get them and she charmed them just like Max did with his stare,* staring into their yellow eyes.

SARAH: Right.

CLAIRE*:* The horn *gives the child power to control all the things they don't understand, that are terrifying. And it is a tool from the adult world, right? It's an adult world tool that helps her calm* the monsters inside her.

SARAH: In the beginning, the wonder horn was what pulled Ida to take her eyes off the baby; it was her desire, her talent. And her talent is a critical part of her identity. The wonder horn was a symbol of selfishness when she turned away from her baby sister to play it, but she kept it all the same, and it saved her (and her sister) in the most horrifying circumstances. She learned to trust herself, even when she made mistakes, even when she got it all wrong. And in the end, it was what she used to charm the goblins and rescue her sister and herself from her own nightmare.

BOOTS: What is the early childhood teacher's art or tool?

CLAIRE: Your tool is your particular talent.

BOOTS: Maybe it also has to do with the teacher's ability to face her inner struggles.

CLAIRE*:* I'm thinking about the mother and father's lack of presence, and, *as a teacher, I really feel strongly that I try to create a context for my kids to learn and to be safe and I try to provide instruction and modeling for whatever age level I'm working with, but then I really do feel it's up to them to learn. I can't learn for them. They have to have the adventure of learning. They have to fall down, get up, figure it out for themselves.*

And each one of my students does it in a different way, and however much I try to facilitate, each one of them perceives me, my teaching, in a different way, so that the fact that those parents are not really actively involved in their kids lives,

but hopefully providing some kind of structure and safety that they want to come back to and be in, that I identify with as a teacher. Although as a parent, I would hope not to do that to my kids.

SARAH: But isn't that what Ida's mom did? She let Ida have her adventure.

CLAIRE: *I felt the parents were too far away, literally too far away, and too absent emotionally. And maybe that's part of what you have to realize as a child: that your parents* and teachers *might be there as symbols, or there might something they've given you to help you, but actually you have to do the thing yourself. Kids are I think on their own more than we would like to think. They have to live their lives and figure things out with whatever tools we give them. Who can make any guarantees about what they're actually going to be able to do with what we give them? The goblins are gone for this daughter now, so maybe she did her thing, she did her task.*

BOOTS: Isn't it interesting how in the beginning of the discussion we focused in the mother's absence, but now I'm hearing a powerful and active presence in Ida herself.

SARAH: Ida was indeed brave and bright. Her fantastic nightmare was part of her "ongoing narrative project," a way of storying her identity (Goodson, 1998, p. 4). Ida is a complex individual. On one level, she is a child victim of neglect and unfairly burdened beyond her age, and let's face it, it's not an unordinary situation. Ida's fantastic internal story is more important to us, as readers and teachers and parents, than her real ordinary story.

She learned to face her goblins, that is, her difficult emotions that threatened to destroy her external identity (loving, big sister-caretaker). She used her art, her very own talent, to deal with her conflict.

CLAIRE: *Ida was resilient. She knew what she had to do. Whereas the mother, you see her sitting in the beginning and she shows some emotion at the end. Is she happy because she sees her children or because she got her letter from her husband? She doesn't seem connected to the kids at all. Even two separate pictures* _

SARAH*:* Yeah, the mother's back is turned to the children.

CLAIRE*: And* in the last scene, *it's the eldest daughter who goes to the mother; it's not the mother who embraces the children. She never gets off that chair. So in the amount of time it took for her mother to receive a letter and sit and read it, the daughter who didn't know about the letter was imagining the worst things that could happen, her family destroyed, everyone stolen from her, really. You also can wonder if it's something that the mother felt too, her own feelings of loss and abandonment. She was somewhat paralyzed there. And maybe now there's a release with the news, okay, I love you and I'm coming back and, um, things will be okay.*

The adult spectator and the child

MARGAUX*:* Still, I can't help feeling for Ida. *This picture really says a lot* [points to picture of Ida in her mother's cloak]. *The fact that she's got her mother's cloak on, the father's horn, and she's not watching what's going on. The parents are not really there to see what's going on, and I think as teachers, as adults, sometimes*

we are there, you know, we see it, we look at it, and we're thinking, but you wonder with adults, are they always really there? Watching, you know.

SARAH: Sometimes you can't watch what's inside too, eh?

MARGAUX*: And that's scary, as an adult, you don't know -*

SARAH: It's the same with adults, you don't know what's going on.

CLAIRE*: Besides the goblins are already planning from the very first page of the book to get the kid, so if not then, it would have been some time –*

The lack of resolution

CLAIRE: *There's a bleakness to the family relationship that I hadn't realized – My very first unedited thought was this man does not write for children. This was like a Dickensian, Tolstoy kind of dark, thick novel, with all the layers of images, and the story, all the many stories running through it, really it took my breath away, I had really not remembered it quite as darkly as it first struck me at this rereading, but as soon as I thought, this man does not write for children, I thought, no actually he does write for children, he writes for a child's reality, a child's perception of reality.*

BOOTS: Interesting. *Outside Over There* brought very mixed reviews from critics of Sendak's work. DeLuca (1984) wrote that the reader is "left at the end of this work with too much pain."

MARGAUX: Right, *there is no real ending, real happy ending. There just isn't.*

BOOTS: In the last picture, Cech (1995) describes Sendak's illustration of Ida: "as he is panning back from her story, she is once again small – touchingly, surprisingly small. She seems too fragile to have gone on such a demanding internal adventure" (p. 237). What is the message here?

SARAH: It's emotionally tough to be Ida. There's not a lot of emotion on her face. In the book's twenty-three illustrations of Ida, only twice does she display any clear emotion. First, a degree of anger is depicted when she discovers that the goblins have switched her baby sister for an ice thing. And second, a slight smile is detected when Ida succeeds in turning the goblins into a stream. Every other illustration of Ida depicts her with a pensive, but emotionless, expression.

MARGAUX: I go back to what I said earlier about our putting too much pressure on our children.

CLAIRE: Ida's been pushed to her limit. She's about to break.

BOOTS: What do you think would push an early childhood teacher to *her* limit?

MARGAUX: One burden *of being in childhood education* is that *we're not always taken seriously. I can give an example: we have a lot of technology in our school. It's the big thing. I'm a teacher and all the teachers had laptops, we all do now, we do our report cards and everything on them, and I was the last one to get a computer because I am in Kindergarten. I used to say I am not in Kindergarten; I am teaching Kindergarten. But for people in school settings, you are in Kindergarten. It is not serious.*

CLAIRE*: It also indicates that the idea of how a person develops and the respect that is necessary from conception on is somehow broken down into blocks of time that are more worthy of respect than others.* A stage theory of development.

BOOTS: Certainly, early childhood teachers, and more so, child care providers, do not hold positions of high status in our society. This is pretty clear. That leads me to ask why do we, or why do you choose to teach in early childhood settings?

MARGAUX: *I remember playing school and library with my sister* as a child*. I have memories of exploring my mother's old teaching materials stored in a drawer. Teaching is my vocation and passion. I feel it is my responsibility to make sure that children are respected and understood and hopefully shed light on others to feel the same way.*

BOOTS: Claire, why did you choose to teach young children?

CLAIRE: *During my BEd. studies – qualifying, as it was possible to do then, for elementary and secondary teaching certification – I chose stages in grades five and six, avoiding the younger grades and foreseeing a career that involved high school and upper level elementary teaching. The idea of working with younger children was unappealing for three reasons - their learning didn't appear complex enough to keep me challenged or interested; I disliked their "cute" status; and disliked even more the lesser-intelligence status applied to their teachers. My perceptions had some accuracy as far as teacher-status went (and still does) but looking back I wonder at my lack of memory for the intense, complex, and self-driven learning I experienced as a young child.*

My first position was as a special education teacher in a small school where I worked with children from kindergarten to grade three. Sometime in my first week I found myself sitting beside a soft little guy of seven. In his intense, self-driven desire to enter and make sense of the complex universe of words-on-a-page, he shook and sighed and squirmed and agonized in a way that pierced all my self-protective misconceptions. I thought "I want to be here forever. Or until he learns to read."

The teacher's subjective experience

BOOTS: What happens to Ida? What does she learn?

SARAH: It doesn't *appear* that anything's changed for Ida but of course, I think that something did change, and perhaps this internal change was just as, if not more, important than any observable real world change. It's not a happy ending, but Ida did survive her nightmare. Following her father's instructions, Ida succeeded in destroying the goblins with her own tools (her wonder horn) and her wits, and this provided Ida with a sense of mastery and her only smile (ever fleeting) in the story. Back to Jungian theory, with every being having this "urge to realize itself": maybe Ida doesn't realize herself in the real world, but in her internal world, this is beginning.

BOOTS: And the internal and external are not separate states.

MARGAUX*:* There are *no more goblins though, at the very end. There's* Ida *and her sister, there's the sunflowers. But I don't know. They could be hiding in those trees.*

SARAH: But now Ida knows that she can handle these goblins. There's a sense that Ida is learning to trust in herself, to know that she has the tools to deal with nightmares, fantastic and real. Somehow, this opens doors for Ida. Maybe not immediately, but she's stronger, she's getting ready.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to create a co-constructed dialogue in which, as researcher, I entered a conversation with a group of early childhood teachers. In this partially fictional discussion, the teachers and I explored one literary representation of a child, her mother, and her baby sister. I used this

conversational format to draw out thoughts on teachers' understanding of childhood and adulthood.

The teachers in the focus group study expressed unease in the portrayal of Ida's mother: "I think the mother endangered the children" "The mother looks depressed and disengaged" "These two daughters were really left to protect each other" and "They were left abandoned." These thoughts propelled much of their discussion to focus around Ida being burdened with responsibilities that were deemed as belonging to the mother. Sarah, as one of my voices, challenged this apparently straightforward judgment of the mother as neglectful in her self-involvement, and suggested that the mother herself was struggling with her own internal messages about gendered roles.

Using Ida's story to defamiliarize the teachers' stories, Sarah enlisted some psychoanalytic thoughts to make sense of Ida's unconscious wish for her sister to be removed. She suggested that what Ida didn't realize was that erasure was impossible because "nothing escapes history" (Copjec, 2002, p. 93). My argument, through Sarah, in this section was to suggest that early childhood teachers, predominantly women, cannot erase the "ineradicable stain" (p. 93) of our societal histories in which we continue to live in a discordant space between being expected to foster our own growth and being expected to have no commitments greater than responding sensitively to children. Just as the baby sister cannot be negated, we cannot negate these expectations, lest our goblins return five-fold, "teeming with emptiness, as a swarming void." (p. 96-97). Sarah implied that our goblins have already come out in the forms of comparisons with babysitters, low status, and self-devaluation. Of course, the comparisons with goblins are of a fantastic nature;

however, it is yet another way to articulate the critical function of self-reflection in early childhood teacher practice.

Claire identified painfully with Ida's childhood predicament, and noted how she turned her own feelings of powerlessness and "too much adult responsibility" into an ability to empower classroom communities today. As teachers, it is critical that we understand how difficult, and to an extent, impossible it is to separate our ways of conceptualizing childhood from our own experiences of childhood. Maurice Sendak said, "I really do these books for myself… Reaching the kids is important, but secondary. First, always, I have to reach and keep hold of the child in me" (Cech, 1995, p. 25). This insight bears compelling implications for teachers, who may feel a need to reach some unachievable sense of selflessness.

In learning to face our goblins, early childhood teachers can first accept what Sendak described as the importance of putting oneself "in a state of vulnerability again," and face the difficult emotions that result, in part, from the contradictory relationship between one's internal and external identities, the private and the public domains. But, Ida learned to trust herself, even when at first she got it all wrong.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

> It does appear … that attentiveness to one's own history, one's own self-formation, may open one up to critical awareness of much that is taken for granted.
>
> - Maxine Greene, 1978, p. 103

> Teaching is fundamentally a mode of being.
>
> - Tetsuo Aoki, 1986, p. 8

Purpose of the study

I started this dissertation after years of feeling on the periphery of the field of Education because of my preference for studying popular culture, films and picture books rather than classrooms and because of my interest in early childhood and preschool education rather than elementary school, high school or other forms of formal education considered legitimate. So, in a sense, this dissertation was my way of confronting and analyzing the sense of being an outsider in the discipline.

My research examined how a set of fictional texts evoked early childhood teachers' reflections about childhood. Each phase of qualitative inquiry (the focus group inquiry, the case study, and the co-constructed narrative) was designed to approach the research questions from a different perspective. The purpose of this "triptych" (Alvermann and Hruby, 2000) was to accumulate ideas by returning to the same phenomenon through different lenses. I highlighted the polyvocal nature of our ways of understanding childhood through reporting findings in the format of conversations.

I approached this study through the perspectives of experienced early childhood teachers. Many of the teachers' responses were raw, candid, thoughtful,

and telling. Early childhood education, being overwhelmingly represented by female teachers (Goldstein, 1998), carries a historical legacy of low occupational and professional status. The dissertation questioned the beliefs in childhood that function to ensure that young children and the adults (mostly women) who care for them remain in subordinate positions in society *and* to help us understand what keeps teachers in the field. Ultimately, the goal of the research was to develop understandings of childhood and teacher subjectivity that would contribute to "reflection and deliberative action" in early childhood education (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. xiv).

Childhood teachers. This dissertation applied a humanities approach to inquiry, based in curriculum and literature/film studies, to examine the development of early childhood teachers and how they make sense of childhood. Willian Ayers (2001) asked, "When we teachers look out over our classrooms, what do we see?" (p. 28). He suggested that "all attempts to create definitive categories lower our sights, misdirect our vision, and mislead our intentions" (p. 29). Discourses of childhood fuse with practices that produce teachers, parents, and children who "think (and feel) about themselves through the terms of those ways of thinking" (James and Prout, 1997, p. 23). As Ayers (2001) and Canella (1998) contend, assumptions about childhood feed into all of our interactions with, and expectations for, our students.

Traditionally, early childhood education functions within a structure defined by the adult guiding the child through developmental stages and toward a future directed goal of rational adulthood. Grumet (2006), however, questions the adult's safe position in watching only the child's movement, as if they themselves

are already fully developed. The boundaries that we've believed to be essential – boundaries between adulthood and childhood, and boundaries between the domestic and the public domains - are, in many ways, artificial and negotiable. Pinar (1975) urges teachers to re-conceive their own situations of childhood and adulthood, with the purpose of "excee[ding] one's biographic situation" (p. 412). Through "wide-awakeness" (Greene, 1978, p. 42), that is, a critical disposition and an ability to accept feelings of ambiguity and disorientation, the acts of self-mobilization and social reconstruction function as dual processes.

The adult reader and fictional childhood. In addition to childhood discourses and reflective teaching practices, the theoretical framework I used to analyze the teachers' understandings of childhood included studies in the constitution of childhood in fiction and the position of the adult reader in relation to the child protagonist.

Fictions of childhood are social texts and, through the event of reading these texts, adults can question not only the meanings of childhood, but also "the meaning[s] of *adulthood* in relation to childhood" (Galbraith, 2001, p. 190). The key binary in defining childhood is obviously the child-adult opposition. Nodelman (2008), however, describes the power of children's literature to complicate this binary through a refusal to privilege one side over the other. Adult writers and readers of childhood fictions exist in an ambiguous state in between innocence and knowledge, childhood and adulthood. In identifying the Othering of childhood, we can generate new questions: How else can we re-conceive of the child, and necessarily, the adult? The assumption of child as continuing to live *within* the adult is another approach in children's literature and fiction.

Romanticized as innocence, childhood acts as a representation of weakness and moral goodness, inciting adult readers to appropriate momentarily its emotional vulnerability. Grumet (2006) suggests that childhood stories offer portals to childhood, inviting the adult to "recuperate our losses" (p. 221). Child films establish for adult readers a "different way of seeing" (Powrie, 2005, p. 342), a threshold where adults can look backwards in nostalgic identification with the fictional child and also forwards, in a simultaneity of experiences through time and space. As "projection[s] of adult desire" (Rose, 1978, p. 60), the adult reader can "coordinate his or her voice with that of a child character" (Sokoloff, 2004, p. 75). Memory work (Radstone, 2003; Kuhn, 2002; Strong-Wilson, 2008), film studies (Lury, 2005; Powrie, 2005) and children's literature studies (Rose, 1978; Nodelman, 2008) provided frameworks through which I explored how the teachers' constructions of childhood evoked from the fictional texts could be used productively in developing reflective teaching practices.

Summary of contributions

The focus group study provided the groundwork of my data. The teachers generated a wealth of thoughts and memories about childhood during the discussion sessions, rendering often personal and idiosyncratic pictures of childhood. The case study followed memory vignettes of one woman's journey from childhood to early childhood teacher. The passages highlighted some of the subtleties of the socialization process, and the necessity of excavation in critical work. Issues of gender and race intersected with assumptions about childhood in her teacher formation. Finally, the co-constructed, textual analysis of Maurice Sendak's haunting and elusive story, *Outside Over There,* generated discussions

about the complicated work faced by children, mothers, and early childhood teachers in developing meaningful selves in challenging circumstances.

In order to summarize the dissertation's contributions, I will first return to my initial research questions to draw together themes that emerged from the different phases of inquiry, and then address three areas in which the project contributed to knowledge: methodology, memory work and childhood, and early childhood teacher subjectivity.

The research questions

How do fictions of childhood evoke responses in early childhood teachers? I initially conceived of the fictional texts as either representations for interpretation or prompts for the teachers' reflections on childhood, teaching, and motherhood. Over the course of the data collection, however, the distinction between these two ways of using texts was blurred. The teachers' interpretations of the children in the fictional texts were often grounded in their own idiosyncratic memories as they called upon memories to respond to the stories, and then these memories propelled them back to their own experiences of childhood (and motherhood). In these ways, the use of memories converged the functions of the texts as both foci for interpretations and prompts for reflections.

Grounding the discussions around stories seemed to free the teachers to engage more personally and yet less self-consciously with their beliefs in childhood. Supporting the position of reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978), the stories resonated differently with each teacher. For example, Catherine was reminded of her own childhood monsters by the works of Maurice Sendak, and Roch Carrier's ability to recall his own childhood spoke to Hannah about

respecting the child's perspective. At other times, the teachers took sides. For instance, Merrill and Maggie interpreted Max in *Wild Things* as manipulative, whereas Catherine, Hannah, and Linda saw him as primarily imaginative.

As noted, memories bridged the teachers' interpretations with personal reflections, and the fictional texts provoked the teachers to, as Greene (1995) suggested, "break loose from [their] anchorage" and "find other ways of telling their stories" (p. 111). Given the rhetorical power of developmental stage theories in the teachers' professional worlds, I was not expecting that the question "Is this an accurate portrayal of childhood?" would be responded to in terms of: "Was I or would I be that little girl?" Rather, I was expecting responses in the vein of: "Is this a developmentally accurate representation of a child of this age?" The teachers presented nuanced and individualized descriptions, colored by memories and emotions, instead of conventional descriptions of childhood,

What are some of the factors, including assumptions about gender and childhood, that underlie the devaluation of early childhood education? Early childhood education is a gendered field, and yet the journey to becoming one of the 97 percent of women representing the profession is filled with ambiguous messages. This was demonstrated in Emily's case study, in which gendered expectations were difficult to identify at the time of their delivery. On retrospective inspection, what was revealed was how different *gendered* discourses of childhood were constitutive of one person's ongoing identity narrative. As a girl, Emily received messages about femininity entrenched in larger, societal and cultural value systems that connected maternalism with teaching, particularly teaching younger children. Girls grow up with messages of childhood teaching as naturalized, as part

of femininity and motherhood. How many times have I witnessed parents expecting daughters, but not sons, to babysit? The beliefs that connect middle-class mothering with ideal teaching practice are not archaic traditions.

Do, then, gendered expectations call for women to renounce early childhood education as a worthy profession? Emily, even after developing an awareness of the gender politics in her family life, decided to return to the field. The teachers in the focus group study, all intelligent and competent women, frequently spoke as mothers rather than as teachers. In fact, there was little unprompted talk about being teachers. It was the adult as child and the adult as mother who were forefront in the conversations. Clearly, it is difficult to quash the mother and child part of ourselves, particularly when memories, which hold the distinction between the personal and the public "in tension" (Radstone, 2000, p. 11), are called upon.

In professional circles, early childhood teachers may be careful to distinguish their work from the work of mothers, but Grumet (1988) encourages us to consider a middle ground in between. Perhaps it is time to legitimate these maternal, subjective, textual and emotional ways of knowing (Swanson, 2000) and challenge the paternal project that denies the adequacy of self-knowledge based in identification, connectedness and differentiation "with this other, this child, 'my child'" (Grumet, 1988, p. 11). Early childhood education may be one of the few formal educational spaces in which the division between the domestic, in which teachers are not expected to hide their traditionally-defined feminine strengths, and the public, in which masculine ideals of objectivity and rationality dominate, can be negotiated.

Finally, this study shows how it may be possible to closely examine the ways "our relations to other people's children are inextricably tied to our relation to our own progeny, actual and possible" (Grumet, 1988, p. 28). This is potentially transformative, while at the same time, risks reestablishing early childhood education as less-than-professional within the terms defined by society.

What do the early childhood teacher's responses to the stories reveal about her subjective teaching experiences? What identity issues does the early childhood teacher face as a child-centered adult? Some of the teachers' connections with their own childhoods mirrored Maurice Sendak's conviction that the child he was (and more significantly, still is) continues to live inside him. In describing how childhood moments stayed with her, and sharing her childhood monsters, that "awareness of helplessness," Catherine touched on a close connection with the child within. *South Park'*s "My Future Self N' Me" and Emily's story constructed childhood as a preparatory time, a future-directed period of transition that would precariously result in either adult success or failure.

In light of the proposition that one's own childhood is always present, the distinction needs to be made between one's child (within) and the actual child in the teacher-child relationship. *Who* is being taught and cared for? The idea of caring for one's childhood self while teaching actual children is a disquieting thought. It is a position that contradicts the maternalistic view of the female caregiver as selfless: the residual tradition that imposes the belief that "fostering [growth] in others is the only valid role for all women" (Miller, 1973, p. 40). Perhaps it was this belief in selflessness as a required trait for mothers and teachers

that made the self-involved mothers depicted in *The Piano* and *Outside Over There* invoke such negative feelings from the teachers.

Emily's case study examined the ways that an adult's memories of childhood play into his or her desires to teach children. Maggie's story of the daycare mother who mistakenly believed she could recreate her memories for her child helped me appreciate the power of childhood moments "half-remembered and half-anticipated" (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, p. 225) that shape our actions as teachers and parents. How can memories be used to "vanquish repetition" (Radstone, 2000, p. 12) and to "illuminate and transform the present" (hooks, 1989, p. 17)? How can an awareness of one's own child as a potentially confounding participant in the teacher-child or mother-child relationship be used to enlighten actual teaching practices?

To begin to answer these questions, it is necessary to return, once again, to Grumet's (1991) point of distinguishing between the world of one's own childhood and the world one is responsible for creating for children today. The child in an early childhood setting is not *only* the actual child that the teacher works directly with, but also the child from one's memories, the child from endless cultural representations of childhood, and the child who is constructed from our experiences with children, our own or others. The voice of one's own child is one of many, but one that needs to be attended to with "awakeness." Erasure, as with Ida's baby sister, is impossible. The challenge is for the adult to "inspect the boundaries of her ego" (Grumet, 1988, p. 11). By attending to this voice, we can begin separating our experiences from those of the children we work with today. By connecting this voice to the voices of cultural expectations regarding age,

gender and race, we can begin release it from assuming the position of the colonizer.

Next, I turn to the very format of the dissertation, that is, the sense that each individual is an evolving collection of "layers of consciousness" and multiple, competing, and contradictory voices. The acceptance of self-involvement, of caring for the child within does not negate one's ability to care for actual children. The teachers conducted their conversations while conceptually crossing boundary spaces between childhood and adulthood with ease. They spoke from the perspective of child, mother, teacher, and child protagonist. As Kuhn (2000) wrote, we "occupy all these positions at once" (p. 188). A critical disposition forces us to accept our hybrid natures, to accept the contradictions within a person, and to understand that the boundaries we've believed to be essential are in fact open to discussion.

Why do smart, competent women choose to work in a field that is devalued? How do they negotiate the lack of recognition they receive in society with the value they place in their work with children? This dissertation started with Linda, in the focus group discussion, describing her frustrations with not being taken seriously as a kindergarten teacher: "*I* am not in Kindergarten; I *teach* Kindergarten." This view is understandable given the systemic attitudes and circumstances surrounding the field of early childhood education. Early childhood teachers contend with lower pay, lower professional status, and lower regard even by teachers of older children. The number of poor quality early childhood settings contributes to further denigrating the field. However, despite these dismal factors, there are many bright and capable women who choose to teach in early childhood settings, and it is to

five of these teachers that I asked, "Why did you choose this field?" The teachers in the focus group study expressed a passion for working with young children that prevailed over their awareness of the field's marginalization: "Teaching is my vocation." "I was hooked." They chose the field *despite* the images of the low professional status. Emily's challenge was to navigate through contradictory layers of social, parental, and internal messages, and to decipher which choices suited her own values, which choices would help her to recover her own landscapes for learning (Greene, 1978). As Ruddick (1982) writes, "[f]eminist consciousness will first transform inauthentic obedience into wariness, uncertain reflection, and at times, anguished confusion" (p. 105). This is certainly an area for future research.

Ida from *Outside Over There* provided a complex character with which the teachers could identify. In Ida's fantasy sequences, the participants made connections between Ida's conflicting desires and internal struggles to individuate and the teachers' own (internal and external) struggles to negotiate their professional identities with issues of social status. Ida wanted to destroy her sister *and* love her, and as teachers, we feel that hatred and love for our work. We know deep down that there *is* truth in the connection between our domestic selves and our public selves, however, we function as if it would deprofessionalize our work to admit it. Not according to Madeleine Grumet (1988), who argued that only by allowing ourselves the space to think about these issues can we address them properly.

The metaphors of "outside over there" and its reverse of "inside over here" were useful ways to approach the notion of teacher subjectivity as what takes place "inside over here." The study of teacher subjectivity is not a retreat from dealing

with the real structural issue that the field of early childhood education must address. We are in both places – inside the inner world of fantasy and outside the world of external reality – at the same time (Winnicott, 1971). Teachers struggle to realize themselves in their professions. The women in this research identified with Ida's artistic desire to create, to discover and use one's tools. These individualized tools are used to deal with conflict and to create and re-create one's identity or identities. The goblins were symbols that allowed the teachers to discuss their wishes and destructive fantasies and, especially, their vulnerabilities. As Sendak said, "[t]o be an artist is to be vulnerable. To not be vulnerable means … you've closed yourself off at something" (Cech, 1995, p. 29). By defamiliaring everyday situations, the teachers examined their own goblins, or their own difficult emotions. As Sarah noted, it didn't appear that anything changed for Ida, but something did change. Ida survived her nightmare and succeeded in destroying her goblins.

Areas of contribution to knowledge

To address three areas of the project's contribution to research knowledge, I will summarize the study's implications in terms of its methodology, its work on memory and childhood, and its study of early childhood teacher subjectivity.

Methodology. The research's methodology was unique in two ways: in its use of literary and film texts in social research and in its focus on representation as a significant facet of the inquiry process.

Using literary and visual texts made it possible for temporal spaces to be collapsed and for the teachers to cross boundary spaces between adulthood and childhood with ease, experiencing the past, present and future simultaneously. The discussion that took place in response to a scene from the film, *Chronicles of*

Narnia, the scene in which Lucy walks into the wardrobe, reveals how the fictional texts made it possible to understand Pinar's theoretical explanations of temporality in a familiar, concrete way:

Ma: [It's funny] um:: (3) I see it a little different- like, ah-I don't think I would be that little girl that would [open the door]
L: [(small laugh)]
Me: No (.) I would go and get my sister
(laughter from group)
Ma: [Yeah (.) I wouldn't be that little girl]
C: [Interesting]
Me: I would [push her through]
(laughter from group)
C: [I was that little girl] oh yeah

The teachers referred to childhood memories as present and future possibilities ("I don't think I would be that little girl" "I would go and get my sister").

The teachers then switched positions from being the child to being a mother in relation to the child (even though no mother was portrayed during the scene):

Ma: [And then I'm thinking of my daughters]
S: Yes
Ma: And how (.) as a mother, I would probably say to them, (play voice) Don't ever [(laughter from group)]
Ma: [go there where you're] not sure (laughs) y' know

What remained constant was the particular meaning that was ascribed to childhood (which, in Maggie's case, I would interpret as a time to be protected) whether she was in the role of the child protagonist, her own child self, her self as mother, or her own mother but we probably try to do this all the time. Maggie "occup[ied] all these positions at once" (Kuhn, 2000, p. 188).

There are also implications for using fiction in studying the process of curriculum - the lived experience of teaching and learning - and in studying how

the concept of temporality might play into our work with young people. The conversations in this dissertation offer us an attainable way of seeing Pinar's theory of temporality being lived by real teachers. I believe that fiction, with its capactity to defamiliarize the everyday, was effective in helping the teachers cross these temporal spaces.

Finally, the dissertation's representation through semi-fictional conversations within and amongst early childhood teachers offered a novel approach to qualitative research. The writing of the dissertation was an integral part of the research inquiry, rather than simply a "mopping-up activity at the end of a research project" (Richardson, 2000, p. 923). The polyvocal aspect of a teacher's identity needed to be communicated and the conversations were the devices that allowed me, as researcher, to step in and out of the data wearing different identities, including the curriculum theorist, the teacher, the mother, the daughter, the cultural analyst and, of course, the graduate student. The writing was my process of selving, unskinning, unfolding, and unlayering in order to examine one's "landscapes of learning" (Greene, 1978).

Memories and childhood. As revealed, memories were significant in the ways the teachers made sense of childhood. The childhood texts in this dissertation evoked emotions of childhood, such as lack of control, vulnerability, and overwhelming helplessness (Wilson, 2005). Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* prompted the teachers to discuss ways that they used their memories of childhood as mothers and teachers. For example, Hannah noted that "From that first job in grade one, I discovered a gift for creating literate, welcoming classrooms with and for all my students – *the kind of classroom I wished someone had created for me*

when I was their age" (my emphasis), demonstrating how memories shaped her actions as a teacher. Roch Carrier's *The Hockey Sweater* prompted one teacher to tell a story about a daycare parent who was determined to buy Christmas cups with Santa Claus on them for her son, because *she* used to have hot chocolate in Santa Claus cups on Christmas morning when she was a little girl. The teachers laughed at this narrative of a mother who mistakenly believed she could recreate her own memories for her child.

It may be that the teachers were driven to return to their remnants of childhood emotions because, as Nussbaum (2001) suggests, the foundation of adult emotions is located in childhood. To continue the speculations more productively, perhaps these returns, these "in-between" or threshold experiences (Powrie, 2005), allowed the teachers to learn to distinguish between their child selves in the past, idealized representations of childhood, and actual children in their present lives.

The conversations contributed a familiar dimension to the notion that a teacher needs to distinguish between her own childhood and the present childhoods of those she works with today, allowing the reader to understand in concrete, everyday situations, Pinar's urging that teachers "capture [the past] as it hovers over the present" (1976, p.55). The purpose may be to release the teacher from unconsciously replaying her childhood emotions, to be more able to "see" and learn from actual children. We remember our childhood in ways that we use to understand our own children and students. We do it all the time, but like Sendak said about children, maybe as teachers (and parents), we also "get it all wrong" much of the time. Part of reflective practice involves understanding our motives in caring for and teaching others.

Early childhood teacher subjectivity. Ideas about public and domestic dimensions in teacher subjectivity have implications for examining the traditional divide between early care and early education. In early childhood education, teaching is sometimes naturalized as a maternal skill and, understandably, there was ambivalence in associating early childhood teacher identities with identities as mothers. Such an association undermines the professionalism of the work. At the same time, and as discuseed, the teachers revealed irrefutable links between how they were related to as children, how they related to their own children, and how they related to other people's children.

Early childhood education may be one of the few formal educational spaces in which the divide between the domestic and the public can be negotiated, in which a middle ground might be considered. Boots, my curriculum theorist identity in the co-constructed narrative, noted that "It's okay if we read [*Outside Over There*] from the perspective of the adult wanting to take care of Ida, which is how we usually conduct ourselves as parents and teachers, but to actually identify with Ida and her child emotions is terrifying. It's terribly frightening to be propelled back into that time." Sarah, my mother identity, brought in a psychoanalytic perspective, noting that the mother in *Outside Over There* isn't recognized as "an independently existing subject" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 165); she is devalued and deprived of her own subjectivity and Ida's identification with her mother results in the girl's loss of self.

There are implications for teacher education. In early childhood teacher education, we are traditionally focused on child development theories, but perhaps the teacher herself or himself needs more attention and scrutiny. The lived

subjective experience of an early childhood teacher can be much more complex and multifaceted than is typically assumed, even in educational contexts. By attending to our different voices with awakeness and through memory work, we can be more critical and openly contradictory as early childhood teachers.

Limitations

Texts. My selection of the six fictional texts impacted the focus and direction of the teachers' conversations. If, for example, texts depicting childhood in the context of classroom situations were shared, the discussions would likely have taken more of a traditional educational tenor. On the other hand, one is hard pressed to find inspiring or rich narratives about early childhood depicted in classroom circumstances.

Second, rather than the texts being my choices, if the participants contributed to the selection of texts from their own childhood or teaching experiences, their interpretations would likely have reflected more personal meanings.

Finally, while I addressed the othering of the child as constructed by the adult author, the fictional texts did not adequately present race and class. In choosing texts that were familiar, I reinforced the universal sense of childhood that is imagined as European and middle-class.

Generalizability. The stated goal of the dissertation was to generate insights through the contexts of the focus group and the conversations, and not to produce generalizable findings. My research approach did not lend itself to quantifiable or empirical methods.

Directions for future research

Memory work and teacher research. Early childhood education is a field that challenges us to reconsider the boundaries between the domestic and the public domains, between the past, present and future, and between childhood and adulthood. It challenges us to attend to issues about gender, and assumptions of childhood as a universal state of being. Memory work around early childhood teacher identity is an area that calls for further research. Memory work's potential for transformation lies in "the reinterpretation and re-contextualisation of memory, in the service of revised understandings of individual or collective selves" (Radstone, 2000, p. 12). Radstone (2000) describes liminal aspects of memory work as crossing between remembering and transforming.

Further research through early childhood teachers remembering and transformating might involve other "touchstones" (Strong-Wilson, 2006) beyond childhood fictions, such as childhood artifacts, photographs, home videos, and toys. The purpose is to invoke memories that can be used generatively in the present.

In terms of participants, pre-service teachers, who are entering the field of early childhood education participating in the study would offer a perspective at the cusp of making professional choices. Male teachers, although rare in early childhood education, would also offer a unique perspective. Action research with in-service teachers in "professional learning communities" is another area for research. The participating teachers appreciated the opportunity to tell their stories, having much to offer as experts. I would also be interested in continuing to address

ways that the traditional devaluation of early childhood education can be turned around at the university level.

Uses of fiction and writing in research. The research calls for further experimentation in testing the boundaries between fiction and educational research. The accounts I chose to write were layered and conversational, and as different accounts shape different realities, different representations would have shaped other insights. Possible other accounts of teachers' experiences include visuals, such as videos, photographs, or drawings, and ongoing written reflections.

My researcher voice was deliberately presented as muliple and contradictory, however, future research could take the co-constructed aspect further. My research uses different lenses to circle the research issues, with each perspective accumulating insight. In expanding this notion of different lenses to the writing of the conversations, the *Outside Over There* conversation, for example, could be written in conjunction with the teachers, as a back-and-forth exercise.

Interdisciplinary curriculum studies. Finally, I'd like to continue exploring the intersections between curriculum studies, film theory, and early childhood education. Film apparatus theory – which describes how the cinematic apparatus positions the spectator - was a productive means of studying curriculum theory. Studies of the child film and in children's literature are valuable vehicles in connecting us to issues of early childhood teacher subjectivity, as childhood texts disturb the adults' comfortable position and I believe we need to be disturbed out of that.

Final thoughts

Curriculum.

Education is not the same as schooling, nor is it the same as learning.

- Eisner, 1994, p. 36

How does this research help us reflect on our work as teachers and parents? How does it contribute to more complicated understandings of our work (Taubman, 2007)? Pinar (2004) argues that too many of us in the field of Education are lost, asleep, and "too few seem to realize they are even asleep" (p.3). In shaking us out of our complacency and comfort in maintaining the status quo, *currere* encourages teachers and teacher educators to "construct their own understandings of what it means to teach, to study, to become 'educated'" (Pinar, 2004, p.2).

When I teach Education students about critical theory, I pose the Marshall McLuhan question: "Who discovered water?" and then I offer the old punch line that it probably wasn't a fish. Thinking critically has to do with removing oneself from one's fishbowl and identifying its contents, and in analysing its contents, "the attempt to understand culture has to include the way it shapes the critic's own consciousness" (Lasch, 1978, p.16). In other words, cultural politics requires a "politics of the individual" (p.16). But, ontological and epistemological arguments aside, being critical isn't about having knowledge about criticality. Understanding that one's identity isn't necessarily about societal status isn't the difficult part; living it is.

After years of feeling on the fringe of my field as an Education student - with my picture books and early childhood focus – this study has helped me better locate where my contradictions and interstices lied: I could teach about critical

theory and toss in fishbowl analogies, all the while unable to recognize how I refuted my own formative experiences as an early childhood teacher because they didn't rank high in the status range, as if it was possible to disown my own experiences, as if the past wouldn't continually hover over me, or return five-fold. In joining forces with other teachers in similar professional contexts, it is my hope that the fields of education and curriculum studies continue to learn from early childhood teachers and from fictional childhood texts.

I return, one last time, to Greene's (1978) call for attentiveness to our experiences and ongoing learning in our work as reflective practitioners. All that we learn can be used to help us, in both breaking free from our personal and collective anchorages and in showing us new ways of performing teaching.

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APPENDIX I

Focus Group Study: Interview Guidelines

Introduction:

1. I'd like to welcome everyone and to thank you for participating in this discussion group.
2. My research focuses on how fictional texts prompt teachers to think about childhood.
3. What I'm interested in are your personal views and opinions; to hear what you really feel about the issues.
4. And as experienced teachers, you are all here as experts.
5. Guidelines:
    a. There are no right or wrong answers to the discussion questions, and you can always retract anything you say.
    b. I'm interested in a range of views, so it is perfectly acceptable to disagree with others
    c. All your responses will be kept confidential
    d. My role is to facilitate the discussion, and I am not the expert of the issues discussed.
    e. You don't need to speak in any particular order
    f. The session will last approximately one and a half to two hours, and we'll take a 5-10 min coffee break in the middle

Opening questions:
As an opener, I'd like to ask each of you to introduce yourself by sharing with the group your name and your experience in teaching children.

Introductory questions:
Why did you choose to teach children?

Transition questions:
Can you think of a fictional child character from a book or film that left an impression or had an impact on you? Why?

Eliciting Devices
I'm going to show you a video. I'll give you each a pad of paper and pen, and, while you are viewing the video, I'll ask you to jot down any thoughts, feelings, or memories that the video triggers.

Key questions

1. What did you think of that story? Did you like it?
2. Do you think it gives an accurate or interesting picture of childhood?
3. Did it remind you at all of your own childhood?

Back-up questions:

Beliefs about childhood (and adulthood):

- Why did Max (or Roch or Ida or Lucy) have to be a child?
- If Max (or Roch or Ida or Lucy) was represented as an adolescent or adult, how would s/he be different?

Teacher identity:

- Let's say Max (or Roch or Ida or Lucy) was in your daycare or Kindergarten or elementary class. How would s/he do in school?
- What would be the best way to "educate" this child?
- How does what you've just described reflect on your own identity or beliefs as a teacher?

Ending questions:

How does the discussion we've been having relate to your own beliefs as a teacher?

APPENDIX II

Focus Group Study: Analysis Features

The Chronicles of Narnia, Part I

Sequence 1 of 7

(I am turning off the DVD player as I speak)
S: So what did you think about (2) that:: clip? *FPP 1 (Question)*
(5)
(soft laughter, clearing throats)
Me: Her innocence *SPP 1 (Answer begins); FPP2 (Proposes)*
(2)
S: Innocence *Repair for gap; SPP 2 (Acknowledges and prompts to continue)*
Me: [and] her curiosity- *SPP 1 (Answer continues); FPP 2 expand (Proposes)*
L: that was my word *SPP 3 (Agrees. Claims property)*
Me: and open *SPP 1 (Me Answer continues); FPP 2 expand 2 (Proposes)*
Ma: yes, that's [ex]- *SPP 2 expand 2 (Agrees)*
Me: [an]-and wanting to get to know who this other (1) being was. *SPP 1 (Answer continues and closes); FPP 2 expand 3 (Proposes)*
Ma: Trust *SPP 1 (Ma Answers); FPP 3 (Proposes)*
Me: Mm hmm *SPP 3 (Agrees)*
(2)
S: Innocence and openness to new [experiences] *Repair for gap; FPP 2 and 4 insert (Acknowledges; offers summary)*
Ma: [Mm hm, mm hm] *SPP 2 and 4 insert (Agrees)*
C: Her sense of wonder *SPP 1 (Answers); FPP 5 (Proposes)*
Ma: [Mm hmm] *SPP 5 (Agrees)*
L: [Mm] *SPP 5 (Agrees)*

Sequence 2 of 7

C: Thought the actress really got that- *FPP 5 expand 1*
Ma: Yes, [captured it.] *SPP 5 expand 1 (Agrees)*
C: [Face is raptured]. I-I hadn't seen that film, so. I have fond memories of the book, so (breathes in) yeah, she really got that moment. *FPP 5 expand 2 (Repeats for emphasis)*
S: Yeah (2) *SPP 5 expand 2 (Agrees).* So, wonderment (1) innocence. *Repair gap; SPP 1 (offers summary)*

Sequence 3 or 7

S: Do you think it was an (1) interesting and accurate picture of childhood? *FPP 1 (Questions)*
(1)
C: For <u>some</u> children. *SPP 1 (C Answers); FPP 2 (Proposes)*

Ma: For some, [I guess]- *SPP 1 (Ma Answers); SPP 2 (Assesses and gives a weak agreement)*
C: [Yeah.] *FPP 2 expand (emphasizes her statement)*
Ma: I can see some children not::: being afraid and not::: *SPP 2 expand (disagrees/challenges); FPP 3 (Proposes)*
L: Yeah *SPP 3 (Agrees)*
Ma: going near that [fawn at the door (unclear)] *FPP 3 expands*

Sequence 4 or 7

Me: [Which she wasn't] at first, with the sounds, but then when she (1) collected herself, for lack of a better word, then it was (play voice) Oh::: *SPP 3 (Agrees, upgrades); FPP 4 (moves in a different direction)*
L: (laughs) *SPP 4 (shows appreciation)*
Me: What do we have here? [laughs] *FPP 4 expand (Amuses; Evokes laughter jokingly)*
Ma: (play voice) [Let's see what we] can do. *SPP 4 expand (supports joke)*
S: When she met the fawn? *FPP 4 insert (asks for clarification)*
Me: Mm hmm *SPP 4 insert (Answers, accepts)*
S: Right

Sequence 5 of 7

C: But even going into the attic room *FPP 5 (Proposes)*
Ma: Mm hmm *SPP 5 (Accepts and prompts to continue)*
C: And seeing this strange shrouded thing:: I mean, it could be frightening *FPP 5 expand 1 (Explains, proposes)*
Me: Mm hmm *SPP 5 expand 1(Accept and prompts to continue)*
C: But she just look (makes apt expression) *FPP 5 expand 2 (Persuading others to share the same emotional response)*
L: (small laugh) *SPP 5 expand 2 (supports)*
C: Something new. *FPP 5 expand 3 (concludes)*

Sequence 6 of 7

C: Which is how I read the book, I re- I loved that book, it's one of my books, right? *FPP 5 expand 3 (Explains; Questions)*
Ma: [Mm hmm] *SPP 5 expand 3 (Supports)*
Me: [Oh::?] *FPP 5 insert (Repair – asks for clarification)*
C: From my own childhood? *SPP 5 insert (Clarifies)* And that particular moment I remember it as if it happened to me (1) I re-read that book so often. *FPP 5 expand 4 (Evokes memories)*
Ma: [Mmm] *SPP 5 expand 4 (Prompts to continue)*
C: [I] love:: the idea of opening the door *FPP 5 expand 5*
L: Yeah *SPP 5 expand (agrees)*
C: to a room *FPP 5 expand 6*
Ma: [Yup] *SPP 5 expand 6 (agrees weakly)*
Me: [Mm hmm] *SPP 5 expand 6 (agrees weakly)*
L: [Yeah] *SPP 5 expand 6 (agrees weakly)*

C: and then opening another door and it's all ordinary, it's just completely ordinary (1.5) and then you walk into magic. *FPP 5 expand 7 (evoking feelings of magic)*
Ma: Mm *SPP 5 expand 7 (agrees weakly)*
L: Mm hmm *SPP 5 expand 7 (agrees weakly)*
C: I <u>love</u> books like that. *FBB 5 expand 8 (Emphasizes)*
Me: [Mmm] *SPP 5 expand 8 (agrees weakly)*
C: [But] that was one of the (1) the ones (laughs) that [stayed with me] *FPP 5 expand 9 (Concludes)*

Sequence 7 of 7

Ma: [It's funny] um:: (3) I see it a little different- like, ah-I don't think I would be that little girl that would [open the door] *SPP 5 (Disagrees); FPP 6 (Challenges)*
L: [(small laugh)] *SPP 6 (Supports and appreciates)*
Me: No. I would go and get my sister *SPP 6 (Agrees); FPP 7 (amuses)*
(laughter from group) *SPP 7 (Appreciates)*
Ma: [Yeah, I wouldn't be that little girl] *SPP 7 (Agrees)*
C: [Interesting] *SPP 7 (expresses interest, surprise)*
Me: [I would push her through] *FPP 7 expand (amuses)*
(laughter from group) *SPP 7 expand (Appreciates)*
C: [I <u>was</u> that little girl, oh yeah] *SPP 6 & 7 (Opposes and emphasizes)*

***Chronicles of Narnia*, Part II**

Sequence 1 of 6

Ma: [And then I'm thinking of my daughters] *FPP 6 expand; FPP 1 (proposes)*
S: Yes *SPP 1 (prompts to continue)*
Ma: And how, as a mother, I would probably say to them, (play voice) <u>Don't</u> <u>ever</u> *FPP 1 expand (Inform and amuse)*
[(laughter from group)] *SPP 1 expand (appreciates)*
Ma: [<u>go</u> there where you're] not sure (laughs) y' know

Sequence 2 of 6

L: That's funny *SPP 1 expand (Supports and appreciates)*
C: <u>Wow:::</u> *SPP 1 expand (Challenges by showing surprise)*
Ma: And I don't know, *FPP 1 insert (Stalls)*
C: [Okay::] *(Emphasizes interest and surprise)*
Ma: [It's jus-] (1), it's funny, aye? how- *FPP 1 insert 2 (Asks for support or understanding; Tries to respond to challenge by explaining)*
S?: But you wouldn't have (gone in as a child) either, right? [unclear] *FPP 1 insert 3 (Repairs? Asks for clarification?)*
Ma: Yeah (2) *SPP 1 insert 3 (Answers and agrees);* [like]-
S: Yes *SPP 1 insert 3 (Acknowledges)*

C: Wow::: *(Expresses surprise, disbelief)*
L: (small laugh) *(Appreciates situation)*

Sequence 3 of 6

Ma: I would have probably (2) um (1) had my mother (laughs). *SPP 1 insert 3; FPP 2 (amuses, defends, explains)*
(laughter from group*)* *(Shows appreciation)*
Ma: (laughs) Thinking about her, and y'know, (play voice) Don't talk to strangers. *FPP 2 expand 1 (Amuses, explains)*
(small laughter from group) *SPP 2 expand 1 (Shows appreciation)*
Ma: Don't, don't, uh y'know, you're not allowed to be there::: so you don't- *FPP 2 expand 2 (Amuses, explains)*
L: [(laughs)] *SPP 2 expand 2 (appreciates)*
Ma: [And] the respect I had for my parents, where, y'know, I would respect whatever it is they had to- y'know, like I-I just wasn't a (2) a daredevil kind of child, like I-I really, uh::: [and I-] *FPP 2 expand 3 (Explains)*
S: [So you] saw her as being quite brave *FPP 2 expand 3 insert (Asks for clarification)*
Ma: Yeah, an-and fascinating and, um:: (1) y'know, a-all I guess not afraid, curious, trust, openness to others, *(Answers and expands)*

Sequence 4 of 6

Ma: but also, um:: (1) she was so open to the fact that he was different *FPP 3 (Proposes)*
Me: Mm hmm *SPP 3 (Agrees)*
Ma: And then- and then, the realization that (1) y' know that she's different to him *FPP 3 expand 1*
Me: Mm hmm *SPP 3 expand 1 (Agrees)*
Ma: That they're both on the same (1) y'know, they're both– *FPP 3 expand 2*
Me: [Experiencing the same] *SPP 3 expand 2*
Ma: [New to each other] y' know *FPP 3 expand 3*
Me: Yeah. *SPP 3 expand 3*
Ma: an-and how:::
S: That recognition *SPP 3 expand 3*
Ma: And that acceptance. *FPP 3 expand 4*
Me: Mm hmm *SPP 3 expand 4 (Agrees)*

Sequence 5 of 6

Ma: And yeah, y' know, I don-I'm not sure that I would have been so (1.5) open to a stranger and just walk away with someone, like I just (1) that to me is like wow:: (laughs). *FPP 3 expand 5 (Proposes)* Th- No, [there's no way]
C: [She was ready for the] magic- *SPP 3 expand 5 (Challenges); FPP 4 (Proposes)*
Ma: [Yeah] *SPP 4 (Agrees weakly)*
C: [She] knew something right from the very [beginning]- *FPP 4 expands*
Ma: [Yeah] *SPP 4 expands (Agrees weakly)*

C: -of that sequence
Ma: Yeah, yeah. *SPP 4 expands (Agrees weakly)*
C: She was, she was ready. *FPP 4 expands 2 (Emphasizes)*
Ma: I was more of a chicken, I still am, [so] *SPP 4 expand 2 (disagrees/defends)*

Sequence 6 of 6

C: [But it's interesting] you said you would be- you wouldn't- you- (1) how you felt about yourself (the back-up tape recorder clicks off at the end of the tape) as a kid y-you reflect- it reflect- Do you want me to st-? (I shake my head) It reflected in your- in what you say to your own daughters, because just as you said that, I thought, and I did tell my kids, "Go through the door. Anytime." I'd – yeah. "Go. Take the risk. Do it." *FPP 5 (Informs; Challenges)*
Me: [Wow] *SPP 5 (Expresses surprise, disbelief)*
C: [They]- they didn't, but, but-but that's intriguing. *FPP 5 insert (Reassures)*
Ma: Yeah. *SPP 5 insert (agrees weakly)*
(4) *gap*
S: That's interesting. It's, um, different positions of watching it too (.) as a protective parent or as a child. It's interesting. *FPP 5 insert 2 (Repair gap. Summarizes and concludes)*

Hockey Sweater* and *Outside Over There

Sequence 1 of 7

S: How about the two stories that we looked at today. If we juxtaposed the two of them together, do you see any connections? *FPP 1 (Question/prompt)*
(2)
C: You know, the only thing that struck me was that (2) for this little boy (1) with the Hockey Sweater, um (1) even if people weren't accurately paying attention to him, they were really very present in [his life] *SPP 1 (Answer)/ FPP 2 (Propose)*
L: [yeah, the adults were there] (quietly) *SPP 2 (Agree)*
C: This-th-the adults were really there::: *FPP 2 expand 1 (Emphasize/persuade)*
Me: Mm hmm *SPP 2 expand 1 (Agree/continuer)*

Sequence 2 of 7

C: He might have grown up to disagree::, but they were [there for him] *FPP 2 expand 2 (Explain/support/emphasize importance of their presence regardless of agreement)*
Ma: [Mm hmm] *SPP 2 expand 2 (support)*
Me: [Yup] *SPP 2 expand 2 (support)*
C: that was une[quivocal]- *FPP 2 expand 3 (Emphasize/restate firmness of position)*
Ma: [present] (quietly) *SPP 2 expand 3 (Support/add)*

S: -They didn't have the same priorities as [him] *FPP 2 expand 3 insert (Repair/ask for clarification)*
Ma: [Mm hm] *(continuer)*
C: NO, [but th- th- *SPP 2 expand 3 insert (Answer)*
Ma: [No, but they were there] It's okay. *2 expand 3 insert (Answer/Explain/support)*
Me: [they were there] (quietly) *2 expand 3 insert (Answer/Explain/support)*
C: They were there :: *FPP 2 expand 4 (Emphasize)* and-and, uh, for the children in *Outside Over There*, the parents didn't seem to be (1.5) present [presences] *FPP 2 expand 5*
Me: [Mm hm] *SPP 2 expand 5 (Support)*
S: Right (quietly) *SPP 2 expand 5 (Acknowledge response)*
C: They were absent presences. That really struck me. *FPP 2 expand 6 (Argue by comparison)*
(1)

Sequence 3 of 7

H: I think in both of the stories, uh, we can see the reality of the child. Like, the (1) what they're expe::riencing, their pro::blems, and th- like, their reality, their having real problems and (1) um, just considering from their point of view (1) *SPP 1 (Answer initial question in Sequence 1); FPP 1 (Propose/Explain/Compare)*
S: Okay:: yeah *SPP 1 (Accept/Prompt to continue)*
H: what they're facing, we can see that in both stories. *FPP 1 expand 1 (Explain)*
L: Maybe also how they use their imagination [again] *SPP 1 (Answer initial question in Sequence 1); FPP 2 (Propose)*
S: [Mm hmm] *SPP 2 (Accept/Prompt to continue)*
L: (playfully) He's looking at himself be::ing this [pla::yer] *FPP 2 expand 1 (Explain)*
[(soft laughter from group)] *SPP 2 expand 1 (Show appreciation)*
L: This huge [sto::ry] *FPP 2 expand 2 (Evoke through storytelling)*
Ma: [Great hockey player] *SPP 2 expand 2 (Support)*
L: And she-[she was the same] *FPP 2 expand 3 (Argue/extend/compare)*
Ma: [And all kids thought] that. They all thought that - *SPP expand 3 (Support)*
H: The chi::ld's world and their reality *SPP 1 (earlier)*
(sounds of agreement from group)
L: So he's making up his stories just as (1) [sh-she] is. *FPP 2 expand 4*

Sequence 4 of 7

S: [ye::ah] So a very sensitive portrayal
[(soft sounds of agreement from group)]
[of the child's either inner or outer world] *SPP 2 expand 4 (Acknowledge/summarize); FPP 3 (Propose)*
C: And how separate it is from the adult's *SPP 3 (Respond); FPP 4 (Propose)*
L: Oh yeah *SPP 4 (Agree)*
(sounds of agreement)
C: Even the well-intentioned, present adults

(sounds of agreement)
C: do not get it for [one second] *FPP 4 expand 1 (Emphasizes; urges)*
L: [(laughs)] *SPP 4 expand 1 (Appreciates)*
(sounds of agreement)
C: They don't get a pie::ce of what he's going through (1) [which] *FPP 4 expand 2 (Expands, emphasizes)*
S: [that's interesting] *SPP 4 expand 2 (Appreciates)*
C: is really tough to know as an adult but it's a fa::ct *FPP 4 expand 3 (Expands, emphasizes)*
Ma: [Bu-] *SPP 4 expand 3 (disagrees, and is cut off)*

Sequence 5 of 7

H: [But] it's interesting that as an adult he remembers this so clea::rly and he:: is able to understand [so] *FPP 1 expand 1 (Proposes and extends her first statement)*
Ma: [Yeah, yeah] *SPP 1 expand 1(Weak agree)*
(2)
H: Yeah *SPP 1 expand 1 (Hesitates)*
(1)
S: Yeah, so childhood can be about how childhood lives within us still
(sounds of agreement softly)
S: as adults, and he carries [that] with him *FPP 1 expand 2 (Repairs gap; summarizes to prompt conversation)*
H: [Mm hm] *SPP 1 expand 2 (agrees)*

Sequence 6 of 7

C: I remember as a kid (1) thinking that when I grow up I don't want to forget what this feels like *FPP 5 (proposes, evokes memory)*
L: (laughs softly) *SPP 5 (Appreciates)*
C: And I didn't [forget]- *FPP 5 expand 1*
Ma: [Mmm] *SPP 5 expand 1 (Acknowledges)*
C: -what it felt like for me, but of course it didn't mean I was necessarily so sensitive- *FPP 5 expand 2 (expands)*
Ma: [Mm hmm] *SPP 5 expand 2 (Agrees)*
Me: [Mm hmm] *SPP 5 expand 2 (Agrees)*
C: -to my own kids- *FPP 5 expand 3 (expands)*
Ma: [Mm] *SPP 5 expand 3 (Prompts to continue)*
C: [-cause] they had their own childhood. *FPP 5 expand 4 (expands)*
(sounds of agreement)
S: O::kay *SPP 5 expand 4 (Shows interest and surprise)*
C: It really struck me as an adult, oh, I remember what this meant for me as a kid but I don't know what it's meaning for my son or daughter. *FPP 5 expand 5 (expands)*
S: Mmm *SPP 5 expand 5 (continuer)*
C: I'd like to think I do, but (breathes in) I try not to be that delusional. *FPP 5 expand 6 (expands)*

(soft laughter)

Sequence 7 of 7

Ma: [(chucking)] We have a parent here (laughs) who (1) um, really, um, she was- well- her intention was, um, for Christmas morning (1) she had to have, um, these speci- Christmas- like, um- *SPP 5 Supports C's statement; FPP 6 begins (storytelling)*
Me: Oh, oh (softly) *SPP 6 (token; show appreciation and joint understanding)*
Ma: -cups with Santa Claus on it, okay? Like she used [to have when-] *FPP 6 expand 1*
S or C: [aww, that's sweet] *SPP 6 expand 1 (show feelings of nostalgia)*
Ma: -she was a little girl, and have hot chocolate (1.5) have the hot chocolate on Christmas morning so she wanted (.) to do the same thing (.) for her child. So sh- she – this is her husband (stifling laughter) telling the story to one of the teachers- *FPP 6 expand 2*
L: (soft laugh) *SPP 6 expand 2 (show appreciation; prompts to continue)*
Ma: -how (1) he (.) he (soft laugh) was telling the teachers how his wife was going cra:zy looking for [these cups] with Santa Claus on it. *FPP 6 expand 3*
L: [(laughs)] *SPP 6 expand 3 (appreciate)*
(soft laughter from group) *SPP 6 expand 3 (joint understanding)*
Ma: So she ended up ordering th- ordering them on E-Bay. *FPP 6 expand 4*
L: Oh my goodness [(laughs) *SPP 6 expand 4 (appreciate)*
Ma: [And then] um, finally, these-these cups, which he goes co::sted a fortune *FPP 6 expand 5*
L: (laughs aloud) *SPP 6 expand 5 (appreciate)*
Ma: Um, didn't co::me (1) [Only came after] [y'know] *FPP 6 expand 6*
L: [(laughs)] [Oh my god] *SPP 6 expand 6 (show surprise)*
Ma: And she was try-she wanted so::: much (1) t-to do that cause for-as, for her- for her as a child (1) that's what she lo::ved, [y'know] *FPP 6 expand 7*
[unclear as many speak softly]
Me (?): So[she wanted to] *SPP 6 expand 6 (wanting to interpret; showing keen interest)*
C (?): [she figured] *SPP 6 expand 6 (wanting to interpret; showing keen interest)*
Ma: [And he's gonna-] he's gonna to do the same thing, he's gonna to love it also like as much as I::: loved it (1) And so, y'know, the husband's saying well they never came we never had them for Christmas morning, we had them after, and he didn't care (laughs) *FPP 6 expand 8*
(laughter from others) *SPP 6 expand 8*
Ma: He didn't care (laughs) *FPP 6 expand 9 (emphasize that the child didn't have the same experience as the mother)*
(laughter from group)
S: Isn't that interesting how you have your memories and you want to recreate that for the people you love *SPP 6 expand 9 (Acknowledge); FPP 7 (Propose an interpretation)*
Me: Mm hmm *SPP 7 (agree weakly)*
S: [and but you don't know if they're-] *FPP 7 expand*
C: [But you can't, actually] You can't *SPP 7 expand (disagree)*

Ma: It didn't work. [It didn't work.] (unclear as others speak at same time) *SPP expand (disagree)*
C: [That's right. You can't] You make new ones. *FPP 8*
Ma: It didn't work out. But he didn't care, I mean, he-he enjoyed it afterwards (others laugh softly) He just (laughs softly). But it was funny, I-just funny cause ah-I know the parent and I can just (1) y'know, imagine her on the computer looking for the perfect cup *SPP 7*
L: (laughs) *(appreciate)*
(others laugh)
C: We're so well-intentioned. *FPP 8 (propose)*
Ma: Yup *SPP 8 (agree)*
C: (laughs aloud)
Ma: It's funny *SPP 8 (appreciates)*

Where the Wild Things Are

Sequence 1 of 7

S: What did you think of this story? (1) Did you like it? *FPP 1 (Question)*
C: I loved it. *SPP 1 (Answer)*
L: (laughs)
C: I love that story. Maurice Sendak's writing of that story is so true to how children enter dreams, leave crisis, enter dreams (breathes in) and how emotional time passing is – I-I forgot about that – how time can be five minutes or five ye::ars (breathes in) and it's your emotions that-that make the time stretch or shrink, and uh- it was just lo::vely to see that. It reminded me of good things, good things [laughter] *FPP 2 (Propose)*
(3)

Sequence 2 of 7

H: I also really liked it. I find it so imaginative [and]- *SPP 1 (Answer)/ FPP3 (Propose)*
Me: [Mm hm] *SPP 3 (Agree)*
H: -like the idea of the fo::rest, and going into the fo::rest and everyth- these wild things that (.) he's playing with and they're (.) just being wi:::ld and it's an adventure. And then- in the end, riding on the boat (1) was it for a year and a day? *FPP3 expand 1*
S: Um-
H: -riding on the boat for a year and a day back to the comfort [of his room] *FPP3 expand 2*
L: [(laughs softly)]
H: -and I think that (.) that's what children (.) need is the comfort? at the end? *FPP3 expand 3*
C: and the dinner's still hot *SPP3 expand 3 (agree)*
(laughter from group, unclear with many speaking, someone says, [and the food])
C: [I love that] *SPP 3 expand 4*

H: Yeah, [so] (1) *SPP3 expand 5*
S: [Yes, yes] *(repair gap)*
(2)

Sequence 3 of 7

Ma: I looked at it a little differently (.) um:::, I just, uh:: obviously the imagination of the child and so forth (breathes in) but I feel that (.) um:: that little boy had control *SPP 2 & 3 Challenge; FPP 4 (propose)*
Me: Mm hm *SPP 4 (agree)*
Ma: He had con[trol] *FPP 4 expand 1*
C: [Oh] interesting. Oh::: [ye::ah] *SPP 4 (express interest)*
Ma: [Y'know] (.) and that- he can go in and out of things (.) stop them from doing– so h:e has a choice of what he (.) wants to do an-and y'know what he likes, what he doesn't like, how far he wants to go and so forth (breathes in) y'know and that (.) even though uh y'know, he got punished went to his room cause he tried to do something that was like scary (breathes in) he didn't mean it to be (1) scary, he didn't want to hurt anybody he's jus- (.) he was just playing just in his own little (.) y'know, and then he went on to imagine (.) y'know what he really wanted to do- it's just to have fun, just to experiment and try different things, but (.) that he had a choice, [sto-] *FPP 4 expand 2*
Me:
[It's] (.) It's interesting that you say that (.) cause I see it the same he has control (.) and when he was sent to his ro::om, right bef- there's a smirk on his face, right before he imagined [the forest-] *SPP 4 (Agree/support); FPP 5 (propose/amuse)*
[(laughter from others)]
Me: -Oh fine, so now I'm here (1) doesn't bother me (.) [and then he goes on a little adventure] *FPP 5 expand 1*
Ma: (play voice) [I'll do what I:: want to do] *SPP 5 expand 1 (add to play)*
(unclear as others speak at the same time)
S: yeah, right, or- [(unclear)] *SPP 5 (asks for clarification)*
Me: [But then he's still-]
Ma: [Mm hmm]
Me: (.) you know (.) then it comes down to he's still (.) safe in his [own (1) home] *FPP 5 expand 2*
Ma: [Mm hmm]
S:: [Right]
L: [Mm]
Me: and supper's there and it's still (2) hot for him to eat. But … *FPP 5 expand 3*
(1)

Sequence 4 of 7

S: Did the story remind you at a::ll of your own childhoods? *FPP 1 (question)*
(2)

Ma: To some point yes (.) y'know where (.) you wanted to do (.) something different you want to try to– [play voice] "No:: you can't do- you're not allowed to do this no you're not" y'know and then (1) and as a chi::ld yeah y'know you'd go to play- *SPP 1 (answer); FPP 2 (Propose)*
Me: Mm hm *SPP 2 (Agree)*
Ma: - you would do y'know uh y'know you would pretend:: that you were (.) this n' that we would cre::ate our own [uh:::] *FPP 2 expand 1*
L: [Mm] *SPP 2 expand 1 (Agree)*
Ma: -plays:: and uh:: props and y'know take out (.) uh tablecloths and buil– and do things with [them] *FPP 2 expand 2*
Me: [Or-]
Ma: - or clotheslines and y'know uh (.) broomsticks, and uh, y'know (.) dress up and y'know, find a way (.) you would find a way to (.) to do what you really wanted to do, y'know (1) But (1) y'know within a certain … *FPP 2 expand 3*

Sequence 5 of 7

C: It's funny when you asked that question uh:: you reminded me that when I first read the book, it was as an adult::, um (1) my late 20s early 30s, uh, and:: um:: I'd heard of it but I'd never read it (1) And my first reaction was it was a very da::rk book (1) it reminded me of very dark (.) parts of my child- and I think he's been criticized for looking at some dark (.) sides of childhood which I think are [there] *SPP 1 (Answer); FPP 3 (propose)*
Ma: [Mm hmm]
C: I don't think there's- (1) I don't think children can't ta- handle it but um (.) I was a wild:: thing (1) [growing up] *FPP 3 expand 1*
L: [(chuckles softly)] *SPP 3 expand 1*
C: I really was- I was skipping school in grade one I was a wild thing. *FPP 3 expand 2*
Me: Oh [my::]. *SPP 3 expand 2*
C: [And] I-
L: (laughs)
C: when I re- yeah:: (laughs), if you'd had my grade one teacher too you would have [skipped school too (laughs)] *SPP 3 insert*
[(laughter from group)]
C: And um:: and um I just found (.) that he plumbed something very deep (.) with that book. I read all of his other books at that (.) that were already out then too cause I thought (.) he's touching on something in childhood that's [different] *FPP 3 expand 3*
S: [Mm hm] *SPP 3 expand 3*
C: than a lot of (breathes in) writers touch on, and um:: I thought it was intriguing that you could have a story that was an enjoyable adventu::re? that really intuitively tapped into how kids will re::act to "I'm sent to my room? O::kay, watch what I can do in my imagi[nation."] *FPP 3 expand 4*
Ma: [That's right.] *SPP 3 expand 4*
C: And still they want to come home so there was that but also:: (.) um that there are monsters (1) in kids' lives *FPP 3 expand 5*

S: [yes] *SPP 3 expand 5*
Ma; [Mm hm] *SPP 3 expand 5*
C: and sometimes they're not so easily esca::ped? (1) or else they do stay here or something they can always be threatening again at another time::. *FPP 3 expand 6*

Sequence 6 of 7

C: Um:: and it's interesting my son never liked the story. *FPP 4*
Ma: Hmm. *SPP 4*
C: And I wonder (.) just now (.) as we talk I wonder if my own ambiguity about the story communica– cause usually he loved whatever I read to him–(.) *FPP 4 expand 1*
Ma: Hmm. *SPP 4 expand 1*
C: b-but the images were strong for him and [were a bit frightening] *FPP 4 expand 2*
Others (unclear): [Mm hm mm hm]
C: and he didn't really like [it] *FPP 4 expand 3*
Ma: [And] there are children that are frightened of that. *SPP 4: FPP 5 (Propose)*
C: Oh really? [Cause- *FPP 5 insert (Express surprise)*
Ma: [They look at it and – *SPP 5*
[(unclear as others speak at same time)]
C: Cause those really are:: [monsters- *SPP 5 (Agrees)*
Ma: [they sort of look] y'know - *FPP 5 expand 1*
C: Yeah (.) [yeah] *SPP 5 expand 1*
Ma: [And] if you give it a chance (.) [it'll]- *FPP 5 expand 2*
C: [Yeah], yeah *SPP 5 expand 2*

Sequence 7 of 7

L: I would have a hard time reading this because I'm in a girls' setting and they're always scared of everything [(laughs)] *FPP 6 (propose)*
[(laughter from others)]
L: I have only girls (.) and th-they're scared of a::nything (1) A::nything. Mu::sic. A story with one little scary thing that I would not even picked up (1) *FPP 6 expand 1*
(sounds of surprise from others)
L: I wouldn't even notice and they're all [play voice] "uhahhh, d-don't say that (.) I'm scared" *FPP 6 expand 2*
Others: Interesting

The Piano

Sequence 1 of 4

S: How would you describe the relationship between the mother and the daughter? *FPP 1 (Question)*
(1)
Me: Well [sometimes it was very] *SPP 1 (Answer); FPP 2 (propose)*
Ma: [I didn't see mother and daughter] *SPP 1 (Answer); FPP 3 (propose)*

(1)
Me: childlike (.) [they were playing together] *FPP 2 expand 1*
Ma: [Ye::ah exactly] *SPP 2 expand 1 (Agree)*
Me: And then (1) at other times the mother was u::sing the child to (1) get what she wanted. *FPP 2 expand 2*
C: But what you just said you didn't see them as mother (.) and daughter. [You didn't] *FPP 3 insert 1*
Ma: [Nope]
SPP 3 insert 1 (Answer)
S: Oh you didn't? *FPP 3 insert 2 (Respond to answer with a request for clarification)*
Ma: Nope *SPP 3 insert 2*
C: I rea- [I-I th-]
Ma: [Nope]
C: When you said that I realized you know what (.) I didn't either. *SPP 3 (Agrees)*
Ma: Nope. It was more like uh (.) uh (.) sort of uh (.) um (.) a relationship where they supported each other, where they just (.) [held each other] – *FPP 3 expand 1 (propose)*
Me: [It was more equal] *SPP 3 expand 1 (Agrees)*
(unclear others talking)
Ma: Held each other up and (.) just going through life (.) and e::ven, even at the end (.) when finally she left (1) They left (.) they got rid of the pia::no, they got rid that–that (.) she got rid of that-that part of her life that was just so:: da::rk and um then they went back and she was learning to speak again (breathes in) still, even-even then, after all that experience, I still found her to be very immature (2) very immature – *FPP 3 expand 2*
(others express interest: ohhh)
S: Very self-absorbed [ye::ah] *SPP 3 expand 2 (Agree)*
Ma: [And] as a woman (.) like I-I don't think she even (1) I don't know:: I d- it's-it's as though she just (.) remained a chil- even her behavior y'know (stamps her feet) y'know, "I want it like this. I w-" y'know (stamps her feet) I wan– y'know (.) *FPP 3 expand 3*
S: okay:::: *SPP 3 expand 3*
(sounds of agreement from others)
Ma:- she threw her cup down and she jus::: y'know. Her daughter didn't even do that (laughing). *FPP 3 expand 4*
S: So [she was-] *SPP 3 expand 4*
Ma: [Her daughter didn't] even do it that way. *FPP 3 expand 5*
S: So she was:: something of a child herself (2). Oh, that's neat. *SPP 3 (summarizes, shows interest)*
Ma: Obviously [something-]
Me: [She's stuck] *FPP 4 (proposes)*
Ma: Yup, exactly. Things that happened in her life- *SPP 4 (agrees)*

Sequence 2 of 4

H: And (2) when her mother's playing the pia::no? and then she's just like dan::cing on the bea::ch and doing cartwheels and (.) it's so:::: beautiful that's [really really a beautiful image] *FPP 1 (propose)*
Ma: [Yup, yup] *SPP 1*
S: It is *SPP 1 (agree)*
C: And there's tons of gorgeous images in that film. *FPP 2 (propose)*
(sounds of agreement)
H: It's very artistic. *SPP 2 (agrees)*
(7)

Sequence 3 of 4

S: Yeah, *SPP 2* it's an interesting (1) um:: movement too from (1) seriousness (1) the dark clothes (.) to that freedom on the beach. *FPP 3 (Propose)*
L: That's (.) I think to me that's the difference between children and adults (1) basically. It's that they can go to this place (.) and they don't even (.) know. We have the judgment that stops us from doing that. *SPP 3 (Agrees); FPP 4 (Proposes)*
S: Yeah:: (softly) (3)That's interesting (2) although the mom was able to go there in a sense (.) through her piano. *SPP 4 (Disagrees/challenges); FPP 4 insert*
L: M-maybe her but not everybody else around. *SPP 4 insert (Respond)*
S: Right (3) yeah the fellow looked a little perturbed. *SPP 4 insert (Agree)*
C: (Laughs softly)
(3)
S: When you say we have judgment, what kind of [judgment do you mean?] *FPP 4 insert (ask for clarification)*
L: [Well we have (.) you know (2) um- *SPP 4 insert (Answer)*
H: Inhibitions? *SPP 4 insert (offer, suggest)*
(small laughter from others)
L: No (.) maybe it's just the reasoning, the reasoning part of us (.) that's [more what I mean] *SPP 4 insert (Answer); FPP 6 (Propose)*
S: [So we rationalize] everything. *FPP 4 insert 2 (Verify)*
L: Yes, yes *SPP 4 insert 2 (Confirm)*

Sequence 4 of 4

S: If the girl, Flora, wasn't there, how would that make for a different type of a (1) scene? *FPP 5 (Question)*
(2)
L: It would not be as beautiful for sure. *SPP 5 (Answer)*
(soft laughter – not amused but knowing)
S: Okay so there would be less beauty involved in [the scene] *FPP 5 insert (Repair/verify)*
L: [I think so] *SPP 5 insert*
S: -if it was just a woman asking a man to bring her down to the beach to (1) get to the piano *FPP 5 insert 1 (Question)*

L: Because now we like the movie, why we liked it, this part, is because of the little gi::rl. *SPP 5 insert 1 (Answer); FPP 6 (propose)*
Ma: Yeah (softly) *SPP 6 (Agrees)*
L: Without it, it's just – puhh, I guess (laughs). It's magic (1) to have her there. *SPP 6 expand (Answer)*
S: So she brings in a magic quality? *FPP 6 insert (clarify)*
L: Yeah. *SPP 6 insert (Answers)*
(sounds of agreement)
Me: Because if it was just the mother, or just the woman playing the piano (2) how would it be (2) for the man to listen to it, what would he have gotten from it? It added so much watching the child dancing (.) to the music and seeing that (1) beauty and that magic. *SPP 6 insert (answer/argue); FPP 7 (extends)*
Ma: And seeing him:: [(1) slowly (1) change] *SPP 7 (agrees)*
L: [Yeah (.) Yeah, yeah, yeah] *SPP 7 (agrees)*

Ma: I think that's (1) how-how the child (.) has had that effect (1) on him [and it's going to] *SPP 7 insert*
Me: [Would the music have done it on its own::? Or did he need to see the chi::ld? *FPP 8 (questions)*
L: Or a mix of both? *FPP 8 insert (questions)*
Ma: Yeah *SPP 8 insert (agrees)*
Me: Mm hm *SPP 8 insert (agrees)*
C: Yeah a mix of both cause the way the mother and child y'know their heads go like this
(moves hands in same direction) (sounds of agreement from the others) and he was looking at that (more sounds of agreement, unclear) so there was some call there to him to go down to the beach just from the way they were, their relationship. *SPP 8 insert (answer)*