

**YOUNG VIETNAMESE CHILDREN'S IDENTITIES-IN-FLUX IN
VIETNAM AND AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND:
A FOCUS ON THEIR LIVING STORIES**

Hoa Pham Minh

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education,
The University of Auckland
2021**

Abstract

This is a study with young Vietnamese children in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand, designed to understand their identities-in-flux through their stories. Framed within dialogical and semiotic approaches, the term “living stories” refers to young children’s everyday narratives that exist in multimodal forms and in an unfinalized chain with stories of others (i.e., parents and teachers) about children. Guided by a Bakhtinian lens, children’s identities-in-flux is conceptualized as an ongoing process in which they articulate others’ words to make sense of themselves and the world.

A dialogical narrative case-studies design was used with four Vietnamese focal children aged 4–5 years old, two live in Auckland, New Zealand, and two in Hanoi, Vietnam. Families and early childhood education centers/preschools were selected as settings for this study. I chose to become a friend to engage with young children and listen to their narratives. Living stories were collected through diverse resources (i.e., close observation, informal conversations, fieldnotes, and artifacts). Semistructured interviews and informal conversations were conducted to access parents’ and teachers’ narratives about children. Data analysis was completed through three steps (i.e., transcriptions, the four-layer analysis of living stories, and narrative analysis to compose case stories).

Findings revealed that the four young children played, combined, and transformed multimodal language (silences, art, early literacy, and imaginary stories) in their narrative chains to express themselves. Based on a Bakhtinian notion of unfinalizability, I found that children’s ideas and interests traveled across modes of language, time, and settings. Findings also conveyed the children as active agents who, through prior experiences and special interests, articulated resources from culture, friendship, and adults’ responses in multimodal ways to build their worlds. Findings from this thesis promote a reconsideration of children as interbeings with adults and an approach of being present with children for parents, teachers, and educators to comprehend and engage with children’s worlds.

*For young children, especially Vietnamese children, those who are children now,
those who once were children, and those not yet born*

Acknowledgments

I want to thank *nhân duyên* (the dependent arising) and the supporters who have made me and my work exist in the world.

First and foremost, I am very grateful to become a friend of the four young children, their families, and the teachers who participated in the study. Thank you to Dylan, Tony, Nhi, and Duong for letting me enter your beautiful worlds and listen to your enormous stories. This thesis is our accomplishment.

Thank you to my superb supervisors, Prof Janet S. Gaffney and Assoc. Prof Marek Tesar. My thanks go to Jan and your supervising, mentoring, and caring. I have learned from you the most important lessons of qualitative inquiry, researching with young children, and the researcher's lens. Thanks to your unconditional support with my conference and scholarship applications, your thorough and meticulous comments on this thesis. Your saying, "Remember who you are and write from this center," made me confident to story this work. Jan, you are a part of New Zealand in me. Thanks to Marek and your work of childhood and critical comments, which have enriched my thinking. Thanks to your understanding of me, not only as a student but also as an emergent scholar and a person. Thanks to both Jan and Marek for initiating me to become a writer and a capable thinker of decolonizing my mind.

My gratitude is going to the PhD buddies in Epsom Campus, Lan, Jie Jie, Lan Anh, Anh Phan, Randima, and Alison, who shared many ups and downs in this journey. Thank you to Quynh Anh and Lan for being my elder sisters and your mental support during the critical moments.

Thank you to my parents and parents-in-law, who supported me a lot and took care of my children while I was busy with this work. Thank you to my dear sister and close friend, Thuy Ngoc, and your lovely children. Thank you for always trusting me, looking after my kids, and providing me a cozy hub in the final months of this program.

Thank you to my Grandma, who passed away in early 2021. Your stories and teaching always live in me. Bà ơi, cháu yêu và nhớ bà.

I would also to thank my soulmate and life-long partner, Nguyen Ky Son. I am indebted to your love, compassion, and sacrifice. Thank you for always keeping patience and standing by my side under challenging events throughout this program that affected us both. Without you, the thesis would still be a dream.

Thank you to my three children, Hien Mai, Minh Hai, and Minh Anh, for your humor and existence in my life and your sacrifice for this work. In different ways, all of you have guided me to become a mother moment by moment.

Thanks to the following writers, musicians, and philosophers who have inspired me while writing this thesis: Thich Nhat Hanh, Trinh Cong Son, Bob Dylan, and Ocean Vuong. Thank Ocean Vuong and your magnificent novel, “On Earth, we’re briefly gorgeous,” which awoke me to the power of storytelling.

I am grateful to Ms. Hilary van Uden who provided valuable assistance to proofread and format this thesis.

I would also like to acknowledge Project 911 of the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training and the Marie Clay Literacy Trust for their financial support.

Finally, thanks to the PhD journey itself. Thank for all joys and achievements, depression and tension in this path, which have let me grow up mindfully.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xi
Prologue	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Why Stories? Why Vietnamese Children?	1
Research Contexts.....	4
Contextual Background in Vietnam.....	4
Contextual Background in Aotearoa New Zealand.....	7
Theoretical Overview and Key Terms.....	9
Dialogue	9
Unfinalizability	10
Multimodality.....	11
Living Stories	12
Bakhtin’s Concept of Identities-in-Flux.....	12
The Purpose of Research	14
Thesis Organization	15
Chapter 2: Mapping the Research Land	17
Contexts Matter.....	17
Vietnamese Contexts.....	17
Aotearoa New Zealand Contexts	20
Summary	23
The Image of Vietnamese Children	23
A Global View of Children.....	24
A Vietnamese View of Children.....	25
Research on Stories.....	27
Overview of Research on Stories.....	27

Children’s Stories	34
Narrative and Identities Research	39
Overview of the Field of Narratives and Identities	39
Narrative Research and Young Children’s Identities.....	43
Children’s Interests and Identities Information	48
A Psychological Lens.....	48
A Sociocultural Lens.....	48
A Narrative-Based Lens	50
Summary	51
Statement of the Problem.....	51
Chapter 3: Methodology	53
Dialogical Narrative Case Studies	53
Case Studies	53
Dialogical Narrative Approach	54
Settings.....	56
Participant-Recruitment Procedure.....	56
Participants.....	59
Dylan	60
Tony	60
Nhi.....	60
Duong	61
Data Collection: The Process of Establishing Ties.....	61
Observation	62
Informal Conversations and Semistructured Interviews With Parents and Teachers	64
Follow-Up Contact.....	66
Data Analysis: The Process of Deconstructing Ties.....	66
Transcribing	67
An Analysis of Living Stories.....	67
Narrative Analysis to Compose Case Stories.....	70
Researcher’s Reflexivity.....	71
Credibility	73

Chapter Summary	74
Chapter 4: The Case of Dylan	75
Dylan’s Settings: Where Peer Culture Is Valued.....	76
“Nom Nom Nom”: Multimodal Communications in Dylan’s Identities-in-Flux.....	78
Dynamics in Dylan’s Silences and Body Actions.....	79
Blue Catboy: Reimagining Worlds Through an Artistic Lens	85
“I Sleep Daddy”: Emergent Identities in the Turning Point of Becoming the Oldest Brother	88
Chapter Conclusion.....	94
Chapter 5: The Case of Tony.....	96
Tony’s Settings: Where the Child’s Desire Is Centered	97
“You Need Be Kind, Need to Know to Share”: Making Sense of Himself in Social Relationships.....	100
Tony’s Identities-in-flux in His Friendship.....	101
Tony’s Identities-in-flux in His Relationship with Teachers	105
Tony’s Awareness of His Transformation	108
“Spiderman Tony Want to Make a Beautiful Home”: Building the Self in Connection With Spaces and Places	109
Chapter Conclusion.....	116
Chapter 6: The Case of Nhi	118
Nhi’s Home and Preschool: Where the Child Is Expected to Follow Adults.....	119
“Michael Jackson is Not Hot Boy”: Playing with English	122
“I Am a Super Sunner”—Defending Herself in the Transition to Primary School	127
Preparing for the Entrance Exam	127
Making Sense of the Primary School.....	134
Power or Interest in Play: Rethinking Nhi’s Identities-in-Flux	140
Chapter Conclusion.....	141
Chapter 7: The Case of Duong	143
Duong’s Settings: Where Adults Learned to Be Led by the Child.....	143
“I Have Just Turned Into a Bird”: The Role of Imagination in the Child’s Identities-in-Flux	146

Making Friends With the Nonhuman World	146
Making Attachment to Vietnamese Origins.....	150
Solving Daily Problems	153
The Child’s World Through Imagination: To Be or Not to Be?.....	154
“It Is Okay for the Little”: An Attempt to Defend the Self	156
Inside Shyness: An Attempt to Express Himself	156
Inside Confidence: A Desire to Be Regarded As a Person	158
Chapter Conclusion.....	161
Afterword Before Moving On	162
Chapter 8: Looking Across the Living Stories.....	164
Major Findings Learned From the Four Children’s Living Stories.....	165
Multimodality and Unfinalizability in Children’s Living Stories	166
Silences	166
Artistic Communication	169
Early Literacy	171
Imaginary Stories	172
Intersections Within Children’s Multimodal Language.....	174
Children’s Living Stories: A Call for Viewing Narratives and Identities in Unfinalizability	175
Influential Factors in Children’s Living Stories and Identities.....	177
Cultural Resources	178
Peer Interactions.....	181
Adults’ Beliefs and Practices	182
Children’s Experiences and Special Interests	188
From Children’s Stories to Adults’ Transformation: A Need to Reconsider the Image of Children	192
Children and Adults as Interbeings.....	193
Be Present: An Approach to Creating a Sense of Interbeing With Children	195
Chapter Conclusion.....	196
Chapter 9: (In)Conclusion: You Are, Therefore I Am	198
Contributions of the Study	199

Theoretical Contribution	199
Methodological Contribution	200
Empirical Contribution.....	201
Limitations of the Research	201
Future Research: New Stories Waiting to Be Unveiled	202
References.....	205
Appendices	240
Appendix A: Invitation Letter.....	240
Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet, Manager /Principal of Preschool.....	242
Appendix C: Consent Form, Manager/ Principal of Preschool	247
Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet, Teacher	249
Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet: Parents	253
Appendix F: Consent Form: Parents.....	257
Appendix G: Participant Information Sheet: Parents of Co-Participants	259
Appendix H: Consent Form: Parents, Co-Participants	263
Appendix I: Assent Form: Focal Child.....	265
Appendix J: Assent Form, Co-participant Child	267
Appendix K: Sample Questions for Interviews With Parents	269
Appendix L: Sample Questions to Interview With Teachers	270

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Timeline of Data Collection</i>	57
Table 2 <i>Basic Information of Four ECE Settings</i>	60

List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Dylan Imitates Eating His Clay Burger</i>	82
Figure 2 <i>Dylan Imitates Eating the Block</i>	84
Figure 3 <i>Dylan Makes a Castle</i>	86
Figure 4 <i>Dylan Pretends to Sleep</i>	89
Figure 5 <i>Tony Draws Catboy and Gecko</i>	102
Figure 6 <i>Tony Makes a Spider Web on the Window</i>	110
Figure 7 <i>Tony Wears His Handmade Mask</i>	115
Figure 8 <i>Nhi's "r" Letters</i>	132
Figure 9 <i>Nhi Draws "Miscellaneous Things"</i>	132
Figure 10 <i>Duong Beats a Traditional Drum</i>	152
Figure 11 <i>Duong Crouches on His Chair</i>	157
Figure 12 <i>Duong's Chopstick Utilization</i>	160
Figure 13 <i>Thich Nhat Hanh's Calligraphy</i>	198

Prologue

Nhi, a 5-year-old Vietnamese girl, is one of the focal children in Hanoi, Vietnam. Once, at Nhi's home, during my observation, her cousin visited her. It was the first time he had met me. He saw me and asked Nhi if I was a teacher, an aunty, or a friend of her mother's. At that time, Nhi was drawing. She shook her head and did not explain who I was. After he left, I talked to Nhi.

Hoa: "Nhi ơi, thế con nghĩ cô là ai?" [Nhi, how do you think about me?]

Nhi: "Cô là cô thôi, người thích nói chuyện với con" [You are just you, who likes to talk to me]. (Fieldnotes, 3 April 2019)

This fieldnote initiated a new way of thinking of my relationship with the four young children in the study. Nhi's comment reflected that she thought of me as a person who was just myself and interested in talking with her. Nhi and I did not consider our communication a formal contact between the researched and the researcher. Rather, we shared experiences and let each other see ourselves. Through communication, we built relationships.

"To live means to communicate dialogically" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 287). Young children, their parents, teachers, and I are storytellers in the study. Nhi and other children shared their living moments not because they imagined that one day their stories would be analyzed. They invited me into trustful relationships with them. I, in turn, did not only collect data. I lived alongside and communicated in every interaction. Doing this research was to come into a dialogical relationship in which others' stories and mine were interwoven. Research was to live, again, in another's life and my life. Telling about the lives that I had lived in this study was the way of my writing.

As you embark on the journey to read this thesis, please let me give you a guide. The study is grounded by Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. This research, however, is not only a work of Bakhtinian knowledge. It is a collection of stories from children, parents, teachers, and me as a researcher. The theory has been shaped and reshaped by the stories that I have engaged. Now, here we go.

Chapter 1: Introduction

I explored the emergence of young Vietnamese children's identities through their living stories at home and ECE settings in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand. Based on a Bakhtinian dialogical approach, the study highlighted children's stories as living creatures and the very young as active agents in self-authoring. In this introduction, I explain how I came to the topic of young Vietnamese children and their stories. Afterward, I provide a brief overview of Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand contexts where the study took place and represent the theoretical framework and related key terms. Finally, I clarify the research purpose and summarize the content of the following chapters.

Why Stories? Why Vietnamese Children?

I was born in North Vietnam in 1988, 13 years after the Vietnam War and 2 years after *Đổi Mới*.¹ In contrast to previous generations, my generation grew up in peace, had enough food to eat, clothes to wear, houses to live in, and access to schools. At the age of 5, I was enrolled in a public preschool. One day, my teacher introduced us to a picture of a green bud on a tree with a few sentences below it. As we could not read them, she read the passage aloud,

“Trẻ con như búp trên cành,
Biết ăn, biết ngủ, biết học hành là ngoan”
(Children are like buds on the branch,
Knowing how to eat, sleep, and study is good)

These verses were written by Uncle Ho², my teacher explained. I raised my hand and said, “Nhưng bọn con cũng chơi mà. Bác Hồ viết thiếu rồi” (But we also play. Uncle Ho's writing misses that).

She stopped me immediately and said, “Con không bao giờ được phép nói thế, không bao giờ. Là trẻ con, được ăn, được ngủ, được học hành là niềm hạnh phúc lớn nhất rồi.” (You are never allowed to talk like this, never. As children, being provided with food, accommodation to sleep, and education is your greatest happiness).

¹ *Đổi Mới* is the name of Vietnam's economic renewal initiated by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in 1986.

² Uncle Ho is Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese president from 1945 to 1969.

After a long time, some events might vanish, but my preschool teacher’s worried face still lingers in my mind. Now, as an adult, I no longer think that Ho Chi Minh’s poem is missing that part. It was written in 1941 when most Vietnamese people, including children, lived in poverty, war, and illiteracy. Having food, accommodation, and access to school was indeed a privilege for every child. I also forgave my preschool teacher for her rejection of my idea. In the early 1990s, letting one child criticize Uncle Ho for “missing something” could raise a political and moral issue for the teacher.

The sorrow, after several decades, however, remains. This memory was the first time I comprehended sadness as a child when my story was not heard by adults. At 5 years old, I knew play was my interest. I remember how happy I was during free-play and sharing stories with my younger sister and friends. We looked for crickets and dragonflies in the grass fields. We played folk games such as *Lộn Cầu Vồng* (Reversed Rainbow) and *Rồng rắn lên mây* (Dragon and Snake Go to Cloud) in the backyard. We also listened to fairy tales and *ca dao* (folk poems) from our grandmother. Traveling in her storytelling and singing, we believed that every tree, flower, and animal was a spiritual being. We waited for the sound of toads on rainy summer nights and thought it might be the voice of The Sir Sky’s Uncle.³ We did not hurt the stork in the field because there might be young storks waiting for her at their nest.⁴ I was raised in a colorful atmosphere of Vietnamese fairy tales, folk games, and everyday stories with my Grandma, my sister, and peers. The very young person in myself, thus, could not understand why an adult like my preschool teacher denied the child’s interest in play.

Looking back as a researcher, I realize that inside my sorrow are unanswered questions. The image of a bud on a branch implied that children were “subjects of someone else’s agency” (Dyson, 2016a, p. 167). In the verse, young children’s world was bounded by morality (good), and moral behaviors included their “knowing” of essential needs (eating, sleeping, and studying). Apart from these things, what else do young children know and desire to show? How do children, as persons, build their world?

³ The memory links with a Vietnamese fairy tale “Toad Sur Sir Sky”

⁴ The memory links with a Vietnamese *ca dao* (folk poem) “Con cò mà đi ăn đêm” (English: The stork finds food in nighttime). The poem tells a story of a mother stork which finds food at night time and falls into the pond. The mother stork begs the catcher to boil her in fresh water rather than dirty water. The stork does not want to die in dirty water, which will hurt her children.

Eighty years has passed since Ho Chi Minh wrote the verse for children. Vietnam has made significant progress for its 26 million children in just over 2 decades (United Nations Children's Fund, 2016). Thanks to economic renewal, most children have food to eat, places to live, and access to schools. Despite the government's tremendous attempt, children's voices in Vietnam are not fully regarded (Save The Children, 2020). Each childhood includes different narrative accounts (Tesar, 2014). My personal story, however, continually reminds me of storied and playful childhood in everyday life, which has been missing in the literature. Little research has explored young Vietnamese children's ordinary narratives and their self-authoring from their perspectives (Burr, 2014).

Which stories, I wondered, do young Vietnamese children own? How do they express special interests in their stories? How do contexts appear through children's lenses? How do children's stories and their interests reflect their identities as "persons with voices"? (Hallett & Prout, 2003, p. 1). Do adults understand children's stories and respect their identities? These questions prompted me to start the study to explore young Vietnamese children's stories and their identities-in-flux in daily life.

My 5-year-old son and I arrived in Auckland, New Zealand, for my doctoral study in early 2017. In the first months of my doctoral journey, I was a volunteer teacher in the Vietnamese class for young children in our Vietnamese community every weekend. My son attended this class. In New Zealand, he had a new English name: Harry. This name was chosen by him, his father, and me. Once his grandparent called him via Facetime and asked, "Tell us some stories about New Zealand, Harry." He refused immediately, "No, my name is not Harry. Please use my Vietnamese name." A Vietnamese child born in Auckland whom I met in a Vietnamese language class, meanwhile, liked to be called Daniel, his English name. He told me, "I am a New Zealander, but my Mom comes from Vietnam." My son and Daniel showed two different ways to author their ethnicity.

I became curious when listening to stories of my son and other children. I considered stories of young Vietnamese children in Aotearoa New Zealand. How do their stories reflect their thoughts of themselves, of others, and the world? How does living in New Zealand influence these thoughts? How do children think of themselves as members of Vietnamese ethnicity? Reviewing the literature showed that no empirical studies had been done to identify

narratives and identities of young Vietnamese children living here. I, thus, decided to investigate stories and identities-in-flux of young Vietnamese children in New Zealand.

I recalled personal and academic narratives that brought me to studying young Vietnamese children's identities-in-flux through their stories in Vietnam and New Zealand. The overall research question of this study is:

How do young Vietnamese children's living stories reflect their identities-in-flux in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand? Two subquestions are:

1. How do young Vietnamese children's identities emerge in their living stories at home and early childhood education (ECE) settings?
2. What are influential factors in young Vietnamese children's identities-in-flux?

Young children's stories "don't fall from the sky" (Riessman, 2008, p. 105) but emerge from the contexts in which they live. An introduction of historical, social, cultural, and educational contexts in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand is necessary to navigate contextual factors that shaped this study. I briefly illustrate research contexts in the subsequent section.

Research Contexts

This study included two contexts—Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand. In this section, I introduce the historical, social, cultural, and educational characteristics of the two countries, which influenced the ways in which young Vietnamese children created their stories and authored themselves.

Contextual Background in Vietnam

Vietnam is a developing country in South East Asia, with Hanoi as its capital. Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) has held a monopoly on political power over the entire country. After years of economic crisis and the American embargo, CPV started economic renewal or *Đổi Mới* in 1986. The economic renewal in 1986 had an impact on comprehensive aspects of Vietnamese society. The manifestations of cultural values and the ECE system in Vietnam are presented next.

Cultural Values. Traditionally, Vietnamese beliefs and traditions are built on a combination of Confucianism and Buddhism. The main principles of Confucianism, which have had a profound impact on Vietnamese society, are collectivism and a hierarchical social structure (H. V. Luong, 1992; Malarney, 1996). Collectivism is an inherent concept in a Confucian society such as Vietnam. A principle of collectivism is "một người vì mọi người,

mọi người vì một người” (one for all, all for one) (D. H. Tran, 1991). From a collectivist perspective, individuals are expected to dismiss or, sometimes, sacrifice their needs and desires for the sake of their community. People, therefore, are bound by their social duties and obligations. A person’s perception of the self is not considered at the individual level. Instead, the individual finds the significance of their existence in their social responsibilities toward others (Phan, 1998; Truong, 2013).

Another Confucian principle that influences Vietnamese people’s culture is hierarchy (Phan, 1998). Confucianism emphasizes that personal behaviors and actions should follow hierarchical principles. The superiors in social relationships are inherently assumed to be the elderly, men, and persons with higher social statuses. Younger, females, and those with lower social status are inferior. In this hierarchy, the superior have the right to lead and educate the inferior. In contrast, the inferior must respect and follow the superior.

Buddhism is the second ideology that impacts Vietnamese people’s beliefs and social practices. A key concept in Buddhism is interbeing (Thich, 2010), the nature of the universe according to which all people and phenomena exist in interdependent relationships. The Vietnamese Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh wrote that “*to be* is to *inter-be*. We cannot just *be* by ourselves alone. We have to *inter-be* with every other thing” (Thich, 2010, p. 113). The idea of the self as interbeing has influenced Vietnamese values in diverse ways. Vietnamese people consider themselves a small universe in interconnection with Mother Nature (Q. V. Tran, 2000). In families, the Vietnamese believe that the past always accompanies the present; the ancestors and the young generation co-exist in a transformative and interdependent relationship. The Vietnamese saying “Tre già, măng mọc” (As bamboo grows old, young shoots spring up) reflects this relationship. The construction of adulthood links with childhood formation (V. B. Pham, 2013). The notion of adults and children as interbeings is conveyed in a Vietnamese proverb “Lá vàng là bởi đất khô/Nhìn cây sửa đất, nhìn con sửa mình” (Leaves turn to gold due to dry soil/Looking into trees to adjust soil, looking into children to adjust adults ourselves) (H. T. Luong, 2009).

Confucianism and Buddhism differ in their distinct ways of explaining the self. While Confucianist perspectives highlight persons in a hierarchical structure, the Buddhist lens underlines individuals as interbeings with others and the world. Vietnamese culture is a meeting place in which these two different ways of thinking co-exist and intersect with each other (N.

T. Tran, 1999). Historically, Confucianism dominates the political system and social activities in official spaces (e.g., Crown, courts, and schools). Buddhist values, meanwhile, influence people's beliefs and practices in everyday lives and in personal circles (e.g., families, friendship). Confucianist ideas were historically presented in written texts (e.g., official documents, literary art), while Buddhist traditions were preserved in folk culture. Confucianism and Buddhism intersect to build up Vietnamese culture and contribute to people authoring themselves (N. T. Tran, 2016).

In 1986, the CPV launched the economic renewal *Đổi Mới*. Since then, the Vietnamese government has opened to integrate with countries all over the world, especially with Europe and the United States (N. K. Tran & Yoon, 2008). Western values of liberality and human rights, in parallel with globalization, have contributed to economic, social, and cultural changes in Vietnamese society. Since the 1990s in Vietnam, the social trends are “towards diversity and freedom of choice” (Marr, 2000, p. 35), which has made significant changes in Vietnamese people's mindsets. Liberal values that every individual has the right to make a choice and that these personal ideas should be listened to have been popularized in contemporary Vietnamese time (N. T. Tran, 2016).

Both tradition and liberal values “underlie and give sense to any particular story” (Zilber et al., 2008, p. 1051) that young Vietnamese children and their parents and teachers told in this research. The following section presents the development of the ECE system in Vietnam.

ECE System. In Vietnam, ECE refers to early childhood services for all young children from 3 months to 6 years old. Three main ECE types in Vietnam are:

- (1) nurseries (childcare for infants from the age of 3 months up to 3 years);
- (2) kindergartens (childcare for infants from the age of 3 years up to 6 years), and
- (3) preschools (incorporating the functions of both the nursery and the kindergarten, childcare for infants from the age of 3 months up to the age of 6 years) (Article 21). (National Assembly Vietnam, 1998)

Since Renewal in 1986, the ECE system in Vietnam has significantly changed due to rapid economic success and government investment. The government has stressed educational development, including ECE as “a primary national policy” (National Assembly Vietnam, 2013, p. 18). In 2002 and 2018, prime ministers approved national projects to empower the ECE system (Vu, 2021). Accordingly, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) launched ECE

renewal in 2009. This renewal aimed to establish a new program transiting from the traditional teacher-led approach to a child-centered approach (H. Phan, 2012).

As a result of ECE renewal, The Early Childhood Curriculum was released by the MoET in 2009, then revised in 2017, and is applied in all early childhood settings. The perception of children as active learners is central in the ECE curriculum. Vygotskian sociocultural perspectives that emphasize children's central roles in the teaching-learning process and teachers as supporters are considered the theoretical background of the curriculum (Dinh, 2014). The ECE curriculum aims to build the whole child in five areas: physical, cognitive, language, affective and social skills, and aesthetic development (MoET, 2009, 2017).

Due to the rapid economic development, the number of preschools, especially in the private sector, dramatically increased in the 2010s (P. T. Dang & Boyd, 2014). In private preschools, the curriculum is more flexible, and children's needs receive greater attention in comparison with those in public settings (H.-A. Dang et al., 2019). Apart from the ECE national curriculum, many other educational approaches from Western countries (e.g., Montessori, Steiner, Reggio Emilia) have been applied in nonstate preschools. English is taught by (non)native English-speaking teachers in most private preschools in cities (H. L. Dang, 2015).

Despite the curriculum renewal and the government's effort, a transition from a teacher-led program to a child-centered approach has taken much time in Vietnam's ECE context (Vu, 2021). In most ECE settings, activities are directed by teachers, and young preschoolers do not find it easy to raise their voices (Hoang et al., 2018). Up to now, little substantial research has investigated preschoolers' perspectives in Vietnam to see how they author themselves to make their childhood in the contexts. An in-depth review of children's voices in the Vietnamese ECE context is included in the next chapter. The next section is about the contexts in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Contextual Background in Aotearoa New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand is a country in the southwestern Pacific Ocean; it is one of the Commonwealth nations with Queen Elizabeth II as the sovereign and head of state. This section presents cultural values and the ECE system in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Cultural Values. Biculturalism characterizes the official representation of Aotearoa New Zealand's "two founding cultures: Māori and Pākehā" (Walker, 2004, p. 390). In Māori language, Pākehā refers to New Zealanders of European descent. Māori people are the first

settlers of Aotearoa and are considered Indigenous to this nation. The government operates a bicultural framework, which acknowledges Māori people as “tangata whenua” (the people of the land) and emphasizes their equal rights and status in society.

Demographically, Aotearoa New Zealand is a multicultural country. According to the latest census, the majority of New Zealand’s population is European (70.2%), followed by Indigenous Māori (16.5%), Pasifika (8.1%), and Asians (15.1%) (Stats NZ, 2018b). The latest census showed that New Zealand “is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic” (Dam, 2018, p. 135), and the flow of immigration is the main reason for the superdiversity (Nakhid & Devere, 2015). Immigrants who come to work and reside in New Zealand are from various origins; they bring their home cultures to fabricate cultural diversity in this land (Ward, 2010). Multiculturalism, therefore, is a critical dimension that characterizes modern New Zealand culture. The government makes an effort to establish a sustainable and inclusive nation. The purpose is to encourage multiethnic immigrants to become active citizens who can empower their communities and build “a wider New Zealand identity” (Simon-Kumar, 2014, p. 136).

Vietnamese Immigrants in New Zealand. The first Vietnamese immigrants to New Zealand were boatpeople and refugees in the 1970s, following the Vietnam War in 1975 (T. Tran, 2015). There are 10,086 Vietnamese people living in New Zealand, an increase of 60% since 2013, which accounts for 0.24% of the country’s population (Stats NZ, 2018a). Currently, a growing number of Vietnamese migrants in New Zealand are international students and skilled workers (E. Ho et al., 2017). The next section describes the characteristics of New Zealand’s ECE settings.

ECE System. In New Zealand, ECE settings serve young children from 0–5 years old. Main ECE types are daycare centers, play centers, home-based education and care, and hospital-based services (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1997, 2017). When children enrolled in daycare centers and kindergartens turn 3 years old, they may be eligible for 20 hours ECE funded by the government. *Te Whāriki*, the national ECE curriculum of New Zealand, first issued by the MoE in 1997 and updated in 2017, is applied in all childcare centers and kindergartens. Next, I introduce the ECE curriculum in terms of the theoretical framework, pedagogy, and the perspective of children’s identity formation.

Te Whāriki is foregrounded by sociocultural theory and synthesis of Māori Indigenous thoughts (MoE, 2017). From a sociocultural perspective, the learning process is a journey in

which children interact with newly encountered things and observe others in daily activities to make sense of themselves and the world (Rogoff, 2003). Children's lived experiences, and their interests are considered a part of their agency and identities (Hedges, 2008). This idea aligns with Māori thinking that "every child is a precious taonga, born with inherent potential for growth and development and with enduring connections to their ancestors and heritage" (MoE, 2019, p. 9). Children's preferences and child-led pedagogy are chosen to frame *Te Whāriki* (W. Lee et al., 2020).

Vietnam and New Zealand are two different countries with distinctly different historical, political, social, and educational systems. Confucianism, Buddhism, and a growing awareness of liberality foreground Vietnamese culture, which will be described in the next chapter. In New Zealand, a bicultural framework and multiculturalism characterize the culture. Vietnam's ECE system, like other developing countries, is transforming from a teacher-led approach to a child-led approach (Vu, 2021). The New Zealand ECE context underlines children's preferences as a key point in curriculum making and teachers' practices. These contextual factors in each nation have shaped young Vietnamese children, their stories, and identities in different ways, which are illustrated in the thesis. The usage of key terms in this study is presented next.

Theoretical Overview and Key Terms

The research is foregrounded by Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. Bakhtin's core concepts of dialogue and unfinalizability underpinned my conceptualization of the terms *living stories* and *identities-in-flux*. This section illustrates Bakhtin's key concepts and my understanding of living stories and identities.

Dialogue

Bakhtin's concept of dialogue includes at least three distinct ways of understanding (Morson & Emerson, 1990). First, dialogue refers to the interpersonal nature inside each utterance. Any utterance is always "half someone else's" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293); it lives in an interpersonal relationship between its addressers and addressees. Each utterance is answerable when it is generated to address someone in a given situation (Bakhtin, 1993). Simultaneously, every utterance exists in a chain with precedent and upcoming ones. The answerability and interpersonal exchange make words always live in an unfinalized dialogue, which foregrounds the dialogical relationship within stories in this thesis.

Second, dialogue implies a polyphonic and dialogical type of communication, which is in contrast to monologue. Bakhtin (1981) described monologue as an authoritative and finalized response in which speakers dominate conversations with their personal consciousness rather than being open to listening to different points of view. Meanwhile, dialogue is an open space for mutual discussion among people. A conversation can be monologic or dialogical, depending on the relationship between interlocutors and their roles in talk (Matusov, 2009). The idea of monologicality and dialogicality guides me to investigate the relationship between interlocutors in children's everyday narratives.

Third, Bakhtin's concept of dialogue symbolizes "a view of truth and the world" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 130). As Bakhtin (1984a) stated, life is a dialogical process in which all things, people, phenomena communicate and interconnect with each other. Every individual dialogically communicates with others, nature, cultures, and ideological norms in every moment the person lives. Through dialogue, people make sense of themselves, others, and the world. In other words, identities emerge in dialogue (Freedman & Ball, 2004). This idea directed me to investigate children's identities through their daily conversations with others. In the third sense, dialogue is an epistemological lens to comprehend the world (Morson & Emerson, 1990). Bakhtin (1993) rejected any single truth because it is incomplete and monological. From a Bakhtinian lens, (multi)truth exists in a dialogical relationship among different perspectives (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 35). Being open is critical for me to explore multifaced truth in children's stories. The Bakhtinian concept of dialogue inextricably links with the notion of unfinalizability, which is described next.

Unfinalizability

Bakhtin (1984a) highlighted the idea of unfinalizability, that human life is "an open-ended dialogue" (p. 243). He stated that "the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future" (p. 166). The idea of unfinalizability is manifested in three ways. First, every story never ends; it travels "from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation" (p. 293). In other words, stories always live in an unfinalized chain with other narratives. Drawn on this unfinalized chain, I propose the term *living story*. Second, people and their identities are unfinalized. Bakhtin rejected the view that personal identity is monologic, fixed, and complete. The emergence of identities is an open-ended process as "a man never

coincides with himself. One cannot apply to him the formula of identity $A = A$ " (p. 59). People always live "on threshold" of changes and "between boundaries" (p. 60). Even when people die, imprints of their identities continue to travel in others' words. Finding the last word to tell about any person, thus, is impossible. Researchers can convey only how they understand participants' identities in the here-and-now moment rather than providing fixed conclusions of people (Frank, 2005). The idea of unfinalizability led me to see children's identities in a fluid flow.

Third, unfinalizability implies that all things, people, and phenomena are open-ended because they live in a dialogical and interdependent relationship with others (Haynes, 1998). Drawn to unfinalizability, I understood that doing research was to enter an unfinalized dialogue with children, their parents, teachers, and stories. Writing up the thesis was a chance for me to create an unfinished utterance to respond to stories that I heard and encountered throughout this study.

Multimodality

My understanding of multimodality is underpinned by both the semiotic lens and Bakhtin's concept of utterances. Multimodality is a term rooted in semiotics (Flewitt, 2003; Kress, 2010). From a semiotic perspective, multimodality implies the existence of multiple modes of language (e.g., images, writing, speech, and layout) (Kress, 2010). Bakhtin's understanding of utterance reflected a similarity with the contemporary theory of multimodality. From a Bakhtinian lens, utterances exist in diverse forms of language (e.g., spoken language, silences, gestures, body actions, texts, art). The theorist wrote:

if the word "text" is understood in the broad sense—as any coherent complex of signs—then even the study of art (the study of music, the theory and history of *fine art*) deals with texts (works of art). Thoughts about thoughts, experiences of experiences, words about words, and texts about texts (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 103)

The world, thus, is not comprehended singularly but "is seen, heard, touched, and thought" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 56). Drawn by this idea, neo-Bakhtinian researchers have emphasized that utterances exist in multimodal forms (De Vocht, 2015; White, 2009). These forms of utterances are identified by their answerability—an ability to address someone (White, 2009, p. 63). While semiotic research highlights characteristics of different modes of children's languages, a Bakhtinian view demonstrates the answerability and the unfinalized flow within these modes. Bakhtin (1986) asserted the dialogical transformation within modes of language,

any sign is available to be “translated into other sign systems (other languages)” (p. 106). Transformations of meaning and forms within modes of language indicate transmission in their authors’ thinking and intentions (Bakhtin, 1986). Accordingly, I examined intersections within modes of children’s multimodal language to understand their meaning-making processes.

Living Stories

The term living stories is built on Bakhtinian notions of utterances and unfinalizability. From a Bakhtinian lens, utterances exist in multimodal forms of language. The notion of unfinalizability implies that each story is born in dialogue to call for constant communication with others. Accordingly, I use the term living stories to conceptualize young children’s everyday narratives that are multimodal, dialogical, and unfinalized. These daily stories are multimodal because children use a wide range of languages to compose them. Children’s ordinary stories are live because they exist in a dialogical chain with other narratives (i.e., stories of parents, teachers, and the researcher about children). As stories are living creatures, they lead my data collection and analysis. Thinking with stories (Frank, 1995, 2010) is my approach to live and interpret children’s narratives. An in-depth explanation of the terminology is presented when I review the literature of narratives and children’s stories.

Bakhtin’s Concept of Identities-in-Flux

In Bakhtin’s (1984a) philosophical system, he rejects the view that personal identity is monologic, fixed, and complete. The perception of identity is not fixed and singular as “a man never coincides with himself. One cannot apply to him the formula of identity $A = A$ ” (p. 59). Every identity that a person builds and expresses is unique and situated in time and place, “everyone occupies a unique and never-repeatable place” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 40). A person, therefore, has more than one identity, depending on the contexts in which it emerges. Bakhtin suggests an understanding of identities as diverse selves that arise in people’s daily interactions with others in particular contexts (Cresswell & Baerveldt, 2011; Vitanova, 2010). I, thus, use a plural form of the word “identity” in this thesis to demonstrate the variety and dynamics of children’s multiselves.

Bakhtin (1984a) claimed that every person is unfinalized. An individual always lives in “an open-ended dialogue” (p. 293) with themselves and others. Finding the last words to describe a person makes a research report become a monologue and destroys dialogic potentialities (Frank, 2005). Each person holds dynamic roles in here-and-now moments and

these roles encounter and intersect with each other. Each individual's identities, hence, are always under construction. Underpinned by Bakhtin's notion of an unfinalized person, I used the suffixes in-flux to underline the ongoing process of children's identities.

From Bakhtin's perspective, the self is dialogic. People perceive themselves in relation to their comprehension of otherness, "I cannot do without the other; I cannot become myself without the other; I must find myself in the other, finding the other in me" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 185). In other words, the construction of self and otherness exist in an interconnection, "existence is always co-being" (Iddings et al., 2005, p. 31). Bakhtin described the concept of identities-in-flux as "authoring self" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 40) or "ideological becoming" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). Authoring the self or ideological becoming is a process in which people articulate others' words from external contexts to develop their knowledge of themselves, people, and the world (Bakhtin, 1981, 1993). The articulation of others' words occurs continuously in every interaction and relationship, which leads to people's emergent and interdependent roles. I explore children's articulation of others' words in their living stories so that I can understand their intersecting and emergent identities.

The sense of otherness "grows organically in meaning" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 120) and implies diverse interpretations. First, *others* refers to direct interlocutors who physically stay with speakers in conversations. Second, *others* indicate hidden addressees who are not present, but their words echo in speakers' utterances. Bakhtin (1984a) named this phenomenon as "hidden dialogicality" to emphasize people who are "present invisibly ... but deep traces left by these words have a determining influence on all the present and visible words of the first speaker" (p. 197). Third, Bakhtin used the term *other* to refer to echoes of institutional, social, and cultural contexts that appear in speakers' utterances. He explained,

They (*the other*) are positively affirmed in their value regardless of meaning and are gathered and rendered complete in eternal memory, *this* world, *this* nature, *this* particular history, *this* particular culture, and *this* historically determinate world view constitutes the world, the nature, the history, and the culture of man-as-the-other. (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 134)

Accordingly, I examined three types of others' words in children's living stories. First, I explored the relationship between children and their direct interlocutors (i.e., parents, siblings, teachers, friends) at home and ECE settings. Second, I attended to hidden interlocutors whom

children specifically addressed in their dialogues. Third, as words are tastes of contexts, I considered the echoes of cultural values, adults' beliefs and practices, and institutional guidelines that provided resources for children's articulation of others' words.

Bakhtin underlined an interplay between contexts and people in their self-authoring. Bakhtin and Medvedev (1985) stated that self-authoring occurs in an "ideological environment" (p. 14), an environment manifested by diverse others' voices. Authoring the self "does not come into contact with existence directly, but through the medium of the surrounding ideological world" (p. 14). The context, or in Bakhtinian words, "ideological environment/world" is the meeting places in which people encounter others' voices. Simultaneously, Bakhtin (1984a, 1993) highlighted people's proactivity in their identities formation. Bakhtin (1984a) claimed that "the genuine life of the personality is made available only through a dialogic penetration of that personality, during which it freely and reciprocally reveals itself" (p. 59). In other words, people have the freedom of choice to answer questions of themselves and the world. People live in a "tension-filled encounter" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 287) when they find ways to articulate newly encountered events that contradict their previous perceptions. Every person must decide the ways that they respond to these things: accepting or denying, following or resisting, repeating or modifying. The individual's diverse responses to contexts reflect their authorship of making themselves (Bakhtin, 1993). Drawn on Bakhtin's theory of authoring the self, I explore reciprocity between contexts and children in their identities-in-flux.

The Purpose of Research

First and foremost, I started this study to engage with young Vietnamese children and explore the beauty of their multimodal language and unfinalizability in their living stories. By seeing with young children and thinking with their stories, I listened to young children from their perspectives. Inside each narrative are a child and their vivid worlds (Paley, 1990). My research purpose was not to portray a big picture of Vietnamese childhood. Rather, the four layers of analysis of living stories reveal insightful dimensions of how the four children expressed their interests, authored themselves, built up their own truth(s) and worlds. Young children's narratives offer a way for us, as adults, to enter children's realm and understand the uniqueness in their thoughts.

Guided by Bakhtin's notion of self-authoring, I attended to reciprocity between contexts and young children. The research contexts included Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand. Cultural, social, educational, and personal environments in each nation shaped young Vietnamese children, their stories, and identities in different ways. I did not intend to compare Vietnamese childhood in two countries. The young children in this thesis were neither passive recipients nor representatives of their external worlds. Rather, I attended to how children, as individuals, comprehended the validity of contextual factors that came to their lives, and more importantly, how they responded to their external environments. The contexts in this thesis, thus, did not only emerge from the literature and theoretical framework but also through children's lenses. Contexts only "became actually valid" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 36) in children's particular lives.

Stories never end. My childhood story prompted me to start a study of young Vietnamese children's narratives. Inversely, living stories in this study led to "narrative contributions" (Frank, 1995, p. 156) to theoretical and empirical decision making. Theoretically, living stories prompted me to reconsider the image of Vietnamese children. In previous research, most researchers underlined young Vietnamese children's hindered voices due to the Confucian imprint in society (e.g., Burr, 2006; Phelps et al., 2014). In such discussion, adults and children existed in controversial worlds, and children found it not easy to raise voices in adults' spaces. I wove four cases across two contexts in Bakhtin's view of dialogue and the Vietnamese idea of interbeings. This weaving provides a sophisticated examination of how Vietnamese children, their parents, and teachers interacted. In these rich cases, children and adults were not always separate but rather interconnected and influenced each other. Through this close examination, I promoted an image of children as interbeings with adults. On a practical level, this idea required an approach of being present in teachers' and parents' practices to attend to children and their stories comprehensively. This approach may be essential if we, as adults, hope to establish our companionship with young children and empower their opportunities to transform themselves in their own ways.

Thesis Organization

The thesis consists of nine chapters. In the first chapter, I have set the scene for the research. I recall personal narrative accounts leading me to the study of young Vietnamese children's stories and identities. The Vietnam and New Zealand contexts and key terms

theoretical background and key terms, and the purpose of research are also provided in this chapter.

Chapter 2 outlines the literature with a critical review of context matters, the image of Vietnamese children, research on stories, research on children's narratives and identities, and children's interests. Empirical studies of Vietnamese adults' beliefs and practices and ECE contexts in both countries are examined. The ways that the image of Vietnamese children emerged in previous studies are reviewed, in parallel with an overview of the global notion of children and childhood. Through examining main trends in research on stories, I justify how the term living stories was created in this study. The chapter also clarifies contemporary approaches in research with young children's narratives, special interests, and identities.

Chapter 3 describes my methodological background to become a friend of young children throughout the research. Accordingly, the dialogical narrative multicase-studies approach is presented. Data-collection is considered the process of establishing ties with children, their parents, and teachers; and data analysis is the process of deconstructing these ties. The main methods (close observation, informal interviews) are explained in this chapter. The three steps of data analysis to interpret children's living stories are reviewed. This chapter ends with an explanation of the researcher's role and the validity of my research.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 represent the four case stories in narrative form. In each chapter, I illustrate the process of how I entered the child's worlds and how the child utilized multimodal language to compose their chains of stories. I also highlight how these stories reflected the child's identities-in-flux and influential factors in their self-authoring.

Chapter 8 weaves between findings from the four cases and the relevant literature to address the research questions. The multimodality and unfinalizability in children's living stories are discussed to clarify the contribution of this study to the research field of narratives and identities. The influential factors in children's telling and authoring themselves are examined. This chapter ends with a need to restructure the image of Vietnamese children and promotes an approach of being present with young children. Chapter 9 reflects in(conclusive) thoughts of the contributions of this study, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Mapping the Research Land

This chapter provides an in-depth review of the research landscape in terms of children's identities, narratives, interests, and related contexts. I organized the review of literature based on five themes: context matter, the image of the Vietnamese children, research on stories, research on narratives and identities, and children's special interests.

Children's stories and identities are embedded within their contexts. This chapter starts with a review of the contexts of Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand. Vietnamese parents' values, beliefs, and practices, as well as ECE contexts, are discussed in the first section. Adults' beliefs and practices as well as the ECE curriculum in each country, imply different images of the child. These images affect how the very young express themselves and are considered by others in daily interactions. The second section is about the image of Vietnamese children. In this thesis, I create the term living stories to conceptualize children's everyday narratives. In the third section, I briefly introduce trends in the narrative field and clarify how I come to an understanding of living stories in research with young children. Narratives are the lenses for researchers to understand children's identities. The fourth section demonstrates the main approaches in the narratives identities field and specifically discusses prior studies in research with young children's narratives and identities. Children's interests are a part of their identities. The last section provides information on research on children's interests from three lenses: psychological, sociocultural, and narrative-based approaches. The literature review ends with a statement of the problem that summarizes the research issues.

Contexts Matter

This study involves Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand contexts. First, I describe Vietnamese parenting in terms of values, beliefs, and practices in every country. I review Vietnamese parents' perceptions of the child and their parenting methods in each context. In the New Zealand context, I examine the literature of Vietnamese immigrants in New Zealand and their values, beliefs, and practices. Second, I introduce ECE contexts in each country, which includes an overview of ECE curriculum, teachers' perceptions of the child, and their practices.

Vietnamese Contexts

Traditionally, Vietnamese parents are influenced by both Confucianism and Buddhism. The economic renewal *Đổi Mới* in 1986 had comprehensive impacts on all aspects of Vietnam

society. Since *Đổi Mới*, Vietnam has integrated into the global economy, and Vietnamese people have increased access to Western values of liberty. Globalization has led to changes in parents' beliefs and practices and the educational system in Vietnam's contemporary times.

Vietnamese Parents: Values, Beliefs, and Practices. Both traditional and Western values influence Vietnamese parents' values, beliefs, and practices. In this section, I review empirical studies that have explored the image of children in Vietnamese parents' views and their parenting practices. Studies (Burr, 2014; Mestechkina et al., 2014; Rydstrøm, 2001) have highlighted the primary influence of Confucianism on parents' beliefs and practices. Confucian values affect parents' perceptions of children as dependent beings and their emphasis on the role of morality and academic education in children's development (Mestechkina et al., 2014).

Ethnographers have explored the Confucian impact of Vietnamese adults' perceptions of children. Rydstrøm (2001) conducted an ethnographic study in a province of North Vietnam to explore the ways in which adults perceived children and contextualized these views within Confucian values in Vietnam. The author metaphorized parents' understanding of children "like a white piece of paper" (p. 395), due to the influence of hierarchy in families. In other words, children are viewed as innocent and needy beings who require parents' care and protection. Burr (2006) interviewed young adolescents aged 10–16 years and observed them in daily life, supplemented with interviews with caregivers and nongovernmental organization (NGO) officers from 1996–1998. She concluded that the Confucian value of morality led adults to speak for children rather than listening to children. In such descriptions, researchers highlighted a gap between adults and children in Vietnamese contexts.

Researchers have highlighted the impacts of Confucian concepts on Vietnamese parents' practices. As children are imprinted as a white paper, good morality (*đạo đức tốt*) is vital to help them become "socialized appropriately" (Rydstrøm, 2001, p. 395) and future exemplary citizens. Through interviews and questionnaires with Vietnamese parents, researchers (Nguyen, 2017; Różycka-Tran et al., 2017) submitted that teaching children moral lessons about filial piety, respect for the elderly, and politeness are essential in Vietnamese parenting. Due to the impact of Confucian ideas, Vietnamese parents value the role of education, especially academic goals (Hoang V.-N. et al., 2019; Kim, 2002). Parents view that educational investment in the early years could help children reach academic achievement, boost their cognition, and gain high social status in the future (Hoang V.-N. et al., 2019).

Researchers have explored the role of the Buddhist idea of interdependence in Vietnamese families (T. N. Ho, 2009; T. M. Nguyen et al., 2020; V. B. Pham, 2013). T. N. Ho (2009) reflected on his early childhood memories in which Buddhist values of compassion, love, and gratitude influenced his sense of belonging with family, community, and nature. V. B. Pham (2013) investigated the relationship between parents and their adolescent children in Northern Vietnam. T. M. Nguyen et al. (2020) interviewed Vietnamese mothers to understand their parenting methods. Researchers (T. M. Nguyen et al., 2020; V. B. Pham, 2013) shared the conclusion that parents recognized the interconnection between themselves and their children. In these two studies (T. M. Nguyen et al., 2020; V. B. Pham, 2013), parents valued love and compassion, a core Buddhist value, in their treatment of children. These three reviewed studies included adults and adolescents rather than young children.

Recently, researchers have revealed a transition in Vietnamese parents' beliefs from traditional values which focus on parents' authoritarianism to Western values that emphasize a new conception of children as competent beings (Tran et al., 2021). Some authors (Ha, 2016; Huang et al., 2018) described that contemporary Vietnamese parents, especially those living in urban areas, have gradually learned to see their children as competent agents rather than passive recipients of adult knowledge. The literature reveals a combination of traditional values and liberty in Vietnamese parents' beliefs and practices.

In most reviewed studies, researchers attended to parents' voices through interviews rather than closely observing adults in their daily interactions with children. Few researchers (Burr, 2006; Rydström, 2001) have engaged with children to understand their perspectives of adults' attitudes and treatment. These two scholars, however, attended to children over 8 years old rather than young children in their early years. Future research with young children in their natural settings should be considered.

Vietnamese ECE Context. The perception of children as active learners is central to Vietnam's ECE curriculum. Vygotskian sociocultural perspectives are seen as the theoretical background of the curriculum (Dinh, 2014). So far, a few studies (Dinh, 2014; Hoang et al., 2018; Leroy et al., 2021) have been done in ECE contexts to identify teachers' beliefs and practices. Among these studies, researchers showed a difference between the national curriculum and teachers' values, beliefs, and practices regarding the child-centered approach.

Dinh (2014) conducted questionnaires, class observations, and interviews of six ECE teachers. Findings revealed that although teachers acknowledged the central role of children advised by the ECE curriculum, they were confused about applying it in their teaching assessment. The main reason is that Vietnamese ECE teachers were in tension between Confucian values and modern teaching methods (Dinh, 2014). Dinh (2014) claimed that teachers were influenced by a traditional view of children as passive learners and teachers as authoritarian leaders. Hoang et al. (2018) interviewed preschool teachers and recorded their daily activities with children in five kindergartens in several cities of Vietnam to assess the quality of class interaction. Findings showed that teachers recognized the importance of child-centeredness, but they faced difficulties in empowering children's roles in their practices.

In these studies, the ECE contexts and teachers' role have been assessed from adults' lenses rather than children's experiences. The process in which children comprehend their preschool and the relationship with teachers has not been explored. The following section is about the New Zealand context.

Aotearoa New Zealand Contexts

One target group of participants in this thesis is Vietnamese immigrant children and their families in Aotearoa New Zealand. I, thus, start this section by reviewing research with Vietnamese immigrants in this country. Second, I specifically discuss Vietnamese immigrant parents' beliefs and practices. Last, I review children's positioning in the ECE curriculum and teachers' beliefs and practices of New Zealand.

Vietnamese Immigrants in Aotearoa New Zealand. The voices of Vietnamese immigrants in New Zealand are marginalized. Research reveals no substantial research on Vietnamese immigrants living in New Zealand. Identified studies (Moore, 2003; T. Tran, 2015) involved middle-aged Vietnamese boatpeople who arrived in New Zealand during and right after the Vietnam War in 1975. Thus far, no empirical studies have explored the voices of Vietnamese immigrants who recently entered New Zealand as international students and skilled workers. International students and skilled workers represent a new wave of immigration in New Zealand, as well in other developed countries (Dumitrache, 2018). For these new immigrants, a sound education system, democracy, and healthy living environment are reasons for their destination of choice (H. T. Ho, 2020). Vietnamese students and skilled workers have higher social status and do not have aggressive hostility towards the homeland government, in

comparison with those from groups of refugees and boatpeople (Baldassar et al., 2017). Their voices, however, have been invisible in the New Zealand context (H. T. Ho, 2020).

Vietnamese Immigrant Parents' Values, Beliefs, and Practices. So far, no empirical studies have been done in New Zealand to explore Vietnamese immigrant parents' beliefs and practices. To hold a holistic lens of Vietnamese parenting in diaspora communities, I searched for studies in other countries (i.e., US, Canada, Australia, Germany, Czech Republic, Poland). Research reflects Vietnamese overseas parents' beliefs and practices echo their traditions and new values in their host countries.

On the one hand, liberal and democratic values in host countries have led Vietnamese immigrant parents to reconsider their children's identities (Vedder et al., 2006). Through her autobiography of mothering experiences in Canada, H. T. Tran (2019) reflected changes in understanding her own children's identities between the time she had been in Vietnam and when her family settled in a new country. In Vietnam, she had attached her daughters' identities to their academic achievements. When her family moved to Canada, the author reconsidered her ways of seeing her children's identities. She found they had become independent and active learners who were eager to explore the world. Likewise, other researchers (Centrie, 2004; P. Nguyen, 2017) claimed that liberal values in the U.S. context led Vietnamese parents to perceive their children as independent beings and respect their rights in making decisions.

On the other hand, Vietnamese immigrants retain traditional beliefs from Vietnamese culture in their teachings with children. Several researchers reflected Confucian imprints on parenting styles within Vietnamese diaspora people (Röttger-Rössler & Lam, 2018; Souralová, 2021). Through interviews with Vietnamese parents and their adolescent children, these two studies revealed that the Confucian concept *hiếu* (filial piety) was frequently referred to in parenting practices. Parents tend to hold their authority and expect children to respect and obey them.

Other researchers (e.g., Brzozowska & Postuła, 2019; T. Phan, 2005; T. Tran & Bifuh-Ambe, 2021) witnessed the Buddhist influence on parent–children interactions in Vietnamese immigrant families. T. Phan (2005) and T. Tran and Bifuh-Ambe (2021) conducted interviews with the parents and their adolescent children. From the parents' side, findings showed that they considered Buddhist notions of compassion and love as their native values and practiced them daily with children. In T. Phan's (2005) study, the Vietnamese adolescents valued the Buddhist

idea of interbeings that they learned from their families. Their notion of interbeings was seen as an origin of their interdependent selves in relationships with others, the local community, and the homeland. Likewise, T. Tran and Bifuh-Ambe (2021) claimed that the Buddhist value of interconnection allowed the Vietnamese young people to develop a sense of belonging with their ethnicity and mother tongue. Further research in diverse contexts to understand Vietnamese immigrant parents' beliefs and practices is recommended.

New Zealand's ECE Contexts. In this section, I discuss the children's role and their narratives in New Zealand's ECE curriculum *Te Whāriki* and then review ECE teachers' perceptions of children and their practices, especially with groups of immigrant children. An image of the child as a competent and confident learner is vital in the curriculum. *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1997, 2017) aims to support children as "competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (MoE, 2017, p. 6). The image of children as active citizens with diverse needs and capacities is a central value of the curriculum.

Young children's multimodal narratives are underlined in *Te Whāriki*. Accordingly, children can learn from diverse resources, times, and spaces (MoE, 2017, p. 17). They use a wide range of languages (i.e., talking, drawing, writing, singing, dancing, gestures, gazes) to express their feelings and thoughts. Teachers, thus, need to learn flexible and sensitive ways to listen so that they can understand children's development and needs (Guo, 2010). Researchers (Reese et al., 2019) investigated the role of teacher–children interactions in teachers' assessment. The findings revealed that understanding children's multimodal language was vital for educators to diversify children's learning opportunities with various resources.

The construction of children's identities in multicultural contexts is a crucial concept in *Te Whāriki*. Inspired by Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective, *Te Whāriki* acknowledges multiculturalism in New Zealand's contexts. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, the curriculum demonstrates the diverse contexts of families, ECE settings, and communities as funds of knowledge in children's identity formation (Hedges et al., 2011). The curriculum highlights that young learners' identities are strengthened when early childhood settings embrace their home culture and languages (MoE, 2017). Families and ECE teachers need to collaborate to reinforce young children's identity development and sustain their love of their cultural heritage (MoE, 2017).

Researchers acknowledged challenges facing ECE teachers in supporting children from multicultural backgrounds in New Zealand. Hedges (2011) contended that when teachers maintained their assumptions of children, their practices became ineffective with children. One example of this phenomenon was that teachers organized a “tourist curriculum” (Cooper et al., 2013, p. 10) at centers. In this tourist curriculum, teachers simplified a multicultural and inclusive environment in centers by superficially celebrating cultural rituals in children’s ethnic groups. Teachers, meanwhile, disregarded close observation and did not incorporate authentic elements of children’s families and cultures in their daily activities. Likewise, researchers (Guo & Mackenzie, 2015; Singh & Zhang, 2018) submitted that when teachers disregarded children’s multimodal actions and lacked knowledge of their home cultures, they could not create a hybrid space of learning in the center. To sum up, ECE teachers’ norms and their limited understanding of children’s cultural backgrounds are obstacles in their practices with young children.

Summary

This section has examined multiple contexts in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand. The Confucian, Buddhist, and Western values influence practices and the perceptions of children of both Vietnamese domestic and overseas parents. Reviewing the literature of ECE contexts in Vietnam and New Zealand shows that national curricula in two nations are underpinned by sociocultural perspectives, highlighting children’s central roles in the learning process. Prior research conveys that Confucianism is a cultural factor that leads to teachers’ difficulties in listening to children’s voices and practicing child-centeredness in their activities. In New Zealand, children’s multimodal language and their multicultural backgrounds are underlined in the ECE curriculum. Communication is crucial for teachers to build relationships with parents and young children. Scholars recognize challenges facing New Zealand teachers in practices: their assumptions and limited understanding of children’s backgrounds. This representation of Vietnam and New Zealand contexts guides my explanation of the influence of cultural values, adults’ beliefs and practices on Vietnamese children’s identities-in-flux in subsequent chapters. The following section provides an overview of the image of Vietnamese children.

The Image of Vietnamese Children

The image of children is a phrase that refers to adults’ perceptions of children’s capabilities, development, and agency (Scheinfeld et al., 2008). Any concept of children

involves dynamic progress of historical, social, and cultural manifestations in each society and educational system (Martalock, 2012). Every culture, nation, historical era, and person holds its unique view of the child and childhood.

First, I review global ideas of children and childhood. Second, I focus on the history of Vietnamese thinking about children. Vietnamese parents' and teachers' perceptions of children have been described in the prior section. I, however, do not consider this section is a repetition of what has been already reviewed. Rather, I weave data sources of adults' concepts of the child, which are previously mentioned, with contemporary global research trends. This weaving allows me to provide a critical lens of philosophical, cultural, and social notions that foreground the image of the Vietnamese children over history. I also consider how researchers have interpreted the concept of Vietnamese children in their studies and whether these research practices sufficiently reflect the progress of this terminology.

A Global View of Children

Over the past 4 decades, educators and researchers have diversely discussed different perceptions of children and childhood. Historically, developmental psychologists have seen children as “persons-in-waiting” (Qvortrup, 2004) who lack the consciousness and skills of adults. In this view, children are “objects of concern” (Hallett & Prout, 2003, p. 1) and need adults' support, protection, and care. In other words, children are adult-becoming; their identities are made by adults and societies rather than themselves. Theories of childhood have been shifted from children as adult-becoming to children as being, which will be presented next.

Recently, sociological research (e.g., Malone et al., 2020; Prout, 2011; Qvortrup, 2004) has promoted that children should be seen as capable and competent composers of their identities. A wide range of published work has emphasized children's role as active agents who own the freedom to be themselves. For example, Kuby and Vaughn (2015) explored children's agency in literacy activities in primary class. Findings conveyed that young learners were capable of using multimodal materials to negotiate ideas with teachers and friends to develop the knowledge of themselves. Spray (2018) considered how Māori and Pasifika children with illness in a New Zealand's primary school understood their health situations and reacted against inequity in society. No matter what contexts and settings that studies were conducted, the similarity is that educational researchers highlighted children's voices and their rights to be themselves and do what they want.

The image of children links with adults' perceptions of themselves in relationship with children. In the developmental-psychological view, childhood and adulthood are two phases of human beings; children are influenced by adults. A sociological idea of children as social actors, meanwhile, calls for adults to see children in a network with them (Prout, 2005; Spyrou, 2019). Prout (2005) contended that children and adults are both "incomplete," fluid human beings, co-existing with each other and co-authoring to make the world (p. 81). Based on the idea of networking, several investigators have theorized children and adults as co-constructors of children's identities-in-flux in their research practices. Malone (2011) analyzed how Cook Island children proved their agency in environmental protection activities via interviews with young participants aged 8–17 years old and their caregivers. Huf and Kluge (2021) described how the process of researchers' co-being with young children in a UK ECE center allowed them to see the institutional, cultural, and natural spaces from the child's eyes. These two studies demonstrated a potentiality in which adults and children exist in hybrid areas of power-sharing and interdependence (Malone, 2011). This section has provided a brief overview of theorizing children in international research. Nationally, the concept of children in Vietnam's context both intersect and differ with these global ideas, which is described next.

A Vietnamese View of Children

In this section, the image of Vietnamese children is contextualized in Vietnam's culture and history. The purpose is to see how cultural, historical, and social factors have influenced the ways that Vietnamese people comprehend children and childhood.

Vietnam's traditional culture is underpinned by two philosophical systems—Confucianism and Buddhism (N. T. Tran, 1999). In fact, Confucianism and Buddhism do not conflict but intersect with each other to influence how the image of children has been perceived in Vietnamese society. From a Confucianist perspective, children are inferior, living in a stratified relationship with parents and teachers (T. D. Nguyen, 2011). The Vietnamese Buddhist lens, meanwhile, promotes children in interconnection with adults (H. T. Luong, 2009). Despite the deep impact of Confucianism on family hierarchy, Vietnamese adults still value Buddhist ideas in their thinking of interdependent relationship with their children (H. T. Luong, 2009). Parents acknowledge their responsibilities to do good things to express their *tinh thuong* (love, comprehension, and empathy) with the young generation (Thich, 2010).

Research practices have shown the impacts of Confucianism (e.g., Burr, 2006; D. H. Tran, 1991) or Buddhism (e.g., T. N. Ho, 2009; T. Tran & Bifuh-Ambe, 2021). No studies have considered the influence of both philosophical ideas on the image of Vietnamese children. Prior studies (Dinh, 2014; Leroy et al., 2021; H. Phan, 2012) have interpreted the Confucian imprint as the primary reason why children's voices are traditionally hindered in Vietnam ECE contexts. Within such a discussion, Confucianism has become the only representative of Vietnamese culture. Buddhism and its traditions of adults' love and compassion for children have been disregarded in Vietnam's early-years research. Consequently, Vietnamese local knowledge becomes less capable of considering children as agentic persons (Volkman, 2005).

The image of children changed after Renewal *Đổi Mới* in 1986. Vietnam-based researchers have adopted a notion of children as competent and proactive persons from Western educational systems into their practices (Volkman, 2005). As I mentioned in the chapter introduction, this idea of children as active agents has been reflected in legal documents (e.g., Child Laws, Educational National Plan 2019) and the ECE curriculum. Article 5 of Child Laws requires Vietnamese adults to “respect, listen, consider and respond to children's proposals and expectations” (National Assembly, 2016, p. 2). The child-centered approach is a core concept of the National ECE curriculum (Vu, 2021).

Several researchers have conducted empirical studies in Vietnam's ECE contexts to enhance children's role and facilitate parents and teachers to listen to young children (Graham et al., 2014; Lenaerts et al., 2017). Australian researchers invited children into interviews and a participatory photography activity to reflect their understanding of themselves and their relationship with adults (Graham et al., 2014). These authors suggested a need to employ Western theories of children's rights and agency to provide new knowledge for teachers to better understand children from their standpoints. Lenaerts et al. (2017) reflected the negativity of teacher-led activities in Vietnam's preschools, which was attributed to Confucian impact. These authors, thus, adopted a new framework of children's play from Western sociocultural theories to launch educational projects to provide toolkits for Vietnamese teachers to support children's well-being and child-centeredness (Leroy et al., 2021).

While I appreciate these authors' efforts, I also realize a limitation in the studies (Graham et al., 2014; Lenaerts et al., 2017). The key problem is that most researchers have not yet fully entangled with Vietnamese values, including Confucianism and Buddhism, to develop

a holistic view of children. I want to recall Lobok's (2012) claim that "any culture manifests itself as an organic whole and fundamentally cannot be measured using the standards of another culture" (p. 113). As an organ of its cultural body, the knowledge of Vietnamese children is also "organic" and should not be colonized by only Western standards. Tesar (2020) asserted that when South East Asian researchers colonized their thoughts with Western theories, their "Indigenous thinking and local knowledge have been marginalized and marked as insignificant" (Tesar, 2020, p. 2). Further research that considers interweaving Vietnamese native thoughts and global ideas of childhood is needed to develop a holistic view of the child in the Vietnam context. The following section provides an overview of research on stories.

Research on Stories

Story is one of the oldest terms in the history of humankind (Stein, 1982) and is used in multidisciplinary areas such as literature, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and education. Stories vary in the ways that they are composed, shared, and analyzed. This thesis is about children's narratives which are both coincident and noncoincident with adults' stories. I start with a critical overview of current theoretical, methodological, and empirical research on stories focusing on adults' narratives. I then review primary trends and empirical studies in the field of young children's stories.

Overview of Research on Stories

The history of research on narratives and stories began with Aristotle's analysis of the Greek *mythos* (story). Narrative research has shifted with various approaches to exploring stories. In the 1960s, social scholars began attending to stories, which referenced the narrative turn in human sciences (Polkinghorne, 1988). The 1980s witnessed the field of stories flourishing with landmark studies that challenged positivism and realism. Stories have been explored by a wide range of epistemological, theoretical, and methodological approaches with cross-disciplinary hybrids. Based on reviewing underpinning theories, I categorized research on stories into four main trends: structuralist, sociolinguistic, semiotic, and dialogical perspectives. For each trend, I identified the conceptualization of stories, analytical approach, and the relationship among stories, tellers, and contexts. In general, from a structuralist perspective, stories are viewed as text units. Sociolinguistic researchers consider stories in conversations while semioticians gather narratives in multimodal signs. From a dialogical perspective, stories

exist as living creatures, multimodal and dialogical forms. In the following sections, I represent the four perspectives in detail.

From a Structuralist Perspective. Structuralist scholars are influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of two-tiered reality about language. The first one is *la langue*, which refers to an invisible language system and its principles, while the second is *la parole*, which means actual utterances that happen in real life. This framework was later employed by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who utilized Saussure's two-tiered model to explain the reality of myths. Lévi-Strauss (1955) determined that all language myths have universal underground patterns. Examining a universal linguistic structure is the main point of structuralism.

Structuralist narrative scholars followed Saussure and Lévi-Strauss's analysis to examine underlying structures in specific narrative texts (Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1982; De Beaugrande & Colby, 1979; Todorov & Weinstein, 1969). In these studies, stories were selected from literary work and participants' monologic narratives in interviews in which investigators were interviewers and silent audiences rather than collaborators (Kim, 2016). Stories were treated as text units with a coherent sequence of beginning, middle, and end. A key point in structural analysis is an emphasis on universal structures behind actual stories rather than the content and contexts of specific stories (Mandler, 1978). Storytellers' subjectivities and the relationship among storytellers, audiences, and storytelling activity were not considered (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011). Structuralists shed light on plots, logic, and patterns of stories. Researchers, however, analyzed placement and relationship within clauses and units of discourse. The roles of institutional, political, social, and cultural contexts that contextualize stories and storytelling activity were not addressed (Riessman, 2008).

From a Sociolinguistic Perspective. From a sociolinguistic perspective, narrative researchers highlighted the relationship between stories and people's social behaviors. Sociolinguistic scholars emphasized conversational stories in ordinary talk. Conversational stories were captured via audio or video recording in observations. In the light of sociolinguistics, research on conversational stories has shifted from the Labovian approach to Sacks' conversation analysis and, then, performative analysis.

William Labov, Goffman, and Harvey Sacks were regarded as pioneer scholars who established a foundation of sociolinguistics in narrative research. From Labov and Waletzky's (1967) perspectives, a story could be defined as a temporal structure constructed by any two

independent utterances. Like Labov and Waletzky (1967), Goffman (1959) and Sacks (1970) stressed that a story in ordinary talk emerged in more than one utterance. Sacks (1970) demonstrated that a storytelling event occurred in conversations when a narrator took more than one speech turn to have a long and uninterrupted period to tell a story. While Labov (1972) emphasized structural patterns of conversational stories, Sacks (1970) attended to the organization of turn-taking in a storytelling activity. Scholars used the Labovian model to investigate content, meanings, and structural organization in oral storytelling (Goodwin, 1986; Polanyi, 1981; Tannen, 1981). Others used Sacks's conversation analysis to investigate multiturned narratives in storytellers' daily activities (Blum-Kulka, 1993; Jefferson, 1978). One similarity across these studies was that stories were composed by one speaker in their turn-taking rather than all parties collaborating in talk. Goffman concurred with Sacks' exploration of the collaborative process among narrators in story-making, which is reviewed next.

Goffman (1959) was the first scholar to propose that conversational stories were collaboratively initiated and developed by more than one teller. Goffman (1959) highlighted the essential roles of audiences and interactions among interlocutors during storytelling. From Goffman's perspectives, stories shape and are shaped by all participants in ordinary talk. Conversational stories, therefore, are not bounded by structural sequences with beginning, middle, and an outcome, as structuralists suggest. A story begins when a speaker initiates a topic with other interlocutors, develops with co-authorship of participants in talk, and ends when all parties stop talking or move to a new topic (Ochs & Taylor, 1995). Based on Goffman's participation framework, scholars used performance analysis to examine stories in interactions (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2006; Riessman, 2008). Performative scholars underscored narrators' nonverbal aspects of communication (e.g., gazes, gestures, body movement) and the relationship between tellers and audiences.

Drawing inspiration from Goffman's participation framework, Ochs and Capps (2001) coined the term "living narratives" (p. 56) that refers to stories of personal experiences that are told in daily conversations. According to Ochs and Capps, the kind of narrative is less coherent and contains "hesitations, unfinished thoughts, interruptions, and often contradictions" (p. 56). These authors used the adjective "living" in front of "narratives" to emphasize that these conversational stories reflect the ongoing progress of people living the stories they tell rather than recounting them. Drawing on Ochs and Capps's (2001) notion of living narratives, some

researchers (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2006) proposed a new narrative type, *small stories*. According to Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008), a small story is an umbrella term that includes a range of narrative activities, such as telling about breaking news; and past, anticipated, imagined, and shared events (p. 379). Scholars have adopted the conceptualization of small stories to explore ordinary conversations in different settings such as classroom talk, adolescents' round-table conversations, and family conversations at mealtimes (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Juzwik & Ives, 2010; Qin, 2019).

Sociolinguistic researchers examined multilayered contexts that grounded stories: immediate context, social fields, and cultural metanarratives (Spector-Mersel, 2010; Zilber et al., 2008). Immediate contexts refer to local and physical places in which narrating activity occurs. Social fields imply institutional, political, historical environments in which stories evolve. Cultural metanarratives are ideological ideas, norms, and traditions that shape and construct meanings of stories in each society. Empirical studies that adopted Labov's (1978) and Sacks's (1970) conversational analysis frameworks focused on the two first layers of contexts (i.e., immediate contexts and social fields). Small-story researchers (e.g., Juzwik & Ives, 2010; Qin, 2016) unpacked all spheres of contexts and especially emphasized the role of metanarratives or cultural norms in underlining the birth and interpretation of stories.

From a Semiotic Perspective. Semiotics is the science of the sign system, involving concepts and theories to analyze symbolic meanings. Ferdinand de Saussure founded semiology in the social sciences. The work and writings of Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes, and Michael Halliday underpin contemporary social semiotics. Although semiotics is based on linguistic signals, language is one among many sign systems. A mode or sign is conceptualized as anything that can communicate meaning to interpreters. Kress (1997) utilized the term *mode* to demonstrate that “people make signs from lots of different ‘stuff,’ from quite different materials . . . and [they] use the physiology of [their] bodies to turn that physical, material stuff into signs: as speech, as music” (p. 7). Semioticians attend to diverse modes (forms) of signs, varying from words, sounds, symbols to movements, and so on. (Dicks, 2014).

From a semiotic lens, narratives can exist in multimodal forms: (non)verbal language, music, dance, and visual art (Kress, 2010). The following researchers facilitated participants to generate stories in multimodal signs (e.g., talking, autoethnography writing, and pictures). McFerran and Baird (2013) invited two young women to reflect on their thoughts about music

through in-depth interviews. In these interviews, the participants were encouraged to share their feelings via speaking, drawing, singing, and collecting photos. These authors found the solidarity between musical narratives and womanhood that might be unspoken in participants' verbal speech. Klingemann and Klingemann (2016) invited some ex-alcoholic males to describe their life stories through free drawing. These two authors highlighted that visual narratives provided a more coherent and emotional description of participants' life courses than verbal speech. Despite different sources of data, these three studies focused on identifying modes or signs in relationship with their interpretants or contexts. A sign is only comprehensively understood when embedded in a particular sociocultural context and in a relationship with its makers and interpreters.

Kress (2010) claimed multimodal forms are a meaning-making process. Most semioticians, however, focused on analyzing signs themselves rather than the process in which people composed and utilized these signs to make meanings. Woolhouse's (2017) study is the rare one that investigated the storying journey in which teacher participants drew their lives to convey their identities. The researcher examined participants' artmaking process and nonverbal cues (e.g., tone switch, pauses, and facial expressions) during their drawing activity. These multimodal modes allowed researchers to know how artifacts and physical body, past and present selves, professional and personal lives emerged and intersected in participants' narratives. This study also promoted the need to have further similar ones in the future. Consistent with the semiotics lens, a dialogical approach also demonstrates the multimodal forms of narratives, which are reviewed next.

From a Dialogical Perspective. A dialogical perspective in research on stories is foregrounded by Bakhtin's theory of dialogism (Frank, 2010; Vitanova, 2013). Stories emerge and exist in dialogues (Frank, 2012). In this sense, a dialogical approach echoes sociolinguistic and semiotic approaches in which people tell stories in ordinary talk. Bakhtin (1981, 1984a) conceptualized three critical characteristics of utterances, which are multimodality, polyphony, and unfinalizability. Drawing on this idea, dialogical researchers featured multiple forms and polyphonic voices in stories as well as a narrative chain within stories.

In structuralist and sociolinguistic perspectives, stories emerge in spoken and written discourses. A dialogical view is similar to a semiotic lens in valuing multimodal forms of narratives. From a Bakhtinian standpoint, speakers do not use only verbal language. They,

furthermore, use multimodal forms “with the eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, whole body and deeds” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 293) to construct their utterances. A story, therefore, can exist in a wide range of genres: silence, an action, a sign, a word, a sentence, a song, a dance, or a picture. From a Bakhtinian lens, a mode of language can become a narrative account when it is capable of addressing a specific meaning and responding to someone (Frank, 2000).

Dialogic analysts adopted this view to consider stories in multimodal forms. Several researchers (Friesen, 2012; Kirkland, 2013; Matusov, 2009) have adopted Bakhtin’s notion of unfinalizability to investigate pauses and silences in young people’s narratives. In these studies, silences are hybrid spaces in which participants utilize their nonverbal language to communicate to address diverse audiences. Some other researchers (Barone, 2001; Haynes, 2002) have considered artwork as meaningful utterances. These two scholars analyzed artmaking processes and artifacts to see how artists composed “a secondary nature” (Bakhtin, 1990) to send to their future recipients. A similarity across dialogical studies is that researchers recognized the ongoing process in which words and ideas travel in-between modes, persons, and settings.

Drawing on the Bakhtinian notion of unfinalizability, Frank (2005, 2010) built a dialogical narrative approach (DNA). The aim of DNA is not to explore the structural organization and contents of stories but rather to specify voices that tellers speak in and through and the influence of multilayered contexts on these voices (Frank, 2010). To examine polyphonic voices of interlocutors, researchers did not singularly analyze each story. Instead, a story was examined as a narrative chain. Consistent with Frank (2010), Mangan (2017) analyzed participants’ voices in a chain of their narrative accounts. The following questions guided Mangan’s analysis process: Who are visible/invisible interlocutors in the story, and what is the relationship among them? Who is present in the story, and how are they mentioned in storytelling? How are the voices of inner-others and ideological voices echoed in the story? How are the speaker’s internalized voices constructed? How does the researcher participate in and influence the storytelling event? Dialogical researchers differ from sociolinguistic scholars in conceptualizing the idea of otherness in a person’s narratives. Sociolinguistic researchers (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Goffman, 1959) analyze the relationship between tellers and direct interlocutors in conversational stories. Dialogical inquirers (Brown, 1998; Frank, 2005; Mangan, 2017) investigate unfinalized dialogues between narrators and both visible and hidden audiences. Hidden interlocutors imply respondees who are invisible in conversations but

available in a narrators' telling. A Bakhtinian dialogical perspective has the potential to trace the unfinalized flow of narratives in which storytellers continuously articulate others' words across settings and utterances, which sociolinguistic scholars do not comprehensively examine.

Employing a Bakhtinian dialogical approach, narrative researchers identify participants' voices in their stories (Brown, 1998; Frank, 1995; Holland et al., 1998; Matusov, 2018; Vitanova, 2016). A similarity across these studies is that researchers underscored the reciprocal relationship among storytellers' voices, their lived experiences, and contexts. Narrators' voices reflect their past lived experiences. Voices that people speak in and through simultaneously, are responses to their multilayered contexts. Dialogical researchers examined three spheres of contexts (i.e., immediate context, social field, and cultural metanarratives) but paid more attention to the latter, which links with ideological voices in Bakhtin's (1981) theory. A summary of Brown's (1998) and Vitanova's (2016) studies revealed the process of listening to people's polyphonic voices in DNA.

Brown (1998) uncovered voices of white preadolescent girls in poor and working-class families in rural Maine of the U.S. through collecting their written texts and observing group conversations with peers and teachers. In the first step of data analysis, the researcher listened to the data and read the transcripts. She examined the impact of her identity as a white middle-class academic on the girls' views of her, their relationship, and her interpretation of their voices. The author examined girls' conversations, noticed their gestures and body movements in parallel with their written texts to understand the words of others in the girls' utterances. The impact of institutional and cultural contexts enters Brown's inquiry when she draws echoes of ideological voices of working-class and gender that appeared in the girls' contemporary voices. Vitanova (2016) examined polyphonic voices of three teachers-in-training in TESOL through their digital and written narratives. Personal photos that participants selected were viewed in conjunction with their written narratives and conversational interviews. The author realized that student teachers' internalized voices in and out of workplaces were knots to link threads of their narratives with each other. In both studies (Brown, 1998; Vitanova, 2016), narrators' assimilation of others' words reflected their lived experiences and particular responses to the personal, institutional, social, and cultural contexts.

Coming to an Understanding of Living Stories. The term living stories emerges from a primarily dialogical lens in conjunction with a semiotic perspective. From a dialogical lens,

stories are living creatures. Bakhtin (1981) considered language “a living, socio-ideological concrete thing” (p. 294). In his theory, words are not only spoken or written; instead, they live in multimodal forms and exist in real-life dialogues. Utterances have lives: “The life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 202). In other words, utterances live in unfinalized dialogue with each other and exist due to their call for the birth of future ones. Based on Bakhtin’s notion of unfinalized utterances, Frank (2005) argued that each story existed because it was called by and called for other stories. Stories, hence, never die; they become living things that “breathe...and animate” as humans do (Frank, 2010, p. 5).

Dialogical researchers conceptualize stories in multiple forms, echoing semioticians who focus on multimodality in narratives. Consistent with a Bakhtinian lens of unfinalizability, the semiotic approach demonstrates that a story arises in diverse modes of language. Gestures, silences, symbols, and sounds are not add-ons to verbal speech but rather storied modes with fruitful meanings. I use the term living stories in this thesis to emphasize narratives as alive beings, which emerge in ordinary talk, exist in multimodal forms, and live in an unfinalized chain. A review of children’s stories is presented in a subsequent section.

Children’s Stories

In the previous section, I presented an overview of research on adult participants’ stories with four main perspectives: structuralist, sociolinguistic, semiotic, and dialogical. While the literature on children’s stories inextricably shares these three primary trends, children’s narratives have their particularities. Shifting to the field of children’s stories, narrative researchers have held different views in the conceptualization and analysis of young narrators’ stories. Structuralist scholars invited children to generate prompted stories so that they could explore universal structures in these narratives. Sociolinguistic researchers identified patterns in children’s conversational stories to understand their meaning-making process in daily activities. Semioticians attended to multimodal narratives that children composed in their interactions. From a dialogical lens, investigators considered children’s everyday stories that are multimodal and unfinalized to explore diversity and uniqueness in their voices. I describe four main trends in research on children’s narratives: prompted stories, conversational stories, multimodal stories, and living stories.

Children's Prompted Stories. The first studies of children's stories began in the 1960s under the influence of structuralism (Nicolopoulou, 2011). Structuralist narrative researchers prompted children to tell stories in educational settings (Applebee, 1978; Baker & Stein, 1978; Pitcher & Prelinger, 1963; Sutton-Smith, 1981). For example, Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) collected stories told by American children aged 2 to 5 years in kindergartens by asking the children, "Tell me a story. What could your story be about?" In case children only retold stories that they heard from others or retold events or shows on television, the researchers then said, "Now I would like a story that is your very own, one nobody else told you, that you made up all by yourself" (p. 29).

A similarity across these studies is that researchers considered a child's story concrete if it contained a coherent structure of beginning, middle, and end. This view, however, was later critiqued by scholars who figured out many stories of young children were unfinished, less polished, and incoherent (S. Engel, 2006; Nicolopoulou, 1997). Most structuralist and formalist researchers used prompts to initiate children to tell stories in school settings. From children's perspectives, they were invited to participate in tasks with strangers (i.e., researchers), which could lead them to feel uncomfortable expressing their real ideas individually (S. Engel, 2006). These researchers, thus, could not capture a natural flow of children's narratives (Nicolopoulou, 2011). Structuralist researchers (e.g., Baker & Stein, 1978; Mandler, 1978) concentrated on children's verbal speech rather than their nonverbal language in their storytelling. Young storytellers' silences, gestures, and facial expressions were often ignored in data transcripts and analysis.

From a structuralist perspective, children's real and imaginary stories were separately analyzed. A real story is identified when young storytellers tell about actual events, while imaginary narrative refers to children's verbal accounts of nonfictional events. Structuralist researchers (Richert & Smith, 2011; Subbotsky, 2004) emphasized children's real narratives as evidence of their cognitive development while devaluing their fantasy. Structuralist researchers did not consider stories in which children blended actual and fantastical events.

Children's Conversational Stories. Sociolinguistic researchers capture conversational stories that children tell in daily interactions with others in real-life settings. S. Engel (2006) used the term "naturalist approach" (p. 35) to refer to a method in which researchers position themselves in children's real-life settings, listen to their voices, and access spontaneous stories

by observation rather than by using prompts. Children's conversational stories are spontaneous, collaborative, and composed of various types (i.e., self-talk, conversations with parents, siblings at home, conversations with teachers and peers in kindergartens). In terms of relationships with children, researchers play the role of a silent observer in settings to capture children's spontaneous stories.

Researchers emphasize structural patterns and cultural styles in children's narratives (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 2004; Bruner & Lucariello, 1989; Miller et al., 1996; Miller & Sperry, 1988; Minami, 2002; Nelson, 1989). Nelson (1989) conducted a collaborative project to explore 2-year-old Emily's monologues when she was alone at naptime or bedtime. Her parents recorded Emily's presleep narratives over 2 years. Nelson and other colleagues analyzed these audio tapes to explore structural story organization, as well as the link between sequence changes and the child's cognitive development over time.

Other researchers (Miller et al., 1996; Minami, 2002) undertook cross-cultural studies to compare children's personal stories in families to seek cultural patterns of narratives. Although these authors gathered children's stories in everyday talk, they mainly examined a group of children's narratives of past events, which led them to neglect other types (i.e., stories of breaking news, fictional stories).

Recently, some researchers have used conversation analysis to examine children's spontaneous stories in ordinary talk to understand their communicative competence (Bateman & Carr, 2017; Blum-Kulka et al., 2004; Theobald, 2016). Conversation analysts (Bateman & Carr, 2017; Theobald, 2016) looked at narrative structures inside these stories and explored the storytelling process of children with their friends who composed stories together. A similarity of these studies is that researchers focused on children's verbal speech. Children's other forms of expressions (e.g., spontaneous drawing, songs) during their storytelling were not analyzed. Sociolinguistic scholars also attend to universal patterns among children's stories rather than exploring the uniqueness and fragmentation in every single child's narratives.

Children's Living Stories. In my conceptualization, the term living stories refers to everyday narratives that are multimodal, dialogical, and unfinalized. Based on my search, the term living stories has not been used in studies of young children. Some semiotic and dialogical researchers have explored children's stories that are multimodal and collaborative, as well as emphasized dialogic relationship between children's narratives and others' stories about them.

I, therefore, review empirical studies that have utilized semiotics and dialogism to explore children's stories to identify contributions and challenges in this line of research.

In terms of data collection, semioticians and dialogical investigators gathered children's ordinary stories through observation. In contrast with structuralist and sociolinguist views that highlight stories in verbal texts, semiotic and dialogical lenses offer a novel way to conceptualize narratives. This wider lens underlines children's stories in diverse forms of communications, including texts, nonverbal actions, body movements, and artifacts. Semioticians (Bengochea et al., 2018; Flewitt, 2003; Kress, 2010; Taylor, 2014) interpreted children's stories via multimodal analysis. Kress (1997) collected artifacts of young children up to 8 years old and interpreted them via multimodal analysis. He investigated the grammar structure and narrative sequence inside children's drawings, collages, and cut-outs. Findings suggested that children used drawing as a cogent mode to tell their stories, (re)imagine reality, and construct meanings. Guided by Kress's (1997) multimodal analysis, contemporary researchers (e.g., Bengochea et al., 2018; Flewitt, 2003; Taylor, 2014) analyzed children's diverse modes of languages in different settings. Flewitt (2003) conducted close observation at home and ECE centers to listen to multimodal narratives of 3-year-old children for 1 year. She focused on analyzing toddlers' verbal and nonverbal communications (i.e., gestures, facial expressions, body movements). In her study of children's facial expression and gestures in a UK primary class, Taylor (2014) found that their silences and pauses can express various meanings: agreement, support, or resistance. Bengochea et al. (2018) studied the meaning-making process of Anthony, a 4-year-old bilingual child, through his interweaving of verbal, visual, and actional stories in an ECE setting. Aligned with semioticians, dialogical researchers (Cohen & Uhry, 2011; De Vocht, 2015; S. W. Lee & Hassett, 2017; White, 2009) interpreted young children's multiple forms of languages. While semioticians emphasized differences across children's multimodal modes, dialogical researchers analyzed how these modes conveyed children's articulation of others' words. Cohen and Uhry (2011) considered children's play areas as carnivalesque environments in which children negotiated with others' words in multimodal forms to raise their voices. White (2009) and De Vocht (2015) found that children were active and capable of using gestures, body actions, and verbal speech to assimilate adults' words in their own ways. When adults understood multimodality in their meaning-making process, they comprehensively interpreted children's voices (White, 2009).

A key contribution of a dialogical approach is that researchers considered children's narratives as unfinalized chains with stories of others (e.g., parents, teachers) about young children. Dialogical researchers became a friend of children, their parents, and teachers to comprehend the unfinalizability in children's narrative flow. Dyson's (1997) approach was to become an "adult friend" of first-and-second-grade children to sensitively listen to their stories in daily activities at primary school for 2 years. She, moreover, communicated with teachers and parents, collected and distinguished children's fairy tales, movies, and media programs that might be resources for children's words in their stories. Likewise, Kendrick (2005) became a playmate of a 6-year-girl, Leticia, for 1 year in her home. Each story told by the child was linked with the precedent ones and with parents' and researcher's stories about her. Becoming a friend of children and positioning their stories in a narrative chain with others' stories about them were ways for dialogical researchers to understand how children articulated external resources to make sense of themselves and the world.

An overarching point across semiotic and dialogical studies is that researchers listened to narratives in children's free-play activities where both real and fantasy events emerged and were linked with each other. These studies conveyed that multimodality is a hybrid venue for young children to create "another kind of reality, not distanced but tangible" (Kress, 1997, p. 26). Although multimodality involves diverse modes, most researchers analyzed young storytellers' verbal language and visual artifacts. Other modes such as musical and dancing narratives have not been fully explored. Among children's nonverbal languages, their silences and pauses have not been fully recognized (Taylor, 2014). A further investigation into diverse forms of children's multimodal narratives with a focus on their silences is required in the future.

Some researchers (Heydon, 2012; Pahl, 2009; Prinsloo & Stein, 2005; White, 2009) have attended to the intersection among children's multimodal modes in their ordinary conversations. Pahl (2009) identified how first-grade children created concepts and complex ideas by transiting verbal speech, body movements, and artmaking. Prinsloo and Stein (2005) uncovered the link between multimodal narratives that a young 6-year-old South African girl composed at home, school, and in community contexts. Guided by a Bakhtinian lens of answerability, White (2009) explained how ideas shifted within language modes in toddlers' interactions. These studies have contributed to recognizing a transformative process within children's multimodal modes. Pahl (2009) identified children's special interests as the root that

inspired them to develop and interconnect different language modes in their stories. Empirical studies that traced the ongoing process of children's multimodal forms would further clarify why mode transformation appears in young storytellers' narratives.

Reviewing research in children's narratives, I noted a lack of studies conducted in homes and ECE settings. Although some narrative scholars addressed a reciprocal relationship between these settings in children's storytelling activity (De Vocht, 2015; Kendrick, 2005; White, 2009), no studies have comprehensively described a chain of children's stories between family and daycare environments. When children tell stories, they articulate words from diverse resources to build their ideas (Dyson, 1997). Explanation of children's meaning-making and a narrative chain within their stories might be limited when researchers conduct studies in a single site, children's homes, or ECE settings. Thus, more empirical research with children's narratives across their naturalistic settings is needed to expand knowledge in this key area.

Narrative and Identities Research

When children tell stories, they construct and express themselves and make sense of their worlds. A focus on stories can provide an essential window into children's identities. In this section, I provide an overview of the field of narratives and identities. Then I summarize studies that have explored children's identities-in-flux through diverse types of stories.

Overview of the Field of Narratives and Identities

Over the last 3 decades, as part of the narrative turn in human sciences, a growing number of social scientists have found an application of narratives in a new wave of philosophical discussion on the relationship among the self, others, and contexts (Atkins, 2004). Although a growing number of researchers have viewed identities as narratively constructed, their approaches were not aligned. Scholars who have examined identities through stories follow three approaches. From a psychological approach, researchers emphasized the link between identity development and life stories. From a performative approach, researchers considered identities-in-flux in daily conversations. From a dialogical approach, authors explored persons' identities through a narrative chain of living stories. In the next sections, I will discuss these trends in more detail.

Identities Formation From a Psychological Approach. From a psychological view, researchers underscore the relationship between stories of people's life events and their personality development over the life span (McAdams, 2003). When people are asked to tell

their life stories through an investigator's request, "Tell me the story of your life," they must seek answers for Eriksonian key questions of identities: "Who am I? How did I come to be? Where is my life going?" (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 235). Life stories have some synonyms (i.e., personal stories, personal narratives, autobiographies), which refer to stories of people's lived experiences. McAdams (2003) used the term "narrative identity" to describe the expression of identities through personal narratives of past events.

In narrative identity research, researchers investigated significant events or turning points in participants' life stories to understand changes in their identity formation. Attention to significant events in narrative identity began with Bruner's (1996) ideas of the link among cognitive development, psychological processes, and narratives. He claimed that when turning points occurred in life, individuals would reflect and resolve them through narratives. Webster and Mertova (2007) extended the matter by providing a framework to examine critical events in people's life stories. For these authors, critical events were unpredictable, unstructured, and significantly influenced individuals' identity development. Narrative identity researchers used thematic and structural analysis to examine life stories' coherence and content, which were central to understanding people's perceptions of themselves and the world (McLean, 2008).

From a psychological perspective, interviews were the main method to reveal participants' life stories and their identities. One disadvantage of this trend was that researchers focused on tellers' reflexivity of themselves about precedent events rather than their identities in contemporary times (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). People retold and revisited their identities rather than living in identities (Bamberg & Demuth, 2016). A constant and fluid process of identity formation in daily life, therefore, was not explored. Based on this limitation of life stories, some narrative identity scholars (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2006) proposed a performative approach that focused on identities in daily interactions, which is discussed next.

Identities Formation From a Performative Approach. From a performative perspective, identities are viewed as dynamic and constantly changeable. Based on this theorization, some scholars argued that identities emerge from conversational stories in daily life rather than in life stories of preexisting events (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). In this sense, identities are constructed and reconstructed moment by moment when people live and tell their stories in daily life (Watson, 2007). Performative

scholars support Goffman's (1959) views of identities as performing constant selves (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Juzwik & Ives, 2010; Qin, 2016). In these studies, researchers focused on immediate identities that were "something people perform or do rather than something they have" (Smith & Sparkes, 2006, p. 25).

Several researchers have underlined a connection between significant events and conversational stories in understanding people's identity performances (Juzwik & Ives, 2010; Page et al., 2013; Stephens & Neill, 2011). Juzwik and Ives (2010) presented a small story called "My Worst Mistake", which is about a teacher's childhood memory. Through analysis, these authors proved that this story described a significant event in the teacher's life, which influenced the ways in which she performed as a teacher in relationship with students. Similarly, Stephens and Neill (2011) found that critical events that winemakers related in their biographies also appeared in their daily talks and influenced how they performed themselves with others in conversations. These empirical studies showed that when a turning point occurred in people's lives, its influence on individuals' identities is revealed not only in autobiographies but also in ordinary talk. This view is an extension of life-story research that focuses on identities-in-flux through critical events in life stories.

A critique of the performative approach is that researchers value the role of contexts rather than storytellers' agency in identities construction. Performative scholars support Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory, considering the construction of identities as an act of performance and storytellers as actors. In his dramaturgical framework, Goffman (1959) proposed that social communication is a stage in which speakers acknowledge their role and perform appropriate narratives to fit others' expectations. The backstage, where the individual is free of the restriction of evaluations and accreditation from the community, is a place to relax and express actual thoughts. Goffman's theory is adequate to explain social roles of storytellers in telling activity, conflicts facing them when they are in/out of the front stage. The performative theory, however, may not be suitable for understanding tellers as active agents whose stories express their freedom of choice to become who they want and do what they choose.

Identities Formation From a Dialogical Approach. Close to the idea of identities-in-interactions is a perspective that is underpinned by Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. Identities-in-flux is a process in which persons dialogue with and assimilate others' words to make sense of themselves and the world (Skinner et al., 2001). Dialogical researchers position themselves as

participant-observers in storytellers' lives, and interpret stories in a narrative chain to understand people's interdependent and emergent roles (Barone, 2001; Frank, 2010).

In a dialogical approach a researcher explores the intersection and open-endedness of people's identities through multimodal forms of language. For psychological and performative scholars, interactions refer to verbal speech. From a dialogical standpoint, people interact with others in multiple storied forms (e.g., interviews, conversations, reading texts, artifacts) (Barone, 2001; Haynes, 2002). Consistent with a dialogical approach, a growing number of researchers have explored the emergence and intersection of identities through a variety of multimodal storied forms (Enache, 2017; Fang, 2020; Simas et al., 2018). Enache (2017) investigated identities of several Romanian ECE teachers in collaborative talk among them and with the researcher. She identified an interweaving between teachers' professional identity and their ethnic identity as Romanian immigrants. Fang (2020) utilized a dialogical approach to examine hidden voices that emerged during her imaginary dialogue with Virginia Woolf. Fang's analytical process illustrated an interdependence between her reader identity and other roles as a feminist and a researcher. An interdependency of people's identities is a key point in a dialogical view of conceptualization of self-authoring.

A feature of the dialogical approach is its emphasis on persons as active agents in their relationship with contexts. While psychological and performative scholars highlight contextual factors on people's identities, dialogical researchers examine how given contexts are seen through individual perspectives. This idea does not mean that dialogical authors negate the impact of contexts on a person's identities formation. Dialogical scholars acknowledge the influence of social and institutional powers on people's discourse (Frank, 2010). They uncover the existence of contextual factors in particular lives and through persons' authentic voices. A focus on the personal lens allows dialogical inquirers to attend to voices of those at the margins whose narratives are normally dominated and forgotten by traditional assumptions and institutional powers (Frank, 2005). Participants in many dialogical studies, therefore, are members of marginalized groups, who might be young children, Indigenous, refugees, immigrants, persons with disabilities and illness, or the homeless (Frank, 1995; Jacobs, 2013; Matusov, 2018; Saldanha & Nybell, 2017, Vitanova, 2016).

An overarching point across the dialogical approach is that inquirers did not label people by their social status (e.g., patients, immigrants, homeless, disabled persons), which could make

them “feel ‘done in’ by assessments and diagnoses” (Saldanha & Nybell, 2017, p. 214). Rather, dialogical researchers respected narrators in their studies as persons who had diverse experiences and owned their lives to live and tell their stories. For example, Jacobs (2013) used DNA to explore the stories of five American families who lived in homeless shelters. Instead of seeing people as objects of poverty and vulnerability, she investigated the fruitful knowledge and literacy experiences that five parents shared and co-authored with their children across settings. Saldanha and Nybell (2017) listened to stories of young people who were homeless or had special needs through interviews, informal conversations, and digital storytelling. These authors interacted with participants over months and closely observed their communications. Their findings illustrated how youth were bounded and simultaneously resisted discourses of injustices in disability, race, gender to author themselves. Persons, thus, are considered active producers rather than dependents of their contexts. A notion of storytellers as active agents in their identities-in-flux is the most remarkable difference between the dialogical approach and other previous approaches.

Narrative Research and Young Children’s Identities

While Eriksonian researchers claimed that identities do not occur in the early years, some sociocultural authors (e.g., Rogoff, 2003) argued that young children can make sense of themselves and the world. A focus on stories can provide an important window into the construction of children’s identities. Narrative research with young children’s identities is a new area (Clandinin et al., 2015). Drawing on a variety of theoretical backgrounds, researchers explore children’s identity formation through different kinds of stories. From a sociopsychological approach, researchers examine children’s identity formation through their personal stories of past events. Performative scholars explore the matter of children’s identities through their conversational stories. Dialogical authors investigate the construction of children’s identities through a narrative chain of living stories. In this part, I will describe three main approaches of narrative research with children’s identities formation.

Children’s Identities Formation in Personal Stories of Past Events. Based on psychological knowledge of the relationship between life stories and identities, some researchers (Greidanus, 2007; Houle, 2012; Orr et al., 2007) have examined children’s reflexivity through their personal stories of past events. For example, Houle (2012) explored the construction of identities of young struggling readers in Grade 1. Greidanus (2007)

investigated how four children constructed their identities after experiencing their loved ones' deaths. A similarity within these studies is that inquirers use semistructured interviews as a primary method to gather stories from children whose ages are from 5 to 10 years old. This method can be suitable for young children over 5 years old but is unsuitable for those aged 0–5 years. At that age, young children are not willing to participate in interviews, and the content and structures of their life stories are less coherent (S. Engel, 2006).

In order to resolve the limitations of interviews with young children, some researchers investigated young tellers' stories of past events in their daily conversations with their caregivers and teachers (Miller & Mehler, 1994; Tsai, 2007). Miller and Mehler (1994) accessed personal stories about past events through observing child-mother conversations at home. Tsai (2007) observed how children told teachers about their past incidents during Sharing Time in a Taiwanese kindergarten. In these two studies, children freely shared their lives with others, and their stories were typically collaborative. Researchers (Miller & Mehler, 1994, Tsai, 2007), however, used structural and thematic analysis to examine children's stories, which allowed them to identify cognitive and psychological patterns across children's identities development. Uniqueness in individual children's identities and their specific contexts, thus, were not addressed. Children's emerging identities during here-and-now moments when they tell stories were not considered.

Children's Identities Formation in Conversational Stories. Drawing on a performative notion of identities-in-interactions, sociolinguistic researchers have pointed out that children (re)construct their identities through conversational narratives. The main method that researchers use to gather children's stories is observation via video/audio recording. Researchers position themselves in children's daily activities as observers to listen to their spontaneous stories in daily activities. Sociolinguistic researchers have contextualized children's interactions and identities-in-flux within personal, institutional, social, and cultural discourses. I will review relevant studies that have investigated children's identities through daily interactions in different settings.

Blum-Kulka and Snow (1992) explored identities construction of children through their meal talk with parents at home. A tape recorder was provided to each family to record parent-child conversations during dinner. Findings conveyed that parents' words carried local cultural values of politeness and discipline. Children absorbed these values through their interactions

with parents and used them to develop a sense of being members of their culture. Other researchers (Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016; Nicolopoulou et al., 2021; Puroila & Estola, 2014) gathered children's spontaneous stories at ECE and primary schools to understand their identities-in-flux. Puroila and Estola (2014) explored identity formation of toddlers in a Finnish kindergarten through their everyday narratives following teachers' stories about them. Weaving these stories together, the two authors underlined the role of friendship and teachers' agendas in the construction of children's identities. A similarity across these studies is that researchers address the influence of contexts on children's identities formation rather than their active roles as producers of contexts.

Children's Identities Formation in Living Stories. I created the term living stories to refer to young children's everyday narratives that are multimodal, dialogical, and unfinalized. Among the empirical examples that I offer in this section, none explicitly refers to this term. These studies, however, are all foregrounded by a dialogical approach and align with my conceptualization of living stories. My point in this section is not to synthesize these examples within theoretical frameworks of dialogism. Rather, I want to explicate the application of dialogical ideas of narratives and identities in empirical work with young children.

In terms of conceptualization of identities, dialogical researchers emphasize that children's identities emerge in their daily interactions, which approximates the performative view. Different from performative scholars, dialogical researchers do not consider children's identities-in-flux as an act of performing themselves. Dialogical researchers conceptualize children's identities-in-flux as a process in which they used multimodal storied forms of language to articulate others' words (Dyson, 1997). Dialogical researchers examine children's oral articulation through listening to their stories and others' narratives about them. Children's multimodal narratives are primary data in dialogical studies. Stories about children, told by teachers and parents, are secondary data in dialogical studies. Researchers interview teachers and parents to seek their perspectives on children's personalities. Investigators weave these narratives together to see how children assimilated others' stories about them to develop their knowledge of themselves and the world. Researchers utilize their in-depth understanding of contexts, which they gain through close observation and conversations with participants, to seek the origins of children's narratives.

Bakhtin did not directly work in the ECE field. Researchers have brought Bakhtinian ideas to see diverse imprints of otherness through children's eyes. Several scholars (Dixon, 2013; Dyson, 1997) explored the validity of cultural resources in the daily lives of first- and second-grade students. Dyson (1997) stressed that beneath discourses of popular culture were social norms that were contemporaneously available in society. Her findings show that children are not copiers but rather producers who renew and enrich their cultural values. Some inquirers (e.g., Cohen, 2017; Oh & Lee, 2019) specifically observed children's block play in ECE settings to understand the role of friendship in children's self-authoring. These authors conclude that peer culture serves children as a hybrid zone of mutuality to learn, reinforce, and transform identities.

Researchers (Cengiz, 2016; Matusov, 2009; Morgenstern, 2021; Ødegaard, 2007) employed the terms *dialogicality* and *monologicality* to understand how responses of parents and teachers (non)address children's ideas. Findings highlighted that adults' diverse perceptions of children governed the ways that they communicated with children. When parents and teachers saw children as finalized objects, children were bounded by adults' disciplinary and monological assumptions. In this situation, young children did not find it easy to have freedom spaces, and adults might not comprehend children's voices (Matusov, 2009). Meanwhile, when adults conceived children as open-ended agents who were always multiple and dynamic, their responses to children became hybrid spaces of reciprocal changes. Bakhtinian researchers suggest that in this case, children and adults become change-makers of each other, and the very young gained more opportunities to exercise their agency.

One overarching point across dialogical studies is that the children's identities and their given contexts are considered in an interplay. From a dialogical viewpoint, children are interpreters and producers of their contexts. Dyson (1997) and Ødegaard (2007) examined the intersection of contextual factors in children's self-authoring. The researchers highlighted that cultural values, teachers' beliefs and practices, curriculum, and peer interactions interwove and influenced children. Reciprocally, the very young utilized their prior experiences and personal desires to respond to contexts, "reenact regulations (e.g., rules, rituals) for a better understanding of self" (Cohen, 2017, p. 67). Most reviewed studies, however, have been conducted in only institutional places (i.e., ECE centers, kindergartens, and primary schools) and Western

contexts. Future studies that would examine the holistic relationship between children and their social environments in diverse settings and contexts are suggested.

Summary. Reviewing empirical studies in narrative identities research with young children, I acknowledged some differences within perspectives on children's narratives and identities formation. While life-story researchers interview children to learn about their identities in personal stories of past events, performative and dialogical authors observe children in daily interactions to explore their emerging identities at here-and-now moments. Dialogical researchers consider children's identities-in-flux as the process of their oral articulation, while performative authors view children's identities as an act of performing constant selves. Dialogical researchers investigate contexts and identities through children's lenses, which performative scholars and life-story researchers do not fully access.

Although I have identified some differences within perspectives in the narrative research with young children's identities, I concur with Smith and Sparkes (2008) that boundaries within these perspectives are unclear and blurred. The contrast is in the approaches to noticing children's narratives. Life-story researchers interview children to learn about their past events. Performative and dialogical researchers, meanwhile, interview teachers and adults to know about children's surrounding contexts and then explore the impact of social environments on conversational stories.

Another overarching point within the three approaches is the relationship between participants and researchers. Narrative identities researchers claim a close relationship among children, parents, teachers, and researchers. Clandinin et al. (2006) proposed that starting an inquiry is a journey for investigators to live alongside children, their communities, and their stories. This idea resonated with dialogical scholars who believed that research should be a living dialogue among children, their parents, teachers, and researchers (Ødegaard, 2020).

Young Vietnamese children's voices and identities are marginalized in research. Among reviewed studies, most scholars have investigated young children's stories and their identities in Western contexts. Most of the participants in the studies are White, and all use only English. Tsai (2007) is the only researcher who has explored children's identities and narratives in Taiwan, an Asian context. Future investigation of children's narratives and identities in non-Western contexts is suggested. The next section reveals the link between children's interests and their identities formation.

Children's Interests and Identities Information

Children's interests have been explored from different perspectives. This section presents the existing research on children's interests from psychological, sociocultural, and narrative orientations. In each lens, I discuss how researchers have conceptualized children's interests and interpreted them. Contributions and gaps in the three lenses are also clarified.

A Psychological Lens

Developmental psychologists (e.g., Cimpian et al., 2007; Zentall & Morris, 2010) conceptualized children's interests as their active choices to engage in specific activities and with particular objects. Researchers employed multimethodologies in studies with children, their parents, and teachers to understand children's choices. Some researchers designed questionnaires and surveys to seek parents' and teachers' perspectives of their children's motivations (e.g., Hume et al., 2015). In experimental studies, children were interviewed or completed tasks to see how they expressed and sustained their interests (e.g., Zentall & Morris, 2010), or researchers provided parents and teachers tape recorders and asked them to record their interactions with children at home or ECE settings (e.g., Cote & Bornstein, 2009).

Across these studies, researchers aimed to categorize children's choices and behaviors through statistical modeling. Psychologists (Tracey, 2002; Tracey & Ward, 1998) compared types of children's interests and competencies across three age groups: early childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Participants filled in a questionnaire to reflect their preferences for daily activities (e.g., playing alone, interacting with others). The findings showed that children preferred free-play activities. Young children in these studies found it challenging to maintain their interest in specific topics over time compared to the groups of adolescents and college students. The psychologists did not directly engage with children in their natural settings. Their interpretations of children may be biased by their adult lenses (i.e., parents, teachers, researchers), and the young participants' actual thoughts may be missing in scientific reports. Psychologists discover patterns of children's motives in their activity choices in experimental settings. Sociocultural researchers, meanwhile, understand children's interests as socially constructed processes.

A Sociocultural Lens

From a sociocultural lens, children's interests are situated in the link with their holistic contexts. Researchers (e.g., Hedges & Cooper, 2016; Lovatt, 2020) interpreted children's

interests as inquiry. The young children engaged with knowledge resources from their cultures, families, ECE settings, and communities to make sense of themselves the world. Sociocultural scholars (Cooper et al., 2013; Lovatt, 2020) became participant-observers to learn about children and their interests in natural settings. Researchers also combined their close observation of children with results from semistructured interviews with the teachers and parents. The multiple data resources led to a holistic view of children's interests in relationship with their contexts.

Studies (e.g., Hedges & Cooper, 2016; Lovatt, 2020; Zhou, 2019) investigated the link among children's interests, play, and their identities formation in Aotearoa New Zealand. Hedges and Cooper (2016) observed daily activities of young children aged 3–5 years old and interviewed their parents and teachers at two kindergartens. The findings indicated that the culture at home, ECE settings, and local communities provided material for children's learning. The young children interacted with knowledge resources to develop experiences and interests. Hedges and Cooper (2016) found that play is critical for children to learn about themselves. Through expression and enhancement of their desires and intentions in play, children develop knowledge of their learner, cultural, and linguistic identities (Hedges & Cooper, 2016). Zhou (2019) explored four young Chinese children's early literacy experiences and their identities formation at home and kindergartens. Her findings show that children blended their interests and past experiences into their early literacy practices. Aligned with Hedges and Cooper (2016), Zhou (2019) considered play a zone of freedom for children to integrate interests and prior knowledge, leading to their emergent roles.

Lovatt (2020) described the influence of young children's interests in developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes through participant observations of children and semistructured interviews with parents and teachers. His study demonstrated that teachers' instructions and play-based learning activities at centers were vital to broadening children's opportunities to express their interests. Young children aged 3–5 years old were capable of continuing and transforming their interests and prior experiences to make sense of themselves and the world. Sociocultural scholars (Hedges & Cooper, 2016; Lovatt, 2020; Zhou, 2019) underlined the influence of contexts on children's interests and identities construction. Children's interests were interpreted as an ongoing process including both continuity and changes. The dynamic identities emerged in a continuum of children's special interests.

Some researchers (Ghiso, 2013; Wohlwend, 2015) closely observed children's interest expression and identities formation in their literacy practices at primary schools. Their findings conveyed that young children did not consider playing only a leisure zone. Instead, the young children played with literacy-related materials, and, through play, they went beyond regulated tasks to author themselves as proactive learners. Wohlwend (2015) compared children's expression of interests and their identities formation in and out of class. She claimed that children's *playing with literacy* was a unique approach to stepping out of teachers' authority and enjoying the freedom of being themselves. Most sociocultural studies have been conducted in institutional settings (kindergartens, primary classes). Further research at home and ECE settings would provide a broader view of play in children's interests and identities formation.

A Narrative-Based Lens

Narrative researchers (Flewitt, 2016; Karjalainen, 2020; Ødegaard, 2015) investigated the relationship among children's everyday stories, their interests, and identities formation. Researchers joined children's activities, closely observed them, and listened to their everyday narratives. Ødegaard (2015) looked into the construction of interests and identities in a co-narrative of two 4-year-old girls in a Finnish kindergarten who pretended to be Pippi Longstocking. Drawing on Bakhtin's carnivalesque lens, Ødegaard concluded that a shared interest in Pippi Longstocking led children to enhance their narrative and express an emergent identity as superwomen. Karjalainen (2020) observed children's everyday narratives with friends and teachers in an ECE setting. She found that children used their joyful performances (e.g., funny actions) as a means to initiate their everyday stories with peers and extend their particular interests. The studies (Karjalainen, 2020; Ødegaard, 2015) revealed that storytelling and play allowed children to explore their interests and express themselves.

Flewitt's (2016) work is among the few studies (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007; Puroila, 2013) exploring children's interests in multimodal storytelling. She explored how two immigrant students expressed their thoughts and interests in their multimodal stories in a UK primary school. She highlighted that children used different signs (body movements, gestures) to integrate their imagination, interests, and emergent roles regardless of their limited English proficiency. That children's stories and their interests shape each other has gained consensus among narrative researchers. Most studies, however, examined children's storytelling practices in institutional settings. The expression of children's interests and identities has been mainly

analyzed in children's verbal speech rather than other language modes. The relationship among children's growing interests, their identities, and the chain of their multimodal stories across settings has not been fully explored.

Summary

Psychological, sociocultural, and narrative researchers concur that children's play, interests, and their identities formation link with each other. Play is essential for children to comprehend and express their interests and identities. Researchers, however, differ in their approaches to access and interpret children's interests. Psychologists position themselves as outsiders to examine children's motives and hobbies. Young children aged 3–5 years old are considered inconsistent in sustaining their interests in comparison with adolescents and adults. Sociocultural and narrative researchers, however, contest this psychological view. Researchers (e.g., Hedges & Cooper, 2016; Ødegaard, 2015) became a part of children's environments through their participant-observations and semistructured interviews. They used multiple data sources to listen to children's voices and reach a holistic view of the contexts and children's agency. From sociocultural and narrative approaches, children's interests are influenced by with which resources they interact (i.e., popular culture, religious activities). Young children are not inconsistent in developing their interests as psychologists have described. Instead, children appear as active and competent persons in deciding what they want to do and who they will become in their activities. The relationship among chains of children's multimodal stories, their interests, and identities formation has not been comprehensively investigated in narrative research.

Statement of the Problem

Examination of the literature shows that, although Vietnamese-related topics have been conducted in research, children's voices have not been the focus in Vietnam research. The ordinary narratives and identities-in-flux of Vietnamese children have not yet been explored in Vietnam and New Zealand contexts. Most early-years researchers use Confucian impact to explain why children's voices are historically marginalized in Vietnamese society. Vietnam-based researchers have adopted Western-rooted theories to produce instructions and interventions for ECE teachers to understand young children. Other Vietnamese values (i.e., Buddhism, folk culture) have been untapped in the national construction of a concept of

children. Future studies are needed to find the potential to weave Vietnamese native knowledge and global ideas in conceptualizing the image of Vietnamese children.

The term living stories is created by a Bakhtinian lens of narratives in accordance with a semiotic lens of multimodality. No studies have used this concept to explore children's ordinary stories. From a dialogical view, children's stories are unfinalized because they travel among people, modes of language, and contexts. Only a few studies (Pahl, 2009; Taylor, 2014) have explored the intersection within children's multimodal modes of language, and they were conducted in institutional settings rather than across home and ECE centers. Further research is needed to explore the unfinalizability and multimodality in young children's narratives in different settings to better understand the emergence of their identities.

Narrative inquirers underline the importance of interpreting stories, identities, and contexts through children's eyes. Children should be seen as active participants in interconnecting with their current contexts. Most studies have explored children's narratives and identities in Western countries and from Western theories rather than Asian contexts and from non-Western epistemological perspectives, suggesting further investigation in the future.

Chapter 3: Methodology

“My name is Hoa⁵” was the first utterance I used to introduce myself to the children, their parents, and teachers. In te reo Māori, the Indigenous language of Aotearoa New Zealand, where my PhD program started, “hoa” means a friend. For me, this saying implied a metaphoric meaning of my work, which was to become a *hoa*, a friend who entered a network of ties with participants. I became a *hoa* of children and learned to *see with them*. This chapter represents the methodological background for my engagement with children to understand their stories and identities-in-flux.

This research explored how young Vietnamese children, as individuals, expressed their identities across home and ECE settings in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand. A qualitative multiple-case study within a dialogical narrative approach (DNA) was employed as the methodological background to the research. In this chapter, I present a dialogical narrative case-studies design. Then, I describe the settings, participant-recruitment procedures, and participants. Finally, I reflect on the process of data collection, data analysis, the researcher’s reflexivity, and data credibility.

Dialogical Narrative Case Studies

A dialogical narrative case-studies design was chosen to describe diversity in the process in which young Vietnamese children, as individuals, author themselves in their situated contexts in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand. Dialogical narrative case studies, as the name implies, comprise both case-studies design and a DNA. Case studies focus on “mundane details” (Dyson, 1997, p. 20) of individual children in particular contexts to identify the varied nature of how they make sense of themselves and the world. DNA guides researchers to listen to living stories of children, their parents, teachers to explore children’s identity formation. Details of the study are explained next.

Case Studies

Case-study design helps researchers deal “in-depth” with “a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). The research questions concentrated on the ways that children, as individuals, constructed their identities. Case-study design, thus, was appropriate to draw “an in-depth picture of every child,” which referred to

⁵ Hoa is my first name.

“the understanding that emerged was multifaceted, constructed out of multiple temporal and spatial vantage points” (Miller, 2016, p. 182). This research utilized case study to explore each Vietnamese child’s identities formation as a case. The nature of identities-in-flux cannot be fully understood without involving children’s narratives and the factors of contexts (Bakhtin, 1984a). An individual case, thus, included the child’s living stories and particular contexts in which he or she was situated. The child was not only embedded within local settings of home and ECE centers but also in institutional, social, and cultural contexts. Data in every case were gathered within the boundaries of the child (e.g., daily activities) and within related activities in broader communities (e.g., family sports day in preschool, entrance examination of primary schools in Hanoi).

A multiple case-study approach allows researchers to discover diversity among several single cases (Merriam, 2009). Analytic conclusions, thus, in a multiple-case study, are more potent than those from a single case study (Yin, 2014). I, therefore, chose multiple-case studies to understand the similarities, individual differences, and different ways in which Vietnamese children construct identities. Another rationale for the multiple-case-study design was the location of contexts. This research was conducted in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand. Case studies in each context contribute to clarifying the influence of specific cultural elements in two different contexts.

Dialogical Narrative Approach

DNA was designed to investigate Vietnamese young children’s identities-in-flux through their living stories. DNA is foregrounded by Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism and developed by Frank (2005, 2010, 2012). DNA is also embedded within the broad field of narrative inquiry research (Frank, 2010). This section explains narrative inquiry and why DNA was chosen as a methodological approach to this study.

Narrative inquiry, “the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about the experience” (F. M. Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). Children use experiences to tell stories and develop their identities (S. Engel, 2006). Narrative inquiry provides a methodological process needed to explore young children’s experiences and their identities. In narrative inquiry, stories are both a phenomenon and a writing method (F. M. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As a phenomenon, stories are data that narrative inquirers explore to make sense of participants’ experiences and identities. As a method of writing, storied forms

are selected to represent researchers' interpretation of participants' lives. Accordingly, I gathered and interpreted stories to understand Vietnamese young children's identity formation. I also built up case stories in a narrative form to represent my interpretation of the focal children's stories.

Inspired by Bakhtin's ideas of dialogue and unfinalizability, Frank (2005, 2010, 2012) created a dialogical approach to listen to persons' voices through their stories. The dialogical approach demonstrates researchers' ability "to speak with a research participant rather about him or her" (Frank, 2012, p. 3). Doing research, thus, becomes a living dialogue among participants, researchers, and stories. During fieldwork, researchers keep their roles as "an engaged witness" (Frank, 2005, p. 972). Dialogical inquirers live alongside participants, listen to their stories daily, and explore the echoes of outer contexts in participants' everyday dialogues. Through a holistic process of closely observing and listening to participants' stories, dialogical inquirers could have "more ears...to hear with" (Archibald, 2008, p. 30). I chose to become a participant-observer in children's homes and ECE settings, which enabled me to attain my role as a *hoa* of theirs.

Stories are live because they exist in multimodal forms of language and travel between persons (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984a). Children's everyday stories link with narratives of parents and teachers about them. Children's stories were gathered through my observation. I interviewed parents and teachers to learn about their narratives of the focal children, significant events in children's lives. Informal conversations with the focal children, their parents, and teachers were maintained during data collection to enable me to understand possible meanings of children's stories and resources that they used to develop their utterances and voices. Artwork is a unique language that people use to communicate with others (Bakhtin, 1990). Children's artifacts were collected during this fieldwork. Prior research (Dyson, 1997; Hedges, 2011) has emphasized the echoes of external resources (e.g., media, picture books) in children's dialogues. In analysis, each story told by children was examined in a narrative chain with others, which revealed the liveliness and openness of stories in this study.

Dialogical researchers and participants "came together in some shared time and space and had diverse effects on each other" (Frank, 2005, p. 968). I recognized that voices and discourses influenced the ways that I heard children's voices. I kept in mind King's (2003) caution, "Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous" (p. 9). The danger is when

inquirers lack knowledge of persons' lives, which leads them to impose their monologic voices on participants' stories (Archibald, 2008). A balance between insider and outsider gave me the chance to look backward and forward, inwards and outwards, to listen to children's voices from different sides and contextualize them within their personal, institutional, social, and cultural contexts. Children's identities-in-flux, thus, are recognized in openness rather than finalization (Frank, 2010). An explanation of the impact of my roles as both insider and outsider is further represented in the section "Researcher's Reflexivity" in this chapter. Gaskins et al. (1992) argued that "both children and contexts change, reconstituting one another as children grow older" (p. 13). A combination of case-studies design and DNA facilitated the investigation into living stories of young Vietnamese children, their parents, and teachers to understand complex case situations and attain detail and richness of children's lives.

Settings

The study was carried out in Auckland, New Zealand, and Hanoi, Vietnam. The selection of these contexts was based on the researcher's identities, accessibility to necessary resources, and contextual background. Auckland is the place where I, as the researcher, studied and permanently lived during the study course. Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand, with a high population of immigrants (Wright-St Clair & Nayar, 2017). The majority of Vietnamese people are concentrated in Auckland; most reside in South Auckland (Stats NZ, 2018b). In 2013, the number of Vietnamese children under 5 years in New Zealand was 477, with nearly two thirds (64.8%) living in Auckland (E. Ho et al., 2017). Recruiting Vietnamese children, their parents, and teachers in Auckland as participants was more convenient than other cities.

Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam, where I had resided for more than 10 years before I came to New Zealand. This metropolitan city is also my home in Vietnam. The ECE system in Hanoi is diversified with a wide range of ECE services (i.e., public preschools, private preschools, private daycare groups) (Vu, 2021). Participant recruitment for this study, thus, was accessible.

Participant-Recruitment Procedure

Vietnamese children aged 4–5 years were the focal children in the research. The reason for this age range is that children of those ages, through their narratives, are "old enough to convey both culture and perspectives" (Minami, 2002, p. 55). For this study, data were gathered

in ECE settings and with Vietnamese families. Children’s parents and siblings, teachers, and their peers became co-participants in the study. After I received the ethical approvals from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) with reference number 020988, I started data collection first in Aotearoa New Zealand, and later in Vietnam. The timeline of the data-collection process is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Timeline of Data Collection

Timeline	Location	Work involved
May 2018 to August 2018	Auckland, New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant recruitment • Participant-observations at home and ECE centers • 1st interviews with parents and teachers in the 1st week of data collection • 2nd interviews with parents and teachers in last week of data collection
September 2018 to October 2018	Hanoi, Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant recruitment
February to May 2019	Hanoi, Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant-observations at home and preschools • 1st interviews with parents and teachers in the 1st week of data collection • 2nd interviews with parents and teachers in last week of data collection
June 2019 to October 2019 November 2019 to May 2020	Hanoi, Vietnam Auckland, New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up contacts with participants via personal communications (family visits, emails, phone calls, messages)

In both sites, access to potential participants started with the recruitment of ECE settings. In Auckland, I sent invitation letters (Appendix A) to center managers. In the email invitation, I introduced myself and gave an outline of the project. Within 2 weeks, managers of Manuka Center⁶ and Harbor Center replied to the email invitation, showing their interest in the research. After face-to-face meetings to discuss the study, the managers of these centers reviewed the participant information sheet (PIS) (Appendix B) and signed consent forms (CF) (Appendix C).

I sought managers’ permission to have a 4-week visit to become familiar with settings, routines, teachers, and children before data collection. In the first meetings with teachers, I

⁶ All names of settings and participants in this study are pseudonyms.

introduced my work and invited them to participate in the study. When interested teachers gave their acceptance, I selected potential children for research according to the following criteria: (a) children are Vietnamese and aged between 4.0 and 5.0 years old at the beginning of the study, (b) children had enrolled in these centers at least 3 months prior to the study so that teachers have had enough time to understand children and children can adapt to the center environment, (c) at least one of their parents is Vietnamese. Teachers in both centers identified more than two children in each site who met these criteria. I asked managers and teachers to introduce me to Vietnamese families during drop-off and pick-up times. When the first interested Vietnamese parents gave their acceptance, I asked for their approval to meet the children at home and ECE centers to get familiar with them.

I asked for managers' help to distribute envelopes with PIS and CF for teachers and parents (Appendices D–H) as well as assent forms (AF) to children (Appendices I–J) during the third week of my warm-up time. All forms for Vietnamese parents and their children were provided in both English and Vietnamese. I met teachers and parents at ECE centers to review PIS and CF to clarify my work and address any questions. For children, I explained the procedure to them verbally first, being willing to answer their questions, and sent the AF to them via their parents/guardians. The children were suggested to color in a happy or sad face on the AF to express their satisfaction to participate in the project. PIS, CF, and children's AF were sent to parents of other children who were the focal child's friends. Teachers and parents were asked to return the CF and AF in a sealed box kept in the ECE centers with the managers/principals' permission within a week. At the end of the warm-up time, two Vietnamese children, Dylan from Manuka Center and Tony from Harbor Center, signed their AF to become the focal participants. Their parents, six teachers (three from Manuka Center and three from Harbor Center) signed CF to participate in this study. Their siblings and friends who signed AF joined as co-participants. The focal children's homes and ECE centers were research settings.

A similar process was adopted to recruit participants in Hanoi, Vietnam. There were, however, some differences in the recruitment procedure due to different contexts. First, all forms were translated into Vietnamese before being sent to participants. Second, I had phone calls and then asked for preschool principals' acceptance to come to meet them rather than sending invitation letters via emails. After these meetings, two principals of Huong Duong

Preschool and Binh An Preschool showed their interest in participating. Third, these principals chose classes for me to attend during the warm-up time, which corresponded to the age group of my research. In Vietnam, the age of children enrolling in ECE settings is 1–6 years old. In preschools, children are divided into classes depending on their ages. For this study, the principals suggested attending classes of children aged 4–5 years and those aged 5–6 years. After discussion with principals, I selected one class of children aged 5–6 years in Huong Duong Preschool and one class of children aged 4–5 years in Binh An Preschool to start visits and participant recruitment. During the school visits, four teachers (two from each preschool) agreed to participate in this study. Last, I asked principals' advice to select prospective case-study children. Principals in the two preschools introduced me to several potential Vietnamese families in the second week of the warm-up time. After discussion, two parents (one in each preschool) showed their interest in participating. At the end of the warm-up time, Nhi, a 5-year-girl in Huong Duong Preschool, and Duong, a 4-year boy in Binh An Preschool, signed their AF to participate. The focal children's siblings and friends who signed AF participated as co-participants.

Participants

Dylan, Tony, Nhi, and Duong were the four focal children in this study. Their parents, teachers, and friends were co-participants. Brief snapshots of biographical information of the focal children are provided. The in-depth descriptions of the children and their settings are elaborated in the following chapters of four cases. The basic information of four ECE settings is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2*Basic Information of Four ECE Settings*

ECE settings	Manuka Center	Harbor Center	Huong Duong Preschool	Binh An Preschool
Location	Suburban, Auckland	Urban, Auckland	Urban, Hanoi	Urban, Hanoi
Children	40	42	125	110
Age range	2–5 years	0–5 years old	1–6 years old	1–6 years old
Teachers	4	8	14	12
Models of sessions	Morning and afternoon	Whole day	Whole day	Whole day

Dylan

Dylan is a Vietnamese boy who was born in Auckland. He was aged 4 years and 6 months at the start of this study. Dylan lived with his father, Du, his mother, Thu, and two younger brothers, Dave and Benny, in South Auckland. Dylan was enrolled in Manuka Center which belongs to Happy Step Company, one of New Zealand’s largest providers of ECE. The center is located in central South Auckland. At the start of this study, Dylan and Dave had attended Manuka Center for 8 months.

Tony

Tony was born in November 2013 in Vietnam. At the start of this study, Tony was 4 years and 5 months. Tony, his parents, and his 1-year-old sister, Suri, came to New Zealand in October 2017. Tony and his family lived in Auckland Central’s suburban area. Tony and Suri were enrolled in Harbor Center, which was the Campus ECE center of his father’s university in the central business district (CBD) of the city. At the beginning of this study, Tony had attended Harbor Center for 8 months.

Nhi

Nhi was 4 years and 10 months at the beginning of data collection in Vietnam. Nhi lived with Nga, her mother, and Hanh, her 6-year-old sister, in Cua Tay District. Duy, her father, worked in Ho Chi Minh City and came home for short visits fortnightly. Nhi was enrolled in A3 Class for children aged 5–6 years old in Huong Duong Preschool that was situated in her neighborhood. Nhi had attended Huong Duong Preschool for 2 years and a half at the start of data collection.

Duong

Duong was 4 years old at the beginning of data collection. Duong lived with his father, Dan, his mother, Han, and his grandmother in a three-bedroom apartment in the Son Ha new urban area of Bac Binh District. Duong was enrolled in Bong Lua Class for children aged 4–5 years in Binh An Preschool near his apartment. When data collection started, he had been attending Binh An Preschool for 2 years. The following section explains the data-collection procedure and methods of this study.

Data Collection: The Process of Establishing Ties

Data collection was a dialogue in which I established ties with children, their parents, and teachers, and listened to their stories (Frank, 2010). The key in establishing ties was to find ways to “eliminate extraneous, research-induced ‘contaminants’” (Speer, 2008, p. 511) so that I could balance between being a *hoa* and a qualitative researcher in relationship with participants. I spent 4 weeks getting familiar with the focal child, his or her parents, teachers, and settings, which allowed me to become a natural part of their ordinary lives (S. Xu & Connelly, 2010). The warm-up time was vital to clarify my roles, details of the research and build a connection with them.

The process of data collection was directed by research questions. The overarching question is:

How do young Vietnamese children’s living stories reflect their identities-in-flux in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand? Two subquestions are:

1. How do young Vietnamese children’s identities emerge in their living stories at home and early childhood education (ECE) settings?
2. What are influential factors in young Vietnamese children’s identities-in-flux?

In order to address the first subquestion, I used multimethods to gather children’s living stories at home and ECE settings as well as parents’ and teachers’ stories about children. I gathered data two to four times weekly for a total of 4 to 7 hours per week in each case, which was based on the natural occurrence of events. For each child, I observed the child at home (1 hour per week) and at ECE settings (3–4 hours per week) to gather their living stories in daily activities. I also engaged in informal conversations with the child, his or her parents, teachers, and friends during observations to understand the meaning and origin of the child’s words. Children’s artifacts during observation sessions were photographed. Two semistructured

interviews and follow-up contacts were used to collect narrative accounts of parents and teachers to answer the second subquestion of the role of contexts in children's identity formation. Fieldnotes were kept to mark key events during the fieldwork. Follow-up contact with focal children and their families was maintained from June 2019 to May 2020 to update the children's latest news and development. Descriptions of methods and their procedures are presented in subsequent sections.

Observation

Observation provides researchers an in-depth understanding of children in their contexts (Cohen et al., 2007). Children author themselves through living stories that they tell in ordinary activities at home and ECE settings. Observation in these settings was used as a primary method to gather children's living stories in this study. Observations were conducted through video recordings, informal conversations with children, parents, and teachers; and fieldnotes. Weekly observations occurred 1 hour at home and 3–4 hours at ECE centers for 10 weeks. I explain the procedures and rules of observation next.

A feature of my observation was to become a friend of children in their natural settings. In this sense, I was in the role of a participant-observer in children's daily activities (Yin, 2014). Indeed, becoming a friend of the children was more meaningful than being a participant-observer. The fact that I was an adult could not be erased in children's minds even when I took part in their daily activities. For me, being a friend of the children led me to shift my identities from a mature researcher to "an atypical adult" (Corsaro, 2003, p. 5) or a "very non-threatening person" (Dyson, 1997, p. 25), who kept a mutual, close and collaborative relationship with children over the time. To maintain the role as a friend of the children, I let them and their stories lead my work. I always introduced myself and my aim to become a person who listened, talked, and played with them in daily activities. I kept smiling, acknowledged their presence, and asked to join their play. I also shared my living stories with children so that I could preserve a mutual relationship with them. During the period of data collection in New Zealand, I was pregnant. Having a pregnant woman appear at their homes and ECE centers made children and their peers curious. They asked me about my pregnancy and the unborn baby. In these cases, I was always smiling and willing to answer their questions. When young children in Vietnam asked me about my newborn baby, I was happy to show them funny photos and videos of her.

Sometimes, children asked me about my life in New Zealand, and I shared experiences. These examples revealed that events of my life reverberated in living stories with children.

A key thing in establishing ties with children was to respect their privacy and their rights in making decisions. I always sought the child's acceptance before videotaping. I explained my work to them and stopped video recording if they expressed verbally or nonverbally that they did not want to be observed. Children and their co-interactors were encouraged to carry out their daily activities as freely as they could. No attempt was made to interrupt or prescribe participants' activities. A concern regarding children's privacy was about the triad relationship among children, me, and their parents and teachers. From the fieldwork, I learned that children's understanding of my relationship with the parents and teachers could influence children's perception of me as a friend and their openness. During observations and informal interactions, the children and their peers sometimes broke the rules (i.e., not tidying up toys). They knew that I saw it, and they said to me, "If you say this with teachers, I will take you to jail." Nhi, sometimes, said that "I want to tell you a secret, but you have to swear not to tell my parents and teachers." In all cases, I followed their rules and did not tell things that they shared or did with others. For Duong, this issue was more complicated than with other children. Duong had a habit of starting stories by saying, "I have a secret." Whenever Duong said this, after listening to his stories, I asked him whether he was willing to share his secrets with others in my writing in the future. Consequently, I disclosed only the stories for which he had given verbal agreement. Keeping promises with children is a serious matter, which allowed me to protect their confidentiality and enter their peer culture (Corsaro & Eder, 1990).

In terms of procedures, observations were video recorded. I video recorded children and made fieldnotes while they interacted with other interlocutors or play materials. A handy camcorder was used to record as these devices are appropriate in ECE settings where children are "highly mobile" (Jewitt, 2012, p. 15). During observation sessions, living stories were recognized in a wide range of activities and multimodal forms. Children generated living stories when they conversed with other people (i.e., teachers, parents, peers, siblings) or while they played alone with materials (i.e., toys, books). Children utilized multimodal forms to create stories. Children's stories, thus, not only existed in written or spoken language. Their nonverbal languages (i.e., gestures, gaze, body movements) and artifacts that they created during observations were also considered as forms of their stories. The four children's talk and their

nonverbal actions during interactions were recorded by video recording and accompanied by fieldnotes during observations, depending on the situation. Video recordings were normally utilized during children's daily talk with other interlocutors. Fieldnotes were used before and after observations to record participants' informal conversations or to preserve children's privacy in special situations (e.g., crying, sharing secrets).

Children's artifacts during observation sessions were gathered. Children's artifacts were diverse in types. Dylan's artwork was drawings and block units. Tony loved to create drawings, masks, and shields of superheroes. Nhi's artifacts were drawings, clothes she designed for dolls, and video clips that she recorded herself by iPad when she played at home. She selected some of her videos to share with me when I visited her home. Duong was keen on drawing, building blocks, and singing. I asked the permission of children, their parents, and teachers to photograph these artifacts. I video recorded the focal children's artmaking process.

During observations, I was engaged in informal conversations with children, their parents, teachers, siblings, and peers to create a collaboration among us and understand the meanings of children's living stories. As a friend of children, I did not formally interview them. Instead, I followed their emerging interests and narrative contingency in observation sessions to raise questions. A casual chat between children and me could start when they wanted to share something. Open-ended questions included:

- Do you want to tell me more about it?
- What does “_____” (i.e., children's actions, artifacts) mean?
- How do you know_____?
- How do you feel? Why do you feel like this?

These questions helped to trace the origin of children's words in their everyday stories. I had informal conversations with teachers and parents during observation sessions to ask for their understanding of the meanings of children's living stories. Their responses could help confirm, modify, and extend children's voices.

Informal Conversations and Semistructured Interviews With Parents and Teachers

Clandinin (2013) claimed that “the places and relationships we become part of when we begin with living alongside participants call forth the stories, we, and they, tell” (p. 45). The teachers and parents and I became close when we shared our experiences in informal conversations over this study. In these conversations, I followed the call for stories and “let

stories breathe” (Frank, 2010) to “create a space for the stories of both participants and researchers to be composed and heard” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 45). For example, personal narratives of being Vietnamese in New Zealand connected the parents and me in New Zealand. “Em nói được tiếng Việt không? (Can you speak Vietnamese?) was the first question I received from Vietnamese parents. We told each other about our ups and downs, and our homeland nostalgia in the first days when we arrived in New Zealand. Speaking in our mother tongue and our transnational experiences made us, persons of a diaspora community in an English-speaking country, interconnected with each other.

For teachers, informal communication during the time I was in their settings enabled me to learn more about their lives, perspectives, and the influence of their values and practices on their perceptions of the child. Jenny, Tony’s teacher, shared her living stories of struggles when she first came to New Zealand, when her English was not strong. This sharing reflected why she wanted to support immigrant children like Tony to adjust to the new environment in Harbor Center. Through informal conversations with parents and teachers, I could maintain my role as a natural part of their settings and update the information of children’s daily activities and new events. Key information from informal conversations was recorded as fieldnotes.

Interviews are a vital method in qualitative research to learn about participants’ experiences in real-life settings and understand their backgrounds (Creswell, 2009). Semistructured interviews with parents and teachers were utilized to learn about parents’ and teachers’ stories of children’s backgrounds and the impact of family and ECE settings on children’s identities development. The interview protocols are shown in Appendices K and L. These prompts were flexibly used according to participants’ responses, facilitating parents and teachers to have space to express their perceptions. Interviews with parents and teachers, thus, were open-ended dialogues in which I became an engaged interlocutor to listen to their sharing rather than being an objective and silent listener. Teachers and parents were asked to join in two semiconstructed interviews of 30–45 minutes each. All interviews were audio recorded by iPhone, and participants were given notice that they had the right to stop recording whenever they wanted. Fieldnotes were taken to supplement the recording of critical points in their answers and to prompt further questions.

The first interview with teachers and parents in the first week of data collection provided key information about the children’s backgrounds, their habits, and practices of ordinary talk

between them and others at home and in ECE settings. For parents and teachers in New Zealand, I asked more about their experiences of living in this country. Additionally, I asked parents and teachers to share their perspectives on children in the first interview. For parents, I asked about significant events that happened in children's lives and their perceptions of the influence of turning points on their child's identities formation. In the last week of data collection, the second interview was conducted to understand their opinions about the impact of contexts on the children's identities formation. I also asked them about changes in the children's everyday stories during this study.

Parents and teachers were given the opportunity to review, provide edits, and offer additional comments on the transcript of their semistructured interviews. A hard copy or electronic file of the interview transcript was sent to the participants immediately after transcribing the recordings for them to review the transcripts in their own time. This transcript review took approximately 1 hour. Participants were asked to provide feedback within 2 weeks.

Follow-Up Contact

I kept in touch with all focal children and their parents through personal communications (i.e., visits, phone calls, video calls, messages) from June 2019 to May 2020. For Tony and Dylan, I revisited their homes several times upon their parents' invitation in December 2019. For Duong and Nhi, I had video calls with them when I was in New Zealand and visited their houses and invited them to visit my home when I was in Vietnam in February 2020. These follow-up contacts allowed me to maintain my role as a friend of children and their families. The personal communications with children and parents after fieldwork provided new information about the four children and gave a coherent and systematic picture of their identities-in-flux.

Data Analysis: The Process of Deconstructing Ties

If data collection was a process of establishing ties between participants and me, data analysis was a step to deconstruct these ties with the highest respect and openness. For narrative inquirers, data analysis is a combination of both an analysis of narrative and narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988). An analysis of narratives refers to methods that researchers use to analyze stories to interpret participants' living experiences. Narrative analysis refers to a process in which researchers utilize analyzed stories as elements to write up their storied interpretation. My data analysis was combined with both narrative analysis and analysis of stories. Three steps

in the process of analysis were: transcribing stories, analyzing stories, writing a case story of stories. I began data analysis by viewing and reviewing videotapes (listening and relistening, in the case of audiotapes) in parallel with children's artifacts, and reading and rereading fieldnotes to transcribe video recordings and interviews. Afterwards, I followed a Bakhtinian dialogical approach to analyze children's living stories. Last, I composed case stories of the four children from their living stories in which I had engaged.

Transcribing

I collected parents' and teachers' narratives about children from their interviews and informal conversations with them. I listened to and transcribed all interviews and reread fieldnotes to identify parents' and teachers' narrative accounts. Children's living stories required a complex process of transcribing. Children's living stories in the study were gathered from video-recorded observation, fieldnotes, and their artifacts. Their narratives were multimodal and emerged in daily interactions (i.e., adult-led activities, free-play activities, mealtimes, casual encounters). I watched videotapes and described their settings, interlocutors, the relationship between the child speakers and audiences. Then I viewed and transcribed both verbal and nonverbal languages of children in their interactions. I noted the focal children's gestures, gazes, facial expressions, and body movements. Their pauses, silences, emphases, and overlaps in speech, as well as shifts between English and Vietnamese language, were included in transcriptions. I watched children's artifacts and artmaking-processes in photos and videos, described them in verbal texts and wove them into transcripts of videotapes.

An Analysis of Living Stories

To understand and interpret children's identities-in-flux, I relied on DNA's rule to analyze each story in a narrative chain with others. As Frank (2010) suggested, I did "think about one story with another story...Two stories are necessary for thinking because each opens a critical distance from the evocative of the other" (p. 47). In the study, every story told by children was not analyzed singularly but holistically in a chain with preceding and upcoming narratives. Children's stories were also inextricably analyzed in relation to parents' and teachers' narratives about them.

Based on a Bakhtinian dialogical approach of identities-in-flux, I developed four layers of analysis of children's living stories. These layers required viewing videos and artifacts, listening to audio recordings, and reading transcripts and fieldnotes in four different ways. First,

I acknowledged the interconnection between participants and researchers in data analysis. As a researcher, I identified my subjectivities and their impact on my interpretation of children's stories. Second, I distinguished interlocutors and the relationship between them and the child narrators in their living stories. Third, the process by which children articulated others' words was examined to understand their identities-in-flux. Fourth, from a Bakhtin lens, children's identities-in-flux and their milieus are interdependent. Children's living stories and stories about them were positioned in their given contexts to see the reciprocity between contexts and children's identities. Four layers of analysis of living stories are explained next.

In the first layer, I considered the influence of my subjectivities and the relationship between participants and me on my interpretation of the overall shape of living stories in this study. The first step to start a dialogical approach, as Brown (1998) claimed, was to distinguish researchers' positioning, which influenced participants' perception of them and the researchers' understanding of participants. An acknowledgment of inquirers' subjectivities was needed to understand children's voices and discourses that grounded their voices (A. Lewis, 2010; Spyrou, 2011). Accordingly, I watched videos and read transcripts and fieldnotes to consider reciprocity between children and me during our dialogues. I noted the shifts in voice, gestures, and movements that children made when they talked to me or acknowledged my appearance. Dialogical researchers' interpretation is an ongoing process (Brown, 1998). I documented my feelings, thoughts, and concerns, which emerged during the first layer. Then I compared these emerging thoughts and feelings in the first layer of analysis with prior fieldnotes that had recorded my reflexivity in observations. This comparison clarified similarities and shifts (if yes) in my interpretation.

Second, I identified interlocutors who appeared in children's living stories and the relationship between the child narrators and their addressees. According to Bakhtin (1984a), each living word addresses someone who may be present or hidden in dialogue. I watched videos, read video transcripts, and positioned children's utterances in a narrative chain with their precedent and subsequent stories. Children's stories were also compared with parents' and teachers' interviews and informal conversations. This work contributed to identifying persons that children addressed in their stories (Mangan, 2017). The relationship between interlocutors in children's living stories was examined through Bakhtinian lenses of monologicality and dialogicality (Bakhtin, 1981). Shifts in relationship between child speakers and their

interlocutors in the chain of stories were noticed to see changes in the children's making sense of themselves and others over time.

Third, children's articulation of others' words was examined. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981, 1984a, 1990) work of otherness, I investigated how young storytellers articulated others' words to author themselves. Other's words exist in two primary forms: quotes and echoes of the first speaker's utterances (Gillespie, 2006). Quotes occurred when child speakers repeated utterances of a specific person or group (e.g., friends, siblings, parents, and teachers). Echoes implied words, opinions, and beliefs that children absorbed from external resources (e.g., books, media, traditional heritage, and their wider community). I triangulated different sources of data (e.g., interviews, fieldnotes, informal conversations, and video transcripts) to identify the possible origin of others' words in children's stories.

Afterwards, I compared these words in their original forms and those in children's articulation. I watched videos, read video transcripts, and noticed multimodal forms of utterances that children used in their living stories. I carefully noted gestures, facial expressions, body movements, speech, and artifacts that children created in their narratives. A modification was noticed when children utilized others' words in different language modes, blended them into a new situation, or produced new meanings for them (Kendrick, 2005). This analytical process shed light on the roles that children illustrated themselves in their articulation of others' words and the intersection of these roles. A description of children's intersecting and emergent roles indicated their identities-in-flux in given situations. The first three layers of analysis of children's living stories contributed to answering the first subquestion: How do young Vietnamese children's identities emerge in their living stories at homes and ECE settings?

In the last layer, I positioned children's stories and their emergent identities in relation to contextual factors. Guided by Bakhtin's theory of the self, I aimed to understand the relationship between contexts and children's identities (De Vocht, 2015). I went back and forth between all living stories and the literature of institutional, social, and cultural contexts in Vietnam and New Zealand to identify contextual factors in participants' stories. I then paid attention to the influence of cultural resources, peer interactions, and adults' beliefs and practices on children's identities-in-flux.

In terms of cultural resources, I examined the impact of popular culture and traditional heritage on children's identities-in-flux. Regarding peer culture, I considered how children

influenced and were influenced by their friends in their authoring themselves. I attended to utterances of parents and teachers in dialogues and interviews through the lens of Bakhtinian concepts of monologicality and dialogicality (Matusov, 2009). The examination facilitated my interpretation of how adults perceived children and how they responded to children. Afterwards, suggested by Dyson's (1997) work, I specifically explored children's living stories to understand how they used previous experiences and special interests to respond to these contextual resources. I explored whether the children confirmed, negotiated, or resisted materials in their contexts. Primed by Bakhtin's idea of unfinalizability, I examined intersections within these influential factors. The last layer of analysis addressed the second subresearch question: What are influential factors in young Vietnamese children's identities-in-flux?

Narrative Analysis to Compose Case Stories

Living stories address someone and call for the birth of other narratives. In narrative analysis, I respond to living stories that I had analyzed by inviting them into a dialogue to compose case stories of the focal children. Each case story contained a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of every child. Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 represent case stories of the four focal children. In each chapter, I introduce children's backgrounds and their settings in detail and then present narrative threads of their living stories and others' stories about them. My analysis of children's articulation of others' words and their emerging identities is woven in these threads. Narrative threads convey the dynamics and uniqueness in each child's life events and the child's emerging identities. I, therefore, have not generated a unified structure to represent living stories in all cases. Narrative threads in each case, thus, are organized based on the originality of "particular plotlines that threaded or wove over time and place" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132) throughout each child's living stories.

Living stories are creatures (Chawla, 2011; Frank, 2010). The selection of stories to write the case story of each child, therefore, was based on the feeling that "the stories I was representing had chosen me" (Frank, 2012, p. 10). A sense of being chosen by a story, however, was not emotional and subjective. The selection of children's living stories was formed by my understanding of their lives, contexts, as well as the ties between them and me (Frank, 2012; Jacobs, 2013).

An acknowledgment of the unfinalizability of stories and identities guided my writing. Frank (2005) stated that “one person can never say of another, ‘This is who such a person is.’ One can say, at most, ‘This is how I see this person now, but I cannot know what she or he will become’” (p. 967). I, therefore, resisted any finalized words on the child’s identities. Rather, I attempted to represent an open-ended process in which I entered a network of living stories to see with children to comprehend their emergent identities. I understood that my writing of children and their identities is one of the interpretations. I am not an author, rather an engaged interlocutor in my writing who brought living stories into dialogue and called for future audiences’ storied responses (Frank, 2005). Stories in this thesis, therefore, are alive.

Researcher’s Reflexivity

The dialogical approach creates a “sharing space” (Frank, 2005, p. 970) where participants and researchers can tell their living stories, disclose themselves, and have a mutual effect on each other. Dialogical researchers become a part of participants’ lives and vice versa. Living in the unfinalized chain of people’s stories, I realized that my positioning was both personal and relational. My personal identities as a Vietnamese person and an ECE researcher affected my approach to communicate with the parents and children and my interpretation of living stories. In turn, the four children, their parents, and teachers have changed my researcher role. My positionality in this study is in-flux, which is described next.

Prior to data collection, I held a positivist position and intended to observe children and their settings as a critical outsider. This initial intention, however, was changed by the people with whom I engaged. The moment in which Tony’s parents asked me if I could speak Vietnamese in our first meeting in Auckland woke up my sense of being Vietnamese. When Tony’s teacher shared challenges of language and culture she faced as an immigrant in New Zealand, I relived my narratives as an international student living there. Nhi’s perception of me as a person “who are just me, but likes to talk to her” in the Prologue, Dylan’s silent smile at me (story 1), or the Vietnamese Anthem that Duong and I sang together are examples of how the children interacted with me as a friend. Gradually, I became a *hoa*, a friend to live alongside the children, their parents, and teachers to listen to their voices. As relational beings, children, their parents, and teachers, and I lived in an interconnected network of narratives.

A reason for the reciprocity between participants and me is because we are all Vietnamese; we share similarities of language, race, cultural background, values, practices. I

acknowledge that participants and me, the researcher, were never totally similar. O'Connor (2004) alerted me to the concern of positionality when narrative inquirers conduct studies within their own ethnic groups. The more familiar I was, engaged in participants' lives as an insider, the more challenging it was to avoid assumptions and seek objective clarification as an outsider. As a qualitative researcher, I am "never simply an insider or an outsider" (Dowling, 2005, p. 33). Both similarities and differences between participants' lived experiences and mine could raise biases that I, as a researcher, should recognize. I clarify similarities and differences between participants and me in this section so that I can examine biases and "transform myself" (Archibald, 2008, p. 8) to understand children's living stories.

My ethnic identity as a Vietnamese brought me benefits and challenges while conducting this study. A sense of being Vietnamese contributed to my insightful understanding of young Vietnamese children, their parents, and teachers. I have experienced living in the streams of Vietnamese discourses of education, children's rights, and ethnicity. I, thus, was an insider to Vietnamese cultural influences on stories of the children, parents, and teachers. For example, children's everyday narratives prompted me to revisit my childhood memories or my son's stories. This connection reflected the ways that stories lived and reverberated "from persons to persons" (Kim, 2016, p. 9) in this thesis. Although I shared similar trajectories of being Vietnamese with participants, these similarities could raise assumptions from both sides. For me, I could shadow my experiences to interpret the living stories of Vietnamese parents and their children. From Vietnamese parents' and teachers' perspectives, they might make a rapid assumption that we could easily understand each other when we entered dialogue. Sometimes, they started stories by saying: "you know what I am saying," "you are no stranger to our Vietnamese people." To avoid potential biases, I always acknowledged my insider-outsider positioning and identified when I was similar or not to participants. I encouraged participants to tell their stories in detail so that they could clarify their ideas. I also kept in touch and consulted them to verify that my interpretation would reflect their voices.

I was aware of the differences between participants and me over the time of doing this research. Although the parents and I respected children's rights, I recognized differences between their educational beliefs and mine. For instance, Nhi's mother believed that academic education was vital in children's future. Sometimes, she asked for my advice to help her child prepare for an entrance examination to the competitive primary schools in Hanoi. As a doctoral

researcher in ECE, I started “questioning what I have known as truth” (Kim, 2016, p. 28). I asked myself: “Are these academic activities beneficial to children? Are they real or not?” These questions made me feel like an outsider in my homeland context. A sense of outsidership might bring both benefits and harm to my positionality. In terms of advantages, I had a chance to resee the Vietnamese contexts with critical eyes, exploring multifacets of the truth that the participants might not address, and I could not see if I always stayed inside (Bold, 2012).

Regarding disadvantages, differences between participants’ beliefs and mine might lead me to disregard their genuine voices. To avoid this, I drew on Bakhtinian ideas of openness and unfinalizability. I shared my personal view of academic education in children’s development with Nhi’s mother, but I also respected her right to be different from me. I did not attempt to “offer the monological assurance of knowing what certain lives consist of and what can be expected of them” (Frank, 2005, p. 969). I learned “to hold two more apparently conflicting points of view ... [which] is increasingly necessary for living in a world of high diversity and rapid change” (Bateson, cited in Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 21). I reassured participants about member-checking and tried to reduce any potential bias on my interpretation, which I will explain next.

Credibility

In qualitative research, credibility can be regarded as a fit between data that were collected and analyzed by the researcher and the things that happened in the natural settings where the study was conducted (Cohen et al., 2007). The credibility of data is crucial to determine the quality of data and empower the interpretation in qualitative research (L. M. Connelly, 2016). In this section, I outline issues that related to trustworthiness in this study and resolutions that I took with the aim of meeting requirements of credibility.

Triangulation and member-checking were adopted to ensure credibility in the analysis of children’s articulation of others’ words. Identifying others’ words in children’s living stories might be subjective and challenging when researchers do not provide relevant evidence of the origins of these words (White, 2009). In order to tackle this obstacle, I employed triangulation, which refers to “the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena” (Patton, cited in Carter et al., 2014, p. 545). Accordingly, multiple methods (i.e., observations, interviews, fieldnotes, artifacts) were used to gather data, and data came from diverse sources (i.e., children, parents, teachers, booksmedia

programs). Member-checking was used within and after data collection to track the origin of children's words. During data collection, I asked questions about the origin and meanings of children's utterances in informal conversations with them, their parents, and teachers. I also looked for books and media programs to which participants referred, to understand resources that might ground children's utterances. After data collection, I sent transcripts of all interviews and my preliminary interpretation of children's living stories to teachers and parents to check the accuracy and provide their feedback. Follow-up contacts with focal children and their families were maintained after data collection to ensure that my interpretation linked with updated information of the children and their contemporary situations. These solutions allowed me to ensure validity and reduce my bias in interpreting children's stories and identities.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the methodology of the study, which utilized a multiple-case-study design within the DNA. It has briefly described the settings, participant recruitment, and biographical information of focal children. The process of data collection with an emphasis on establishing ties between participants and me has been explained. The data-analysis procedure that sustained the ongoing dialogue with participants and deconstruct the ties with them has been illustrated in detail. This chapter describes how children's living stories were examined in chains with parents' and teachers' narratives about them through four layers of analysis and the process of composing the four case stories. The chapter concludes with the researcher's reflexivity and the research credibility. The subsequent Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 present in-depth pictures of the four children, their living stories, and identities.

Chapter 4: The Case of Dylan

Dylan was a 5-year-old Vietnamese boy born and living in Auckland, New Zealand. I met Dylan the first time at his home in the last week of May 2018. When his mother introduced me and asked him to say “Hi Aunty” to me, Dylan shrieked and ran. He kept a distance from me in the following weeks. When I approached him, he ran away. When I asked him about his name, he shouted and laughed at me. At the same time, I learned that he did not frequently communicate with his ECE teachers. When the teachers asked him questions, he ignored them. He only came to them when he needed their help (i.e., opening his lunch box), but not often. A relieving teacher in his Manuka Center asked me why I approached him for a study of stories, as they had rarely seen him talking. A turning point that changed the relationship between Dylan and me happened in my second visit to his home. It was a winter morning in Auckland in June 2018.

Living Story 1

This morning, I leave Dylan’s house after the second visit. Bewilderment comes to me when I am on the way to my car. Although 3 weeks have passed since I met Dylan, I am still struggling to communicate with him. When I sit next to him, he runs away. When I approach him, he shouts and laughs at me. Yesterday, one of his teachers tells me that he is “not a good listener.” “How can I understand Dylan? How does Dylan understand me? Should I give up selecting him as a participant?” These questions cling to me when I am leaving his house this morning. When I go to my car and look back, I see him behind me. Perhaps, I am too deep in a chain of thoughts that I do not notice that he runs out of the house to look at me. When I realize Dylan, he is barefoot, wearing a light T-shirt, sitting on the fence of his house. He is looking at me for a long time and smiling. When I ask him to go back to his house as it is very cold outside, he just smiles and does not say anything. He only runs back home when his grandmother calls him. (Fieldnote, 2 June 2018)

Many times, I wanted to ask, “Dylan, what are you thinking? Tell me, please,” but I did not. The moment Dylan gazed and smiled became his story to tell that he was ready to open the world to let me come in. Dylan’s smile and gaze at me on that winter day was not only his welcoming sign but also a living story waiting for my response. From that moment, I became

Dylan's traveling companion to explore and see the world with him. I stopped seeking his "talking" as the only way for stories to exist. Instead, I learned to engage with his multimodal communications. This chapter describes Dylan's settings, dynamics in his multimodal communications, and his emergent identities around the special event that he became the oldest brother in his family.

Dylan's Settings: Where Peer Culture Is Valued

Dylan was the first child of a Vietnamese immigrant family in South Auckland. Mr. Du and Mrs. Thu, his parents, came to New Zealand as students in the early 2010s. Both were born and raised in the countryside of the North Central Coast of Vietnam. Like many young people who were born in the 1980s in rural areas of Vietnam, Thu and Du went overseas to escape poverty in their homeland. Initially, due to financial constraints and English proficiency, they attended short English courses in Auckland. Afterward, they found manual jobs. Thu worked as a baker and nail worker, and Du as a kitchen hand, painter and builder. They met in Auckland and got married in 2012. They had three sons, Dylan in 2013, Dave in 2014, and Benny in June 2018. At the beginning of this study, the family lived in South Auckland, in a neighborhood that consisted mainly of Indian and Pasifika families.

In informal conversations and the second interview, Thu reflected her thoughts on Dylan's significant event when he learned he was to become Dave's older brother. After Dave's birth, Thu and Du decided to send him back to Vietnam to ask their parents to take care of him. Their financial situation did not support them in staying in New Zealand with two young children. Only Dylan lived in New Zealand with his parents. When Dave was 2 years old, the parents decided to take him back to reunite with his family in New Zealand. The period when Dave had just come back to New Zealand was "really hard" (Thu, informal conversation [conv.], 2 June 2018) for Dylan. He had to learn to share his parents' attention and care with the newly reunited brother. Thu shared that it took Dylan several months to tackle struggles and frustration before accepting Dave as a family member and his younger brother. Four years later, Thu was pregnant for the third time. In the second week of this data collection, Thu gave birth to the third baby, Benny. Dylan became the oldest brother of two younger siblings. In an informal conversation before her delivery, I asked Thu how she felt about Dylan's response when Benny was coming. Thu was a little worried but believed that "Dylan knows what he

should do as the oldest brother” (Thu, conv. , 20 June 2018). One narrative thread in this chapter, thus, is about Dylan’s identities-in-flux when he became the oldest brother.

At home, Thu was busy caring for the newborn son. Du worked full-time. He left home early and came back late. When Dylan was at home, he spent most of his time playing with Dave. Dave was one year younger than Dylan, but Dylan considered Dave his best friend at home and at the ECE center (Thu, Interview 1). The two boys’ favorite activities at home were building blocks, playing with superhero toys and alphabet magnetic blocks, and watching TV and YouTube videos on Thu’s iPad. Dylan was usually an initiator and leader in free-play activities with Dave. Dylan loved the locker room in his house, where he played with Dave or alone. While Dylan was in this room by himself, Dylan often lay down on the floor and drew on paper or watched the outside scenery from the window. When Du was off and stayed at home, he preferred playing with Dylan and Dave (i.e., walking, watching TV). In Du’s reflection on the family’s current life, he was comforted by his decision to settle in New Zealand. Although life was not always easy, the most important thing was that his children “could play and grow up in more freedom” than he did when he was a child in Vietnam (Du, conv. , 5 July 2018).

Dylan and Dave were enrolled in the afternoon sessions from 1 to 5 pm at Manuka Center. Located in central South Auckland, Manuka Center belongs to Happy Kid Company, one of New Zealand’s largest ECE service providers. Teachers and children in the center came from multicultural backgrounds. The educational staff in Manuka Center consisted of three qualified teachers. Reika, the headteacher, was Tongan while the other ones, Mandi and Mindi, were Indian. Children in Manuka Center came from multiethnic families in the neighborhood, with Asians being the largest group. Twenty-four children were enrolled in the afternoon session when the study began. 45% of these children were identified on parental enrollment forms as Asian ethnicity, 25% as Pasifika, 15% as Pākehā, and others from many different racial and ethnic groups. The center provided both sessional (4 hours per day) and full-day (8 hours per day) education and care for up to 40 children over the age of 2 years. Most children in the center were enrolled in 4-hour sessions (8.30–12.30 pm or 1–5 pm) and received a subsidy of 20 hours ECE from the government, which means that they could attend with no tuition fee. The parents prepared food for their children. Dylan and Dave both enjoyed tuition-free thanks to 20 hours of ECE funds. Frequently, around 20–24 children were enrolled in afternoon sessions. During

every 4-hour-session, teachers served afternoon tea for children, observed children's free-play, talked to the children about what they were doing, and took photos of their activities. The mat time did not happen regularly during my visits.

A description of Dylan's setting highlights the role of peer culture in the child's identities-in-flux. The curriculum framework of Manuka Center, *Te Whāriki*, underlined children's peer culture as a resource for their learning and identity formation (MoE, 2017). Corsaro and Eder (1990) conceptualized peer culture as "a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns" (p. 197) that emerge in children's social interactions with peers. His parents and teachers valued Dylan's relationship with peers and siblings in his daily life. Thu shared that Dylan loved playing with Dave and Shavid, a 4-year-old Indian boy, in the center. Teachers in Manuka Center were aware of the value of children's social interactions with friends and respected children's preferences in their free-play with peers. In the first interviews, Mandi and Mindi reported that Dylan did not frequently contact educational staff, but he spent a lot of time playing with his close friends. Reika informed me that Dylan became talkative in his immediate group. My observation confirmed this. Dylan preferred playing with Dave and Shavid. At the center, Dylan and his friends loved role-play games (e.g., family game, cooking game), building blocks, climbing the monkey bars, and playing in the sandpit. During free-play time with Dave and Shavid, Dylan used a wide range of multimodal languages (i.e., constructing, drawing, body actions, and spontaneous talk). The first narrative thread in this chapter describes how Dylan used multimodal communications in interactions with others to express himself. The second one illustrates Dylan's identities-in-flux around the event of Benny's birth, when Dylan became the oldest brother.

"Nom Nom Nom": Multimodal Communications in Dylan's Identities-in-Flux

Parents and teachers held both similarities and differences in their perceptions of Dylan. Both parents and teachers emphasized his nonverbal language in expressing his identities. From the parents' perspective, Dylan was a "quiet" child who did not frequently share his daily stories with adults (Thu, Interview 1). Thu said Dylan was not a person who purposely expressed his thoughts and feelings with his parents. Dylan was keen on using actions to show what he felt, said Thu (Interview 2). In teachers' reflections, Dylan did not positively come to talk or share stories with them. "No stories" from Dylan was a similar answer from teachers in the first

interview. Teachers Reika and Mindi shared that Dylan often used “body language.” “He [Dylan] just uses body language. I don’t hear anything from him,” said Reika (Interview 1).

Teachers and parents, however, differed in explaining the reasons for Dylan’s preference for using nonverbal language. In the second interview, Reika and Mindi proposed a lack of English proficiency as the main reason Dylan did not talk to them. This explanation also resonated with teachers’ ideas in the first interviews that English was an obstacle facing children who spoke another language at home in their transition to Manuka Center. The parents, however, conveyed that Dylan was fluent in English. Thu thought that Dylan’s English proficiency was higher than hers.

In contrast with teachers, Thu did not think Vietnamese was Dylan’s first language as he could not speak his mother tongue. For Thu, language was not the main issue challenging Dylan in Manuka Center. She thought that Dylan loved using funny bodily actions to make others laugh (Interview 2).

When I lived stories of teachers and parents about Dylan, a sense of ambiguity came to me. “What are Dylan’s stories? How does he compose narratives? What are the meanings of his body language and funny actions? What is his primary language? Does the Vietnamese language make sense with him?” (Fieldnote, 5 July 2018). Across the ambiguity was an overall question, “I am staying here and now with the little child, but how can/will I understand him?” The living story with Dylan on the winter day clung. The moment in which Dylan, barefoot, was sitting on the fence and smiling let me realize that he was not open to sharing his world with all people. Gradually, I learned to see with him to understand silences, body actions, and imaginary stories that he used to interact with people and construct his worlds. Living stories in this section will describe this.

Dynamics in Dylan’s Silences and Body Actions

Dylan often integrated body actions, gestures, and silences in interactions with other interlocutors, especially adults. Living Stories 2–5 reveal diverse meanings of these types of Dylan’s languages in his identities-in-flux.

Du was busy, and he was hardly at home. Dylan, however, loved playing with Du. Living Stories 2–3 reflect how Dylan used nonverbal actions to invite his father to play with him.

Living Story 2

Du sits down on the sofa to rest. Dylan brings his toy car to Du.

Dylan: “Daddy, it’s broken. Help me fix it.”

Du: “I don’t know. You are a boy. Do it by yourself.”

Dylan keeps silent and runs to his room. (Fieldnote, 23 July 2018)

Living Story 3

Sitting on the sofa in the living room, Du opens a video “Boom” by Tiësto and Sevens on YouTube TV. Dylan is very excited. Dylan comes to the sofa and sits next to his father. Dylan sees a female dancer’s buttocks on the TV and asked Du.

Dylan: “What’s that?”

(Du gazes at the TV and shrugs his shoulders)

Du: “I don’t know.”

(Watching a dancing couple kissing each other on the TV, Dylan turns to his father with eyes wide open).

(Du shrugs again and puckers his lips)

Du: “I don’t know.”

(Dylan stares at his father. Du shrugs his shoulders, raises his hands, and tilts his head. Dylan gazes at his father and shrugs his shoulders in response. Du gazes at Dylan, shrugs his shoulders, and smiles at him. Dylan gazes at his father, shrugs his shoulders, and smiles). (Video recording, 30 July 2018)

Two stories conveyed different positions of Dylan and Du in their interactions. In Story 2, Du did not want to get involved in Dylan’s play and refused his son’s request. Du’s reply turned monological. Dylan, thus, did not have space to be heard, and he kept silent. Story 3 occurred 1 week later. Du answered Dylan’s question, “What’s that?” by repeating twice, “I don’t know.” Then, the dialogue between Dylan and Du was continued by shrugs and smiles rather than talking. Du utilized shrugs to respond to Dylan’s questions. Reciprocally, Dylan repeated shrugs and smiles to reply to Du. Shrugs imply a speaker’s indetermination. Du knew what happened on the TV screen (Du, conv. , 30 July 2018). Du’s shrugs and smiles were not additional gestures to illustrate confusion in his responses, “I don’t know” to Dylan.

I realize the potential to explain Du's gestures by connecting Stories 2 and 3. In Story 2, the right to talk belonged to Du but not Dylan. In contrast, Du's shrugs and smiles in Story 3 reflected his engagement and joy in communicating with Dylan. The space of dialogue in Story 3 was shared by both persons rather than only the father. Reciprocally, Dylan stopped asking; he also shrugged, gazed at his Dad, and smiled. Du shared that body actions that he and Dylan used let him feel that he was "playing a game" with his son. The shrugs and smiles Du and Dylan created together shifted them from father and son to playmates. In Story 3, Dylan showed an interest in using body actions to communicate with his father. Through body actions, Dylan transformed himself from a passive listener in Story 2 into his father's friend in Story 3.

Dylan liked using eating gestures in interactions with teachers and friends in Manuka Center. The meanings of this action varied in different situations, which are illustrated in Stories 4–5.

Living Story 4

Inside the ECE center, Dylan and Dave sit at the table and play with clay. The teacher, Mandi, sits next to them. Dylan tells Mandi that he is "making a burger" with clay. Dylan raises the burger to show it to Mandi and Dave and then takes the burger towards his mouth, opens his mouth as if he is eating it (see Figure 1).

Dylan: "Nom nom nom."

(Mandi takes a photo of Dylan's burger)

Mandi: "Dylan, what did you put in your burger?"

(Dylan keeps pretending to eat the burger loudly)

Dylan: "Nom nom nom."

(Dave and Dylan look at each other and both laugh)

Mandi: "Hey, Dylan, Is it your burger or Dave's burger?"

(Dylan puts the burger on the table and imitates a loud burp)

Dylan: "Burp."

(Dave laughs)

Dave: "It's his burger. I put strawberries inside."

Mandi: "Oh, I put Dylan's name on the left of the burger. Is it ok?"

(Dylan stops pretending, gazes at the table, and keeps silent. Dave gazes at Mandi and nods his head in agreement). (Video recording, 6 August 2018)

Figure 1

Dylan Imitates Eating His Clay Burger



Dylan was the person who initiated the idea of making a clay burger. When the teacher Mandi asked about his clay-work ownership (Is it your burger or Dave's burger?), Dylan did not reply. Dave answered the teacher's questions for Dylan. Dylan, however, used body actions (i.e., gaze to the burger, raising the burger to show his teacher and Dave) to claim his authorship with the clay burger he made. His eating sounds (i.e., chewing, burping sound) revealed a special interest in enjoying the burger. Dylan's multimodal language in the story showed his emergent role as a confident and competent art maker. Dylan's body actions interested both Dave and Mandi, but these two interlocutors chose different ways to respond to Dylan. Mandi asked Dylan several questions, but none of them related to his interest in eating the burger. Dave's laugh showed an engagement with Dylan's funny actions and awareness of Dylan as his playmate. This might be the reason Dylan laughed with Dave; meanwhile, he did not respond to the teacher and kept silent at the end of the story. In the following narrative, I will provide a different meaning of Dylan's silence, body action, and eating gestures in his living story with friends at the outdoor area of Manuka Center.

Living Story 5

In the outdoor area of Manuka Center, Shavid, Dave, and Dylan sit under the slide. Hoa sits beside them. They hold small blocks and play with them. Alvin runs towards, sits down, and grabs Shavid's block. Alvin is a big 5-year-old boy who is often aggressive (i.e., hitting, grabbing toys). Shavid is annoyed but cannot take it back. Dylan sees Alvin and Shavid and keeps silent. Alvin stands up, holds Shavid's block, and his arm touches Dylan's face by accident. Dylan touches his face.

Dylan: "Ouch."

(Alvin runs out, and Shavid follows him. Dylan turns to talk to me)

Dylan: "No fighting."

Hoa: "Yeah. That's true."

(Dylan continues playing with Dave and Shavid. Alvin comes back and wants to take Dave's block)

Dylan: "No, it's his toy. Why do you? Kick him!"

(Dylan points hand as a shooting gesture. Alvin laughs, points his hand as a shooting gesture. Dylan laughs and puts his block into his mouth as an eating gesture; see Figure 2)

Dylan: "Nom nom nom."

(Alvin laughs)

Alvin: "I don't want to eat."

(Alvin stands up and runs out). (Video recording, 6 August 2018)

Figure 2

Dylan Imitates Eating the Block



Initially, Dylan kept silent when seeing Alvin’s aggressive actions. Even when Alvin touched Dylan’s face, Dylan did not react. His utterance “No fighting” disclosed his position as an observer rather than a participant in the conflict. Dylan disagreed with Alvin’s grabbing toys (“No, it is his toy”), but he also did not resist Alvin. Instead, Dylan used and modified body actions (gun hand, eating pretense) to create a new game and invited Alvin to join in. Under Dylan’s transformation, gun hand was no longer a war symbol but a funny game between boys. As Dylan shared later, he wanted to initiate a shooting game that most boys, especially Alvin, favored. Alvin’s gun hand and laugh proved that he understood Dylan’s game and was engaged with Dylan. Through combining and modifying body actions, Dylan became a fun-maker and conflict-resolver who created “humor to share with others, easily kept calm and did not like fighting” (Thu, Interview 1).

Living Stories 2–5 convey the diverse meanings in Dylan’s silences, body actions, and gestures. In Dylan’s world, silences were an absence of sound but fullness of multimodal communications. In Story 2, Dylan’s silence showed he was rejecting talk. His silence, along with shrugs and smiles in Story 3, however, helped him reduce the distance to become a playmate of his father. In Story 4, Dylan’s eating sounds and body actions showed his joy in creating a clay burger, while his silence at the end revealed a disinterest in the teacher’s questions. He combined eating pretense and gun hand to switch his shooting gun from a symbol of violence to a fun game in Story 5. In other words, Dylan utilized silences in multimodal

languages to communicate with different interlocutors and performed diverse identities. Dylan expressed himself as a friend of his father in Story 3, a fun maker and art maker in Story 4, and a conflict-resolver in Story 5. In Dylan's identities-in-flux, silences "have many faces" (Trinh, 1987, p. 8). Dylan became more talkative when he expressed his special interest in art. The following section describes Dylan's identities through an artistic lens.

Blue Catboy: Reimagining Worlds Through an Artistic Lens

Alphabet letters, the cartoon character Catboy, and the sky were Dylan's special interests. In Dylan's imaginary world, these interests inspired him to create new meanings and became conversation initiators.

Dylan loved playing with magnetic alphabet sets at home and the ECE center. He could remember the alphabet since he was 2 years old (Thu, Interview 1). Dylan used magnetic letters to reflect his literacy knowledge and switch them to become materials of his artwork. Living Story 6 will describe this.

Living Story 6

At home, Dylan and Dave lie down on the floor and play with magnetic alphabet letters. Dylan stands up and takes a chair to play. The chair has crisscrossed iron bars at the base (see Figure 3).

Dylan sticks letters to the iron bars of the chair. He sticks P, M, J, and X. Dylan rotates the chair and gazes at stuck letters. Dave touches the X letter on the chair and wants to take it out, but Dylan prevents it.

Dylan: "No, it is my friend. No touching."

(Dave stops touching)

Dave: "Wow, Wow."

(Dylan rotates the chair. Then Dylan asks Dave to take out letters with him. Dave follows Dylan's instructions. After they put all letters from the chair to the floor, Dylan rotates the chair again)

Dave: "Wow, Wow."

Dylan: "Ok. Now, nobody's here."

(Dave pointed at the chair)

Dave: "Nobody's here." (Video recording, 2 July 2018)

Figure 3

Dylan Makes a Castle



After the story, I asked Dylan why he stuck magnetic letters on the base of the chair. He answered, “because I am making a castle.” He also held the X magnetic letter and told me that “X looks like a body” (conv. , 2 July 2018). Dylan combined knowledge of letter recognition, knowledge of the human body, and imagination to create new meanings for alphabet letters. In Dylan’s imaginary story, magnetic letters played two roles: materials to build “a castle”—an artwork, and the symbol of person body. Dylan did not just learn but also played with literacy letters and innovates ideas in his play. This story revealed his identities as both literacy learner and art maker.

Dylan was keen on high objects such as the sky and mountains. When he played with Dave and Shavid in the sandy area in Manuka Center, he usually initiated two others to make sand mountains with him. Once I asked him why, he looked up, pointed to the sky, and said, “we are making higher, up there, up to the sky.” The following stories describe the meaning of the sky in Dylan’s identities-in-flux.

Living Story 7

Dylan and Hoa are sitting on the floor in the locker room. Dylan puts pencils and white papers on the floor. Dylan gives Hoa white paper and a blue pencil and asks Hoa to draw the sky, and he will draw clouds. Hoa agrees. Hoa uses a blue pencil to draw straight lines on paper. After several minutes, Dylan asks Hoa to give him the paper and pencil. He uses a blue pencil to color spaces between lines Hoa drew. He tells Hoa, “You draw

the sky, and I can draw the clouds in the sky.” Thu comes to the room and asks Dylan what he is drawing. Dylan looks up at his mother and answers, “The sky. Aunty Hoa and I make the sky.” (Video recording and fieldnote, 14 August 2018)

Living Story 8

Dylan and Hoa come back to the locker room. Dylan runs out to open the curtain, uses his hand to point outside, and turns around to call Hoa.

Dylan: “See. See it.”

(Hoa comes and sits next to Dylan)

Hoa: “Yeah. Dylan, what do you see?”

(Dylan puts hands on the window, gazes outside)

Dylan: “I can see it.”

Hoa: “What do you see?”

(Dylan points out)

Dylan: “I can see the blue sky, up there in the sky.”

(Hoa gazes at the sky)

Hoa: “Oh yeah.”

(Dylan stands up, gazes at the sky)

Dylan: “With white one. The white clouds and the blue Catboy. The white for Romeo. The blue sky and the white clouds.”

(Hoa smiles)

Hoa: “Is it beautiful?”

(Dylan pulls the curtain back)

Dylan: “Yes. That’s beautiful. Right?”

(Dylan turns back to Hoa. Hoa smiles)

Hoa “Yes.” (Video recording, 1 August 2018).

Dylan’s interest in the blue sky was a knot to tie Living Stories 7–8 to each other. In Story 8, his utterance “the white clouds and the blue for Catboy. The white for Romeo” reflects a unique view. Catboy and Romeo were cartoon characters in “PJ Masks,” a Walt Disney television show on YouTube. In this series, Catboy usually wore a blue coat while Romeo wore a white one. Catboy was Dylan’s favorite character. In other conversations, he always imagined

himself as Catboy. In Story 8, Dylan blended materials from media into his imagination to create new associations to interpret the sky. In Dylan's imaginary view, Catboy and Romeo were no longer animated characters but color indicators: "blue Catboy" and "white for Romeo." Dylan brought his interests to compose new colors of the sky, Catboy blue and Romeo white, and the sky became "beautiful" to him because it embraced his interests. These color names revealed Dylan's emergent role as an artist who created new ways to see the sky.

Living Stories 6–8 convey Dylan's diverse ways of using drawing and constructive play to develop dynamic identities. He combined familiar resources (i.e., magnetic letters, a chair, pencil, paper) and imagination to create new artwork: the castle in Story 6, the picture of the sky in Story 7, and new indicators of sky colors in Story 8. This artwork conveyed his "aesthetic experiences" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 3) in knowing, connecting, and learning the world. Aesthetic experiences with constructive play and drawing allowed Dylan to enhance literacy knowledge, reimagine nature, and interconnect with people. His identities as a competent learner and teacher were coherent with his emergent role as a young artist.

A narrative chain of Living Stories 2–8 highlight Dylan's preference for selecting multimodal languages to communicate with others. Stories 4–8 showed that Dylan emerged as initiator and leader of conversations when he freely played in his favorite areas (e.g., locker room in his house, sandpit in the center) and with close people he wanted to share (i.e., Shavid, Dave, the researcher). Stories 4–8 also conveyed the influence of peer culture in Dylan's identities-in-flux. Dylan and friends (Alvin, Dave, Shavid) reciprocally influenced each other in play. Dylan's dialogical identities as a leader, a literacy learner, and a young artist emerged when he played, shared his interests, and learned from his peers.

"I Sleep Daddy": Emergent Identities in the Turning Point of Becoming the Oldest Brother

Benny, Thu's third child, was born on 20 June 2018. Dylan became the oldest brother of two siblings. The living stories in this section occurred after Benny's birth, and they captured a dynamic in Dylan's identities-in-flux throughout the event.

Living Story 9

Hoa visited his home when Benny, Dylan's third brother, was 5 days old. After breakfast, Hoa spread a blanket over the large table near the window, where the sunlight shined most. When the baby woke up, she would put him on the blanket for his sunbathing. Hearing Benny's crying in the room she went with him. Dylan stayed on the floor with Hoa. He climbed on the table, lying down on the blanket, and imitated sleeping (see Figure 4).

Dylan: "Zzz"

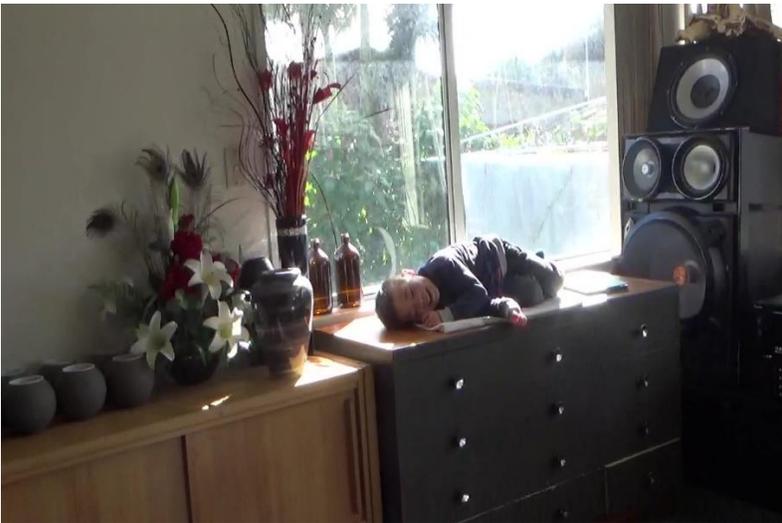
Hoa: "What are you doing, Dylan?"

(Dylan opens eyes to see Hoa and then closes eyes, lies down, speaks loudly)

Dylan: "It's my Em Benny."⁷ (Video recording, 25 June 2018)

Figure 4

Dylan Pretends to Sleep



In this story, Dylan mimicked Benny's actions (lying down on a blanket to sleep, snoring) and acted as "Em Benny." He became the little Benny to introduce his younger brother. Previously, Dylan had not verbally shared about Benny. When teachers or I asked him, "Dylan, how is Benny?" he did not answer (Fieldnote, 29 June 2018). In Story 9, Dylan told me about Benny through his body actions. This story, especially his utterance ("It's my Em Benny"), was

⁷ Dylan mixed the Vietnamese pronoun "Em" (young brother) and the newborn's name Benny to call his youngest brother.

not only a reply to my direct question (“What are you doing?”) but also a response to my preceding utterance (“Dylan, how is Benny?”) but now he was answering. Dylan’s gesture of sleeping demonstrates his dual roles as a new oldest brother and an impressionist who gave a playful representation of Benny. Story 9 reverberated with a later conversation between Dylan and Dave.

Living Story 10

Dylan and Dave sit on the sofa of their living room and watch the YouTube video “ABC Phonic Song” on TV. Dylan sees the letter B and the ball and hears the lyric on the screen, “B is ball. B, b. Ball.” He points at the screen, turns to Dave, “Look. B for Benny. Em Benny.” Then he lies down on the sofa, closes his eyes, imitates sleeping and snoring. Dave laughs and shouts, “Baby, baby.” Dylan smiles and continues closing his eyes and snoring. (Fieldnote, 10 August 2018)

Dylan invented a new association, “B for Benny,” which was different from the current resource, “B is ball” on YouTube. When I shared the story with Thu, she thought that Dylan’s invention came from his previous experience. One week before, Dylan saw Benny’s name on the balloon that Du wrote to celebrate Thu’s giving birth. Dylan blended his prior experience with media resources to compose a new symbolism for the letter B. Dylan’s new idea indicated his emergent identity as a young reader. This new role emerged in his pretend play with Dave. Dylan used not only his verbal language but also imitated actions (i.e., lying down, sleeping) to express his knowledge of little Benny. His pretend play influenced and was enriched by Dave. Led by Dylan’s actions, Dave also imitated his older brother to become a baby. Simultaneously, Dave’s sentence “Baby, baby” and his laugh fostered Dylan to continue his play. In their pretend game of becoming babies, both Dylan and Dave learned from and inspired each other. This living story showed an intersection within Dylan’s identities. Dylan’s emergent-reader-becoming arose when he also played different roles as a little Benny and Dave’s playmate. Dylan’s imitation of Benny’s actions in Stories 9–10 revealed his developing knowledge of babies and early literacy.

Benny’s arrival influenced the ways in which Dylan perceived himself in the relationships with his parents and Dave. Benny was born; Dylan was asked to sleep with his father and Dave instead of sleeping with his mother as he had done. Thu shared with me that

Dylan “did not like to separate from Mom at nights, but he must” (conv. , 28 June 2018). Living Stories 11–12 illustrate how Dylan emerged identities around the change “separating from Mom at nights.”

Living Story 11

Thu and Hoa are sitting in Thu’s room. Benny, the baby, is sleeping on the bed. Thu sees the door ajar. Dylan is sitting outside, next to the door.

Thu: “Dylan, what’s that?”

Dylan: “Mom, can I come?”

Thu: “Yeah. Come here. But gently. Benny is sleeping.”

(Dylan went to the room and sat quietly next to Thu)

Thu: “Dylan, what’s happening?”

Dylan: “I miss you, Mom.”

(Thu pats Dylan’s head)

Thu: “Sao con nhớ mẹ?” [Why do you miss me?]

(Dylan bows head, gazes at the floor)

Dylan: “I have to sleep with Daddy.”

(His voice is smaller, and his eyes are teary)

Thu: “Dylan ơi, mẹ thương con. Nhưng em Benny bé quá nên em cần ngủ với mẹ. Con lớn rồi, con ngủ với bố nha.” [Dear Dylan, I thương you. But Benny is so young that he needs to sleep with me. You are older, you sleep with Daddy]

(Dylan nods his head and then bows it. His eyes are wet. Thu hugs him. Thu, Dylan and Hoa keep silent). (Fieldnote, 28 June 2018)

This living story reflected Dylan’s multifaceted perceptions of himself and others. His actions of sitting outside until Thu asked, requesting to come in, and sitting quietly next to Mom could be interpreted as his assimilation of Thu’s requirement not to disturb Benny’s sleep. Dylan’s expression unfolded his emerging identity as a brother with great care for his newborn brother. At the same time, his saying “I miss you” with a softer sound and upset face revealed another identity—a young child who felt the loss of not being with Mommy at nighttime.

In the story, Dylan used English to speak with Thu while Thu spoke initially English and later Vietnamese. Thu switched to use Vietnamese when hearing Dylan's English sentence "I miss you." In her response, she did not say "I love you" in English. *Love* in English is *yêu* in Vietnamese. Thu also did not use the word "yêu" to convey her feelings. Instead, she said in Vietnamese, "Dylan ơi, mẹ thương con." *Thương* in Vietnamese has a more significant meaning in comparison with *yêu* (love). *Thương* covers the values of love, empathy, and understanding (Thich, 2010). Because an individual understands others' hurts and losses, the person *thương*—loves and empathizes with them. Thu explained later that she did not say "I love you" in English but used *thương* to express her understanding of Dylan's sadness and her tenderness for her son. In an informal conversation, Thu also said that she was touched when hearing Dylan's sentence "I miss you." Her Vietnamese phrase, "mẹ thương con," conveyed that the little Dylan and his feelings were dialogically present in herself. Dylan responded to Thu's Vietnamese saying by keeping silent and crying quietly. Even though he was not fluent in Vietnamese, he comprehended the meaning of *thương* in his mother's words. The sound of *thương* also provoked my thoughts. I, a Vietnamese researcher and a mother, saw my mothering experiences in Thu's sentences. When the Vietnamese word *thương* resounded in the little room, I immediately kept silent to become an invisible observer and respected Thu's and Dylan's privacy. The sound of *thương* interconnected three of us in a Vietnamese sense.

From teachers' and mother's perspectives, Dylan did not show his awareness of being Vietnamese. Teachers and Thu reflected that Dylan had a Vietnamese name on his passport, but he did not remember it. He did not share any stories related to his Vietnamese ethnicity with friends and teachers at the center. His primary language was English. He could understand his parents' Vietnamese language but always responded in English. I, however, could see a sense of being Vietnamese in Dylan at the moment that he listened to the sound of *thương*, nestled in his mother's arms, teary eyes, and being silent.

One week later, I had another chance to hear Dylan talking about sleeping with his Dad but not Mom at night. The story occurred in the interaction between Dylan and me in Manuka Center.

Living Story 12

Dylan introduces the photo of his family on the family–whānau Board at Manuka Center. He points and introduces Du, Thu, Dave, respectively. When he points at himself in the photo, he said, “I besides Daddy. I sleep Daddy.” (Video recording, 5 July 2018)

The utterance “I sleep Daddy” was notable. This sentence seemed to deviate from the narrative track. The date at the bottom of his photo was December 2017. At that time, Benny was not born; all the family slept together in one room. This utterance, therefore, did not describe the context of this photo, but rather a current event in Dylan’s life—sleeping with Daddy instead of Mommy.

The narrative chain of Living Stories 11–12 shows that Dylan’s reflections on the event of sleeping with his Dad instead of his mother were noticeable. In Story 11, Dylan did not say to Mom that, “Mom, I want to sleep with you” or “I do not want to sleep with Daddy.” In conversation with Thu, Dylan reflected his contemporary mood (I miss you) and situation (I have to sleep with Daddy), but he did not reject sleeping separately from his mother. In Story 12, Dylan again confirmed the current situation through the utterance “I sleep Daddy.” Dylan might not want to sleep separately from his mother, but he was on the way to accepting this reality. As Thu shared, Dylan learned that the newborn needed Thu’s care at night more than him. His identity of being the oldest brother supported his becoming a “more confident and caring son” as Thu shared in the second interview. Dylan’s emergent identity as the oldest brother in a relationship with Dave is also shown in Living Story 13 below.

Living Story 13

On my last visit, Thu is quite busy with Benny as he is sick. I finish my observation at their house before lunch. I, however, offer to help Thu by taking Dylan and Dave to their ECE center. She agrees and informs the center manager. Manuka Center is close to Dylan’s house so that we can walk. We walk together on the pavement. I walk at the sidewalk edge while Dylan is in the middle and Dave next to him. When we see traffic lights ahead, Dylan turns to Dave, “Hold my hand, Dave.” And he takes Dave’s hand. (Fieldnote, 14 August 2018)

This story called me to return to Thu's story when she was in the last month of pregnancy. Thu shared that her body was heavy; taking Dylan and Dave to public areas (e.g., parks, supermarkets) was tiring for her. Thu, therefore, asked Dylan to take Dave's hand whenever they went out to avoid getting lost. Dylan's communications in this living story (asking Dave to hold his hand, taking Dave's hand) could be interpreted as an act of following his mother's words. Thu was an invisible interlocutor in the dialogue, but her request was available in his mind. Dylan did not need to take Dave's hand. I walked alongside them and could protect their safety. In this situation, holding his younger brother's hand might not only have been a repetition of his mother's saying but also marked Dylan's emergent role as a caregiver of younger siblings.

A chain of Stories 9–13 revealed that the event of Benny's birth, and Dylan becoming the eldest brother, was significant. This event influenced his emerging identities in relationships with other family members and his knowledge of the world. Stories 9–10 conveyed his perception of Benny, the developing understanding of newborns, and early literacy. Stories 11–12 reflected Dylan's reconfiguration of himself in his relationship with his parents, especially his mother, when he slept with his father instead of his mother at night. Story 11 also showed a moment in which Dylan connected with his Vietnamese origins through interaction with his mother. Story 13 conveyed his developing identity as the oldest brother who cared for Dave, his younger brother. The narrative chain of living stories around the event in which Dylan became the oldest brother called me to rethink Thu's narratives about Dylan's struggles in sharing with his newborn sibling when, with Dave's birth, Dylan became a brother for the first time. When Benny arrived in his family, Dylan became a brother for the second time. From observations, I did not see that sharing was a challenge facing Dylan at that time. Instead, becoming the oldest brother of two younger siblings opened more opportunities for Dylan to experience new roles, learn to care for others, and enhance his social knowledge.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted Dylan's nonverbal communications and emergent identities around a specific event in which he became the oldest brother. The living stories convey the dynamics in Dylan's multimodal languages. He preferred combining, modifying, and playing with silences, body actions, and visual art to express diverse identities and construct his worlds. The event of Benny's birth, when Dylan became the oldest brother, led Dylan to develop various

roles. The dynamic in Dylan's multimodal language indicates an intersection within Dylan's emergent identities. In the sense of becoming the oldest brother, Dylan also learned to develop other identities as a young learner, a son, a caregiver of Dave, and a member of Vietnamese culture. The case of Dylan conveyed the power of nonverbal communications and artwork in the child's identities-in-flux. This chapter has provided a new way to see the child as a gifted storyteller who integrated his body actions, silences, gestures, and artwork to create beautiful narratives.

Dylan's living stories highlight the role of adults' beliefs and practices, peer culture, media, and the child's preferences in his identities-in-flux. Living stories show that Dylan's nonverbal language was not always understood by adults. From teachers' perspectives, Dylan's silence was perceived as him having no stories and a lack of verbal talk. His silences in Stories 2 and 4 may have resulted from adults' monological responses to the child's special interests in given situations. When his parents in Stories 3 and 6 attended to Dylan's actions, their communication became dialogical. Du considered Dylan as his mutual playmate (Story 3), and Thu showed empathy and tenderness for her son's sadness (Story 11). In two stories, Dylan's voice mutually existed in his parents' words. The child, thus, had spaces to express himself and his feelings in these dialogical conversations. Dylan's stories featured peer culture as a mutual-learning space in the child's identities-in-flux. Dylan had various opportunities to join in free-play activities with friends at home and the ECE center. In play with friends, Dylan expressed his special interests, composed artifacts, created new ideas, learned and influenced others, and constructed different roles.

Superheroes and height-related objects were Dylan's special interests. The child integrated media resources (i.e., YouTube videos, Catboy superhero, shooting game) to his previous experiences and interests to develop new meanings. Dylan not only learned but also invented new ideas from media materials that he absorbed. Dylan's inventions revealed his identity as a competent young learner in learning knowledge, reimagining the world, and authoring himself.

Chapter 5: The Case of Tony

Tony was a 5-year-old Vietnamese boy who had recently moved to New Zealand with his family. In New Zealand, he lived with Hai, his father, Tra, his mother, and Suri, his 1-year-old sister. Tony was enrolled in Harbor Center. I met Tony and his family for the first time in the center. Whenever I think about Tony, this first meeting arises.

Living Story 14

Hoa comes to Harbor Center at pick-up time. Tony and his family are in the outdoor area. Sarah, the center manager, introduces Hoa to Tra and Hai, and then she leaves. Tony is playing with Suri in the sandy area. Tony's parents initiate the conversation.

Hai: Em đến New Zealand được bao lâu rồi? [How long have you been in New Zealand?]

Hoa: Dạ, được một năm rưỡi. [I have been here for 1 year and half]

Hai: “Thế mình cùng là newcomer cả. Nhà anh mới đến New Zealand tháng 10 năm ngoái. Giờ là được tám tháng.” [So we are all newcomers. My family arrived in New Zealand last October. Now we have been here for 8 months]

Tra: “Thế ở Việt Nam thì em sống ở đâu?” [Where did you live in Vietnam?]

Hoa: “Em ở Hà Nội chị ạ.” [I lived in Hanoi]

Hai: “Thế là giống chị Trà rồi. Chị Trà là con gái Hà Nội gốc đấy. [So did Tra. Tra is an original Hanoian lady]

(Tony runs to Tra and holds a drawing to show her)

Tony: “Mẹ, look. Tony tự làm cái mặt nạ này.” [Mom, look. Tony myself make this mask]

Tra: “Cô Hoa biết không, cháu toàn tự làm các mặt nạ Spiderman này đấy.” [Hoa, you know, Tony makes Spiderman masks by himself]

Hoa: “Tony sáng tạo quá.” [Tony, you are very creative]

(Tra introduces Hoa to Tony).

Tra: “Tony ơi, đây là cô Hoa. Cô Hoa cũng ở Hà Nội đấy.” [Tony, this is Hoa. Ms Hoa also lived in Hanoi]

Tony: “Hà Nội là quê ngoại của con.” [Hanoi is my hometown] (Fieldnote, 5 June 2018)

The conversation started not with research information but our shared experiences. All of us were living far from Vietnam, but our memories of Hanoi and a current sense of being “newcomers” in New Zealand interconnected Tony, his parents, and me. These shared experiences let me enter the network of living stories with Tony and his family.

In the first meeting, I attended Tony’s utterance with Tra. Tony held his handmade mask and told Tra that “Tony myself make this mask.” Tony used his first name to refer to himself—the first-person in dialogue. This is alien to Vietnamese traditions. In the Vietnamese language, personal pronouns that the first-person and second-person speakers use to refer to each other are based on their hierarchical relations (H. V. Luong, 1987). Typically, Vietnamese children use the singular first-person pronoun “con” (child) to talk to parents. If children call themselves by their first names in communication with older people, this would be considered disrespectful (T. D. Nguyen, 2011). When I asked Tony’s parents about this matter, they shared that Tony wanted to call himself by his name to express determination with others. His parents accepted this as a “new normal” (Hai, conv. , June 2018). Tony was his given name, but it was also a taken name that he used to mark himself as a visible and determined person in interactions with parents. To preserve his genuine voice in these stories, I used the first-person singular to report what he said in stories in which he used Tony to refer to himself. In Story 14, Tony wanted to show his determination when he performed Tra, his creative mask that he made by himself. I was attracted by his determination and creativity from the first interaction. In the first meeting, I learned that Tony was a newcomer to New Zealand. I wondered how a determined and creative person like Tony adjusted to the new life in New Zealand. This chapter describes an ongoing process in which Tony, an innovative and determined person, made connections with people, spaces, and places in his transition to the new country.

Tony’s Settings: Where the Child’s Desire Is Centered

Tony was born in October 2013 to a middle-class family in Vietnam. When Tony was 4 years, he and his parents and Suri, his younger sister, came to New Zealand, it was in October 2017. Hai, his father, pursued a masters’ degree at one of Auckland’s universities. At the start of this study, Hai had a permanent job in a trading company in Auckland, which helped him cover the family’s living costs. Tra, the mother, got a partnership work visa. She studied English as well as worked part-time jobs (i.e., nail maker and kitchen assistant). Tony and his family lived in Auckland central’s suburban area, in a peaceful neighborhood with ancient scenery. Tra

shared that living in New Zealand allowed Hai and her to get closer to their children, which they could not do in Vietnam due to their overloaded business. Spending time with their children became Hai's and Tra's priority. They played with Tony and Suri, read books with them at bedtime, and took them to libraries and outdoor spaces (e.g., beaches, parks) on weekends and holidays. They paid attention to "preserving the mother tongue" in Tony and Suri. They maintained Vietnamese as the primary language at home and encouraged children to talk to their grandparents in Vietnam weekly through Facetime.

Tony and Suri were enrolled at Harbor Center, the Campus ECE center of their father's university. Harbor Center is situated in Auckland's CBD, catering to children of staff and postgraduate students of the university's city campus. Full-day educational services were provided in two separate age groups, including Room Kiwi for babies and infants up to 2 years of age and Room Tui for older children aged 2–5. Tony was in Room Tui while Suri was in Room Kiwi. ECE teachers and children in Harbor Center came from multiethnic communities. The educational team in Room Tui included two teachers, Jenny and Yuna. Jenny, the headteacher, was Dutch and immigrated to New Zealand in the 1980s, while Yuna, a Korean person, came to New Zealand in 2010. In Harbor Center, the children had a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with Asians and Pākehā being the largest groups. At the beginning of the study, 55% of the children were identified as Pākehā, 35% as Asian, and 10% as Pasifika. English was not the first language of half of the children in the center. The manager reported that 12 languages were spoken by children and their families in Harbor Center. Most children whose first languages were not English were born outside New Zealand and then moved to this country with their parents, who studied or worked in the university.

The center had well-decorated facilities. Outdoor areas were decorated with many wooden play facilities (i.e., wooden swing, a high wooden slide next to a watchtower). At the door of Room Tui was an eating area with wooden tables and chairs for children, a piano for children to play with music, and children's lockers. The indoor area was decorated with a drawing and writing area, a crafting space, a mini stage, and a wooden house with books and a sofa for children's rest. Children's artwork was exhibited in many areas (e.g., windows, walls, cupboards). Teachers at Harbor Center acknowledged that children's preferences seeded their learning, and every child had different needs and paths to learn by themselves. Their practices, thus, aimed to provide a learning-rich environment for young children through a wide range of

activities. Daily activities were organized to cultivate children's curiosity and enjoyment. For example, teachers held costume days (e.g., Pajama Day, Tales' Day) to celebrate children's birthdays. Children could choose costumes and perform in their favorite characters (e.g., Spiderman, Elsa). Teachers also supported children's multilingual and multicultural development. For children whose home languages were not English, teachers asked their parents to teach them greeting words in their mother tongue. Then teachers practiced these words in interactions with children at the center, which encouraged them to build a sense of belonging in their transition to the ECE center.

Tony had a special love for superheroes he saw on media (e.g., Spiderman, Captain America, Catboy). Tony's favorite activities at home and the ECE center were drawing and making handmade toys (e.g., Superman masks, superhero pictures). He cut paper and cardboard boxes, drew on them to make his toys. During the process of creating artwork, Tony often generated stories with friends, teachers, and parents. Abbu, a 5-year-old Nigerian boy, was Tony's close friend at the Center and always joined in free-play and making artwork with Tony.

At the start of this study, Tony had been in New Zealand for 8 months and was still on the way to adjusting to this new country. Both parents and teachers highlighted that moving to New Zealand was the most significant event in Tony's life. In the first interview, Jenny reflected on Tony's difficulties in the early days in the center for two reasons: his English ability and life changes. Parents' interviews echoed Jenny's ideas. As a newcomer with minimal English proficiency, Tony could not communicate with teachers and friends on the first days in the center, which frustrated him (Tra and Hai, Interview 1). Tony became angry and acted out his frustration (e.g., biting, shouting) with teachers and friends. At home, Tony also became tense. He was irritable, often cried due to little things, and did not want to talk to his parents (Hai, conv.).

Changes in life situation was another reason for Tony's struggle with his new life in New Zealand. When he was in Vietnam, he had lived with his parents, Suri, and his grandparents, Hai's parents. Tony was the only son of his parents and the only grandson of his grandparents. Confucianism views having a grandson as vital to sustaining lineages in Vietnamese families (Rydstrøm, 2001). Tony's grandparents, therefore, treated Tony favorably in comparison with their other grandchildren (Tra, conv.). In Vietnam, Tony had been the center of the family's attention, and his opinions had "always come first" (Hai's Living Story,

Interview 1). Moving to New Zealand marked a turning point when Tony left his “comfort zone” (Hai, Interview 1) to live in a new setting. At home, he lived with his parents and younger sister, but without his grandparents’ “special treatment” (Hai, Interview 1). In the center, Tony learned ways to share and communicate with friends and teachers. Initially, his previous experiences of himself as “the number one” (Tra, Interview 2) made him become “frustrated” (Yuna, Interview 1) when he found the others’ ideas contradicted his desires.

Both parents and teachers agreed that communication was a key for them to support Tony to make changes in his behaviors (Hai, Yuna, Interview 2). Teachers and parents often kept in touch to update Tony’s daily situations and collaborated to support Tony in making connections with the new life in New Zealand. Teachers also learned from Tra and Hai about Tony’s life at home. They also asked Tony and his parents to teach them Vietnamese greeting words “xin chào” (hello), “cảm ơn” (thank you) and “xin lỗi” (sorry) and then they practiced with Tony at the center. They wanted to familiarize Tony with the ECE environment (Jenny, conv.). Reciprocally, Tony’s parents often consulted with teachers to learn how Tony was changing at the ECE center. Guided by teachers’ advice, they also encouraged Tony to keep the good habits at home (e.g., reading books, making masks, sharing with others).

In sum, Tony was in transition to the new country New Zealand, and he lived in child-centered settings. Parents and teachers respected his preference, engaged with his free-play, supported him in developing a sense of belonging in New Zealand and Vietnamese contexts. According to *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Ministry of Education, 2017), belonging happens when “children know they belong and have a sense of connection to others and the environment” (p. 31). During fieldwork, I observed an ongoing process in which Tony used multimodal languages to make sense of himself in relationships with others, spaces, and places. The subsequent sections present examples.

“You Need Be Kind, Need to Know to Share”: Making Sense of Himself in Social Relationships

Teachers and parents described Tony as a “very determined” boy. Tony was keen on solving problems by himself and only came to ask for others’ help if in need. Tra shared that “when Tony was insistent on doing something, he would be determined to do it at any cost” (conv. , 15 July 2018). Tra’s sharing reverberated with Tony’s living stories with me in the initial days. When I saw Tony struggling to open his lunch box during the first visit to Harbor

Center, I asked him if I could help, but he said, “No, I not allow with you. I will do by myself.” On another occasion, he wanted to make a Spiderman mask with cardboard. He asked me to give him some scissors to cut the cardboard. I realized that cardboard might be hard for him to cut; so, I offered to help him. He, however, replied, “No, I will do it.” From these situations, I understood the reason why teachers shared that “he does by himself if he can. If he really needs our help, he will come to ask” (Yuna, Interview 1). A firm determination, however, made it hard for him to listen to others’ ideas. When conflict occurred between Tony and others (i.e., friends, teachers, parents), he rebelled. When he made mistakes, he did not find it easy to realize his problem and apologize. Over the time of my observation, I saw an ongoing process in which Tony navigated himself to build new social relationships with friends, teachers, his parents, and sibling.

Tony’s Identities-in-flux in His Friendship

PJ Mask TV series was the favorite show of most children in Room Tui, including Tony and Abbu. Catboy was the leader, while Gecko and Owlet were his assistants in this TV show. Tony and Abbu wanted to become the leader Catboy in their role play, which was the main reason for their conflicts. Stories 15–16 illustrate two different attitudes and roles that emerged for Tony to respond to a situation in which both Abbu and he wanted to play Catboy.

Living Story 15

At the table, Tony is drawing his picture with two characters, Catboy and Gecko. Abbu runs to him and sees the drawing. In the drawing, Catboy wears blue clothes while Gecko wears green ones (see Figure 5). Abbu points to Catboy on Tony’s picture and turns to Tony.

Abbu: “I am Catboy.”

Tony: “No, I am Catboy.”

(Tony holds the picture)

Abbu: “This is me.”

(Abbu points Catboy on Tony’s picture)

Tony: “No, this is me.”

(Tony shakes his head)

Abbu: “No, Catboy is big, not small. You are smaller than me.”

(Tony put his picture on the table, points to Abbu)

Tony: “No. I don’t allow you with me, Abbu. I don’t allow you. This is you.”

(Tony points Gecko in his picture)

Tony: “This is me, Catboy is me.”

(Tony points Catboy on his picture)

Tony: “Catboy is doing here, but Catboy is the most superhero.”

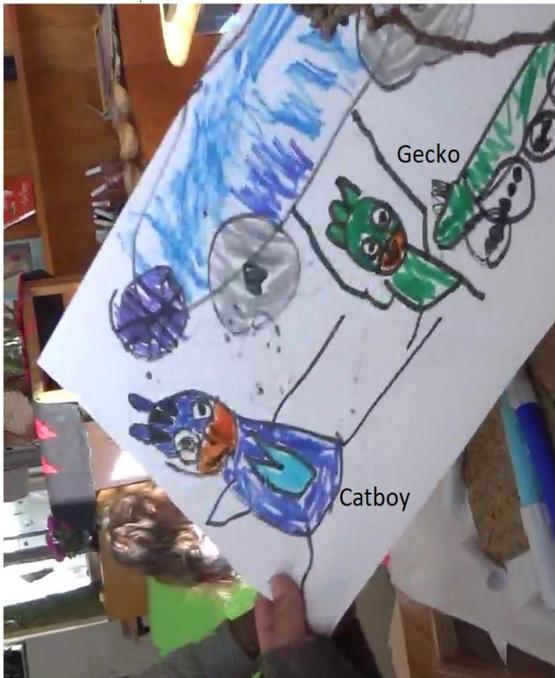
(Tony draws Catboy’s pointing hand at Gecko)

Tony: “But Gecko do (does: Tony’s wrong word choice) hit me. Gecko’s smaller, and then Gecko do there, and then Gecko is falling down. But it goes to be broken.”

(Tony draws Gecko raising hands and then Gecko’s legs). (Video recording, 25 July 2018)

Figure 5

Tony Draws Catboy and Gecko



Tony was smaller than Abbu. Based on this, Abbu argued that Catboy in Tony’s picture must be him. Tony rejected Abbu’s idea (“I don’t allow you with me, I don’t allow you”). Then he created a new drawing story to depict the size comparison between Catboy and Gecko. In

the PJ Masks TV series, Catboy and Gecko are the same sizes. In Tony's living story, he utilized a bigger image of Catboy to refer to himself while drawing a smaller Gecko to imply Abbu. He also changed the relationship between these characters in his story. In the movie, Catboy and Gecko are companions who together fight against bad guys. In Tony's drawing story, Gecko and Catboy were no longer companions but enemies. In the picture, Catboy was standing and pointing at Gecko while Gecko raised two hands to the sky. Gecko wanted to hit Catboy, but he failed and fell. By drawing himself in Catboy's role, Tony rejected Abbu's ideas to become "the most superhero" who was more powerful than his friend. Tony's living story reverberated with Jenny's idea that he found playing superheroes a chance to "show his power" (Jenny, Interview 1). Several days later, Tony and Abbu wanted to play Catboy again. Tony's reaction in this time, however, was different.

Living Story 16

Tony and Abbu are going to the wooden slide in the outdoor area of Harbor Center.

Tony points at himself and turns to Abbu.

Tony: "I am Catboy."

(Abbu points at Tony)

Abbu: "No, you are not Catboy."

(Tony runs first and then turns back to Abbu)

Tony: "I am Catboy. We are two Catboys. OK?"

(Abbu smiles)

Abbu: "Yeah. Yeah." (Video recording, 31 July 2018)

While Abbu disagreed with Tony and conflict might have arisen between them, Tony proposed a new idea that they could both be Catboys. Tony's invention of "two Catboys" reflected a change in his making sense of himself and others. The transformation from Tony's previous drawing story to his spontaneous talk with Abbu implied his shifting roles from an insister to a communicative interlocutor. He did not give up his intention of playing Catboy but recognized that each person's voice mattered. Tony's idea of "two Catboys" invited Abbu to join in a shared context in which both became mutual playmates to create fun together.

One positive change was that Tony could enlarge his network with more people. Initially, he did not find it easy to make friends with his peers at Harbor Center. Later, Tony

played with Abbu; they became close friends. As Jenny shared in the first interview, Tony was determined and reluctant to change, even in his friendship. When he got familiar with playing with Abbu, he did not want to connect with others. Teachers and parents reflected that when Abbu was absent at the center, Tony became upset and did not want to play with others. In the first weeks of data collection, I observed Tony's unhappiness one day when Abbu was off. On that occasion, Tony spent most of his time playing alone. When Aida, a 3-year-old boy, asked Tony to play together, Tony said, "No, you are not my friend. My friend is Abbu. Today, he does not come, I don't allow with you" (Video recording, 12 July 2018). In this story, Tony refused to open his world to anyone other than Abbu. Gradually, Tony learned ways to enhance his network with more friends. At the end of the data collection, Abbu was sick, and he did not come to Harbor Center for several days. Tra was worried whether Tony would accept it. I, however, observed Tony's willingness to play with other friends during these days. The following story shows this.

Living Story 17

Bob, Ella, and Tony play with blocks on the floor. Bob is a 5-year-old boy, and Ella is a 5-year-old girl. Bob and Ella are Pākehā children. Tony smashes a plastic puzzle piece onto the floor and sings.

Tony: "Dino-Roar, Dino-Roar, listen to the Dino-Roar."

(Ella smiles, put her puzzle piece opposite to Tony's one, smashes her block onto the floor, and sings)

Ella: "Dino-za, dino-za, listen to Dino-za, ZA ZA ZA."

(Tony laughs and gazes at Ella)

Tony: "What? What's za za za?"

(Ella and Bob laugh, smash their puzzle pieces onto the floor, and sing together)

Ella and Bob: "Dino-za, dino-za, listen to the dino-za, za za za."

(Tony laughs, put his block next to Ella's and Bob's ones, and sings)

Tony: "Dino-za, dino-za, listen to the dino-za, za za za."

(Tony, Ella, and Bob laugh). (Fieldnote, 22 August 2018)

In this story, Tony interacted with Ella and Bob to create a shared space of laughter and joy. Tony initiated the dialogue by playing Dino-Roar. Dino-Roar was a new toy dinosaur from

George, the main character in Peppa Pig, a cartoon television series for young children. The only sentence that Dino-Roar could speak to George was “Dino-Roar, Dino-Roar, listen to the Dino-Roar.” Tony repeated it in his initiation. Ella responded to Tony’s utterance by modifying it (“Dino-za, Dino-za, listen to the Dino-za, za za za”). While “Roar” in Dino-Roar’s saying might refer to dinosaurs’ sound, “Za” in Ella’s utterances cannot be found in any dictionary. “Dino-Za” was Ella’s new association to enhance the laughter that had been innovated by Tony before. Tony’s repetition of Ella’s words showed the influence of peer culture on his identities-in-flux. Tony was eager to listen to others’ voices and ready to become a part of his peer group. Stories 16–17 revealed Tony’s identity as an innovator and a communicative friend with his peers.

Tony’s Identities-in-flux in His Relationship with Teachers

Tony also made changes in his relationship with teachers. He learned to listen to teachers, respect rules and others’ rights, which will be revealed through the next two stories.

Living Story 18

Tony and Abbu are drawing Catboy masks. They want to take a black pen to draw their own masks, but there is only one black pen. Tony asks Abbu to let him use it first, but Abbu disagrees. Abbu holds the black pen in his hands. Tony tries to grab the black pen from Abbu, but he cannot. Then Tony becomes angry and screams. Yuna comes, sits down with Tony. When Yuna touches Tony, he continues screaming and biting her hand. Yuna keeps calm, gently says to Tony.

Yuna: “Tony, biting is not useful to solve a problem. Calm down, Tony. I am here to listen to you. OK?”

(Tony points at Yuna and screams)

Tony: “I don’t allow with you. I don’t allow with you.”

Yuna: “That’s fine, Tony. I will leave and let you alone for a while, OK?”

(Yuna leaves and lets Tony alone. Tony sits by himself. He is still angry, his face is red, but he stops screaming. For several minutes, Yuna returns and asks Tony if he is ready to talk to her. Tony nods his head and retells Yuna what happened to him. After listening, Yuna asks Abbu to come and tell them if they can take turns to use the black pen or one of them can find another black one in the basket. Tony decides to look for another black one). (Fieldnote, 3 July 2018)

The story reflected Tony’s anger and Yuna’s response to it. Tony’s actions (grabbing a pen in Abbu’s hands, screaming, biting Yuna) showed his difficulty in controlling the anger. Yuna’s response revealed that she was not surprised at Tony’s actions. She shared later that it was not the first time that Tony had exhibited “frustrating behaviors,” but his frustration this time “was shorter than before” (conv. , 3 July 2018). She comprehended that Tony might need time to calm down. As a teacher, she used her “kind and positive words” and “so much love” to support Tony (Yuna, Interview 2). Yuna’s utterance in Story 18, “I am here to listen to you,” echoed her sharing in the interview. Her decision to let Tony alone showed her “respect” (Yuna, conv. , 3 July 2018) for the child’s need to have his private space. The little Tony still existed in her mind even when she did not stay with him for a while. Yuna did not rush and did not criticize Tony. She just practiced listening to the child with the fullness of engagement, stillness, and understanding. Yuna’s calm and attention transformed Tony. Tony ceased offensive actions, listened to Yuna, and chose a solution to resolve conflict with Abbu. Being influenced

by Yuna's stillness and listening, Tony shifted from an angry person to a communicative listener.

Living Story 19

Abbu, Ella, and Tony play hide and seek in the room. They run fast and make Nick fall. Sarah calls them to talk. Sarah suggested creating two rules, the former is the superheroes' rule, and the latter is the teacher's rules. The children agree. After discussion, they set up two rules. The children make the first rule, "no police game." Sarah requests the second one, "superheroes are running outside, not inside." Children accept it and go back to playing. Later, Abbu and Tony go back to the room. They run and crash into the door. Sarah calls them back to talk.

Sarah: "Well. Superheroes walk inside and run outside."

Tony: "OK."

Sarah: "So, what happens now? Are you breaking the rules?"

(Tony and Abbu bow their heads and keep silent for a moment)

Sarah: "Well, what should you do now?"

Tony: "Sorry."

Sarah: "OK. Sometimes, sorry is enough. Sometimes it isn't. We don't need to run inside because we can hit others or make people fall. OK. So, what should we do now? Superhero..."

(Tony smiles, raises his right hand)

Tony: "Superheroes walk inside and run outside."

Sarah: "Right. Remember your speaking, Tony. Think about it."

(Tony smiles)

Tony: "Yes."

Sarah: "OK. Let's come back to your game."

(Tony and Abbu go out). (Video recording, 17 August 2018)

Children's utterances were present in Sarah's speech. She did not start with a command sentence. She used the way that children named themselves—"superheroes"—to call them and discussed rules with them as "a friend of children" (Sarah, conv.). As a friend, she explained in detail for the children to understand why they should not disturb others. Her interaction, thus,

became dialogical because she mutually discussed with children and let them solve problems in their way. Sarah's utterances influenced Tony's response. Tony kept silent for a while, apologized, then repeated Sarah's words and agreed with her suggestion. While linking his response in a narrative chain with preceding narratives (Stories 15 and 18), I did not view his speech as a quote of Sarah's words. Tony was not quick to accept others' ideas. His apology to Sarah conveyed his increasing awareness of boundaries and others' spaces in the center. Tony's apology also revealed a way to interpret his previous silence. His silence before saying, "Sorry" served as a tranquil moment to think about his response. Stories 18–19 showed teachers' support to help Tony build connections with others and the child's developing identity as a communicative listener in the ECE context.

Tony's Awareness of His Transformation

Teachers and parents reflected on Tony's positive change in his social relationship with others. Tra thought that "now Tony knows besides him, there are others" (Interview 2). Yuna and Jenny agreed that Tony made a good process to becoming a good listener. The question was whether Tony recognized his transformation. The story between Tony and Suri at home at the end of data collection answered my concern.

Living Story 20

Suri and Tony are in the living room. Tony sits on the chair next to the table and eats cheesecake. Suri also wants to eat the cake. She tries to climb to the chair, but she is too small to do it. Tony helps Suri to climb into the chair. When Suri sits on the chair, Tony gives his cheesecake to Suri. Suri smiles and eats the cheesecake. "Suri, you need to be kind. You need to know how to share with others," says Tony. Suri smiles and nods her head. (Fieldnote, 25 August 2018)

Tony's saying was not a simple quote of adults' teaching. The child did not easily repeat others' ideas unless he believed in them (Tra, Interview 2). His utterance to Suri, thus, conveyed his identity as a caring person who recognized the importance of kindness and sharing in social relationships. A narrative chain of Living Stories 14–19 reveals an ongoing process in which Tony learned to become a caring and communicative person in relationships with people at home and the ECE center.

“Spiderman Tony Want to Make a Beautiful Home”: Building the Self in Connection With Spaces and Places

Tony was on the way to establishing a sense of attachment to new contexts at home and the ECE center. In the beginning time, he got “frustrated,” said Yuna, in becoming a part of his new settings. With teachers’ and parents’ support, Tony gradually became a “happy and creative” explorer, thought Hai, to connect with home and center. He instructed other friends to make masks, build a castle at the center. He used cord from old white curtains and tape to make Spiderman’s web on the window at home. Tony used art experiences to build new roles in connection with spaces and places at home and ECE center, as illustrated in the following stories.

Living Story 21

At home, Tony uses a white cord from old folded curtain to make his toy. He uses scissors to cut the white rope into small pieces, then tapes them to the window (see Figure 6). Tra and I are sitting next to the table to talk with each other.

Hoa: “Tony đang làm gì đấy?” [Tony, what are you doing?]

Tony: “Làm tơ nhện.” [Making spider web]

Tra: “Bạn Tony sáng tạo lắm. Tony bảo là chỉ cần mẹ đưa cho con cái kéo và băng dính là con tự làm đồ chơi. Đó là nguồn cảm hứng vô tận của bạn ấy. Chỉ cần có băng keo, kéo là làm được đủ thứ.” [Tony is very creative. Tony says that he only needs me to give him scissors and tape, then he will make toys by himself. It is his endless inspiration. With tape and scissors, he can create many things]

(Tony turns to Tra)

Tony: “Mẹ nhìn cái spider web của Tony này. [Mom, look. Mom, look at Tony’s spider web]

Tra: “Ồ, đẹp nhỉ. [Wow, it’s beautiful]

Tony: “Tony tự làm cái spider web này. Vì Tony là người nhện. [Tony make this spider web because I am Spiderman]

(Tony stops taping and imitates Spiderman’s gesture of shooting the web)

Tra: “Thế sao con lại dán spider web lên cửa sổ?” [Why do you tape the spider web on the window?]

Tony: “Vì Spiderman Tony muốn làm nhà beautiful” [Because Spiderman Tony want to make a beautiful home]

(Tra smiles and says “Thanks” to Tony). (Video recording, 29 July 2018)

Figure 6

Tony Makes a Spider Web on the Window



Tony connected media resources (i.e., Spiderman movie) with available materials in his house (i.e., white cord, tape) to design an authentic artwork—the spiderweb on the window. His interest in this artwork was inspired by wanting to become Spiderman, who wanted to “make a beautiful home.” Tony’s role as Spiderman linked with another emergent identity as a young artist who wanted to use his aesthetic experiences and special interests to decorate his own house. In playing Spiderman and decorating a beautiful place, Tony also built a sense of belonging to his home context. The following story illustrates how Tony’s artwork revealed his making meaning of himself and the ECE environment.

Living Story 22

In the morning, Jenny and Tony read the picture book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. After reading, Tony makes a worm house in the sandy area. When Hai comes to pick him up, Tony asks his father to see this house. Tony holds a bunch of leaves that he used as food for worms.

Tony: "Hey, I show you. Look. I show you. This leaf. This one. I show you. See. This one. The green leaf. And the house is here."

(Tony points to the worm house)

Tony: "I made a worm house; then I put it in the sunshine."

Hai: "Oh, fantastic."

Tony: "I made the house, and then I put the leaves on the top of the house so the worms can eat it."

Hai: "Oh, that's great."

Tony: "And now the worms go to supermarket."

(Hai laughs).

Hai: "The worms go to the *supermarket* now?"

Tony: "Because he wants to eat some more."

Hai: "Oh, what does he eat in the supermarket?"

Tony: "Hmm. He eats strawberries and banana."

Hai: "Ah, banana?"

(Tony nods his head and smiles).

Hai: "Yeah. It's going to rain now. That's why we go inside now."

Tony: "No. Look, I show you. Look. I do that with my hands."

(Tony sits down to the worm house, takes sand into the house)

Tony: "Why?"

Hai: "OK, we are going home now."

Tony: "Why?"

Hai: "We are going home now. It's 5 pm now. OK?"

Tony: "OK."

(Tony stands up, shakes his hands, gazes at the worm house)

Tony: "Bye bye." (Video recording, 12 July 2018)

Tony's living story of the worm house was influenced by the picture book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* that he and Jenny read in the morning. In the book, the caterpillar ate many things for 1 week. On Thursday, it ate strawberries, and on Saturday, it ate junk food and got a stomachache. On Sunday, it ate green leaves and felt much better. In Tony's story, one fruit that the worm ate was also strawberries. He put green leaves on top of the house for the worms to eat. Simultaneously, Tony created new details for his story, which had not occurred in the picture book. In Tony's creation, he made an artwork—the sand house for worms and invented the worm going to the supermarket to look for more food. Through this creativity, Tony connected the book world and his natural spaces in the ECE center.

The process of creating and performing the worm house revealed diverse identities of Tony. Tony's utterances to attract Hai's attention ("Look, I show you") and his resistance to the father's requests ("No, look; Why?") revealed him as a determined person. Simultaneously, inside Tony's worm house was a connection between the child and the ECE environment. Tony emphasized that he used his "hands" to take sand to make a house for worms. He put green leaves as food for them. His goodbye at the end of the story surprised me. Later, when he was on the way to his father's car, I asked him to whom he said, "Bye bye", and Tony replied, "the worms." The worms were hidden audiences (Bakhtin, 1986) who did not physically exist in natural spaces but lived as friends in his story. Tony's worm house showed his developing identity as a caregiver of the center environment. In caring, Tony was making sense of belonging to spaces and places of ECE setting.

Stories 21–22 illustrated how Tony created and performed artwork (i.e., spiderweb at home, worm house in center) with others. These artifacts resulted from a mixture of his previous experiences and interests, media resources and books, and the surrounding environments. The process of making artwork, thus, showed Tony's identities as a young artist and a caregiver of his home and the ECE environment. In two stories, parents and teachers respected Tony's preference and nourished his creativity. Jenny's reading of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* provided the child with resources to invent the idea of making a house for worms. Tra and Hai valued Tony's creativity and engaged with the child in his making and performing artwork. With adults' encouragement, Tony freely invented what he wanted and developed a sense of belonging to home and ECE contexts.

I observed Tony's connections with two places—Vietnam and New Zealand. He had recently moved to New Zealand but kept in touch with family members in Vietnam. The following story illustrates Tony's notions of his Vietnamese and New Zealand contexts.

Living Story 23

Indoor at Harbor Center, Jenny is showing children the globe on the table. Abbu and Tony are standing around her.

Jenny: "Here is Netherlands, where I will go next week. I will be away for 1 month. I will travel from New Zealand. Let's see. Where is New Zealand?"
(Jenny rotates the globe to New Zealand).

Jenny: "And here is the United Kingdom. Here is London, where Abbu is going to soon."

Tony: "I will go to Vietnam."

Jenny: "Oh. Will you go to Vietnam? Let's see. Where's Vietnam? Here."
(Jenny points to Vietnam on the globe).

Jenny: "And you also go soon, with your Mommy and your sister, Tony?"
(Tony nods his head)

Tony: "And I visit my grandparents in Saigon. I also lived in Saigon before."
(Jenny smiles)

Jenny: "Yes. We will miss you, Tony."

Tony: "But I will come back."

Jenny: "Right. Then we will see you."

(Tony and Jenny smile at each other). (Video recording, 10 August 2018)

Jenny initiated the living story by sharing her vacation to Netherlands, her homeland. Her sharing made an interconnection among Abbu, Tony, and her, all immigrants in New Zealand. Jenny mentioned her trip at the beginning to "make children feel confident in telling their personal lives" (personal communication). As a teacher, Jenny provided resources (a globe) and opportunities for Tony to share his home culture. Her sharing provoked Tony to talk about his upcoming visit to Vietnam. For him, Vietnam is attached to notions of "visit" and memories of his past life, while New Zealand's context implies an idea of coming "back"—his current habitat. Tony kept a bond with Vietnam while he knew that New Zealand had become

his permanent residence. This story captured Tony's identity as a member of both contexts—Vietnam and New Zealand.

The fieldwork finished at the end of August 2018. Tony went back to Vietnam with his mother and Suri for a holiday in the first week of September. I also traveled to Vietnam at the same time as him. At the end of the last observation in his home, Tony and I shared our future trips to Vietnam.

Living Story 24

At home, Tony shows me his Captain America mask that he made before. He wears the mask and holds the Captain America shield in his hand (see Figure 7).

Then he turns to ask me about the things that I would bring to Vietnam. I answered that I would get my belongings and some gifts for my family in Vietnam.

Tony: “Thế cô định mang quà tặng gì Việt Nam?” [What gifts do you bring to Vietnam?]

Hoa: “Cô vẫn chưa biết, có thể là một thứ gì đó đặc biệt của New Zealand. Thế con mang gì về Việt Nam?” [I have not yet decided, perhaps something special in New Zealand. So, what about you, do you bring anything to Vietnam?]

(Tony stands up and points at his Captain America mask)

Tony: “Tony làm cái mặt nạ này ở New Zealand. Và Tony sẽ mang cái này về Việt Nam, để tặng cho em Bi, Bin.” [Tony made this mask in New Zealand. And Tony will bring it to Vietnam to gift my cousins Bi and Bin]

Hoa: “Ồ hay thế.” [Oh, it is interesting]

Tony: “Và Tony sẽ dạy em Bin, Bi làm mặt nạ giống như Tony đã làm khi ở New Zealand.” [And Tony will teach Bin and Bi to make similar masks like me when I was in New Zealand]. (Fieldnote, 31 August 2018)

Figure 7

Tony Wears His Handmade Mask



Masks were Tony’s authentic artwork that he created during my fieldwork. Gradually, I learned new ways to understand the diverse meanings of his artwork. In the first meeting with Tony and his parents, I saw his mask as evidence of his creativity. Afterward, I realized Tony’s identities were as a young artist, a caregiver of his living environments, and an emergent member of New Zealand’s context in his artwork (i.e., spiderweb, worm house). Tony’s Captain America mask in my last observation implied a different meaning. Tony emphasized that he made this mask “in New Zealand” and chose it as a present to give his cousins in Vietnam. Tony’s New Zealand-made mask bridged him with his family members and the life in Vietnam. He indicated that he would “teach” his cousins to make similar masks when he went back to Vietnam. Tony’s gifting and teaching others to make masks prompted me to revisit the first meeting with him and his parents. In this meeting, Hai named all of us as “newcomers” in New

Zealand. A newcomer assumed a process of learning to engage with the new context. In the last observation, Tony emerged as a newcomer and a contributor who produced new values for the Vietnamese and New Zealand contexts in which he lived.

Chapter Conclusion

Moving to New Zealand was a significant event in Tony's life. Tony blended his artistic language with other multimodal forms (i.e., imaginary stories, nonverbal actions). He mixed and transformed modes of language to express his ideas and interests in living stories. Tony's process of making artwork described his dynamic knowledge of himself, others, and spaces in diverse situations. The case of Tony presented the significance of the child's artistic language in his identities-in-flux. The child's artmaking process conveyed his intersecting roles as a competent young learner, a productive member, and a contributor of both contexts—New Zealand and Vietnam.

Tony's identities-in-flux were influenced by media, the value of the ECE curriculum, and adults' beliefs and practices. Tony used media resources of superheroes (e.g., Catboy, Spiderman, and Captain America) to exercise his special interests and experiment with different roles in relationships with people, spaces, and places in daily life. The case of Tony shed light on the value of *Te Whāriki* in supporting immigrant children in their transition to the ECE center.

Under the influence of child-led pedagogy in the ECE center, Tony had various times and spaces to join in free-play activities. In free-play, Tony expressed special interests, made creative artwork, built his social relationships, learned from friends and teachers, and experimented with diverse identities. The curriculum *Te Whāriki* also highlighted the importance of children's home culture and teachers' and parents' awareness and support to children's belongingness across home and ECE settings (MoE, 2017). Guided by the curriculum, the teachers respected Tony's desires, valued his voices in their talk, and provided resources and opportunities for the child to develop his sense of belonging with both the new life in New Zealand and his Vietnamese origin. His parents engaged with Tony's stories, respected his choices, preserved the home language, and encouraged him to keep close contact with family members in Vietnam. Both his parents and teachers recognized the value of popular culture and heritage values in Tony's identities-in-flux. In other words, Tony's parents and teachers provided dialogical responses to the child's self-authoring. Reciprocally, Tony navigated himself to become a communicative listener and a member of the New Zealand

context while still maintaining a solid bond with his Vietnamese origin. The case of Tony showed a match among curriculum, adults' beliefs and practices, cultural resources, and the child's identities-in-flux in his transition to the new country.

Chapter 6: The Case of Nhi

Nhi was a Vietnamese girl living in Hanoi, Vietnam. On the first day I visited her preschool, Nhi approached to ask me about my work.

Living Story 25

Nhi: “Khi nào thì cô test con ạ?” [When will you test me?]

(Nhi gazes at Hoa’s eyes and waits for Hoa’s reply)

Hoa: “Không, cô không có ý định test con. Sao con lại nói thế?” [No, I don’t intend to test you. Why do you say this?]

Nhi: “Vì mẹ bảo là cô nói được tiếng Anh và cô sẽ đến để kiểm tra trình độ nói tiếng Anh của con.” [Because Mom said that you can speak English and you would come to test my English-speaking level]

Hoa: “Không phải Nhi ạ. Cô đến để chơi với con thôi.” [No, I am not. I just want to come to play with you, Nhi]

(Nhi looks at Hoa for a while, opening her eyes wide, and then smiles)

Nhi: “Thật thế không cô?” [Is it true, Hoa?]

(Hoa smiles at her).

Hoa: “Ừ, đúng rồi.” [Yes, it is]

(She asks me to play the Vietnamese folk game “Lộn Cầu Vồng” [Reversing Rainbow] with her). (Fieldnote, 5 November 2018)

I shared this story with Nga, Nhi’s mother. Nga had read all the ethics documents before and understood my research purpose was not to test Nhi. Nga, however, said that she used “test” as “a common way” to encourage Nhi to engage in my research (conv.). During the fieldwork, Nhi was preparing for an important test, the entrance examination to a prestigious primary school in Hanoi. Having a sense of being tested by me might “help Nhi” (Nga, conv.) have more motivation to study English to pass her exam. Tests were a feature of Nhi’s life.

This story lives in me. Right in front of my eyes are Nhi’s gazing at me. Her gaze raised questions in my mind. “How many tests has Nhi taken before she asks me to test her? How many times has Nhi played before she asks me if it is true when an adult wants to play with her?” (fieldnote, 5 November 2018). The first living story with Nhi continued not because of tests but rather “play.” Nhi liked playing, and she invited me to join in her game. Beneath every

child's desire to play is a need to be seen as a person (Souto-Manning, 2017). The first living story with Nhi urges me to write this chapter to describe how this 5-year-old child found spaces to express special interests and author herself as an agentive person in a context filled by tests and academic achievements.

At the end of this story, I became Nhi's playmate rather than an examiner. Being together is crucial in relationships between players (Bakhtin, 1984b). In the sense of being together, I knew that I was learning ways not to see Nhi but rather seeing the world with her. It took me more than 1 year to become a playmate and see-er with Nhi. Through the close observation, I knew that she loved playing with English. In this chapter, I did not want to see English as a testing tool, as described in Nhi's mother's words. From a Bakhtinian lens, speaking a second language provides new experiences for people to make sense of themselves, others, and the world (Hall et al., 2005). English provided new experiences that Nhi could use to perceive herself and the world. Based on the Bakhtinian understanding, I described Nhi's experiences in playing with English and the contribution of these experiences to her identities-in-flux.

Also, behind the first story was the importance of the primary school examination. I, however, did not intend to bound my view of Nhi and her transition to school within competitions. Nhi's invitation to start a game in the first conversation led me to see the role of the child's preference in her transition to school. In this chapter, I introduce Nhi's settings with a focus on how parents and teachers perceived the child and her preference. Nhi's living stories show the ways that she authored herself in speaking English and during the transition to primary school.

Nhi's Home and Preschool: Where the Child Is Expected to Follow Adults

Nhi was a second child in a middle-class family in Hanoi, Vietnam. Duy, her father, worked in Ho Chi Minh City and came home for short visits each fortnight. Nga, her mother, graduated from a university specializing in English, and she had worked as a desk officer in a construction company. After Nhi was born, Nga quit her official job, and worked from home as an online seller, and spent time taking care of the children. Nhi lived with Nga and Hanh, her 2-year-older sister, in a two-bedroom apartment in central Cua Tay New Urban Area.

Due to her father's absence, her mother became the main caregiver of children and held the dominant voice in the family. Nga wanted to become a close mentor who accompanied her daughters in their development. She aimed to send her children to study abroad when they grew

up. She was aware of preparing “necessary luggage” for their abroad journey, including academic education, English proficiency, and confidence (Nga, Interview 1). Nga extolled academic achievements as a ladder for her daughters to gain success in their lives. She encouraged her children to “study hard.” Nga put a big whiteboard next to the sofa in the living room to teach Nhi to read and write every night. Nga also invested in her children’s learning English. Nga maximized her daughters’ exposure to English through a wide range of activities: reading books, watching movies, and talking. Nga enrolled Nhi in dancing classes for children and registered her to participate in television shows for young children, which empowered her confidence, said Nga (Interview 1).

Nhi was enrolled in Huong Duong Preschool when she turned 3 years old. The preschool was a private ECE setting on the two first floors of a building in the new urban area of Cua Tay District, next to Nhi’s apartment. There were 125 children aged 1–6 years old in the preschool, divided into seven classes. In terms of facilities, Huong Duong Preschool had a wide range of rooms, including a medium yard on the ground floor for children to play, a large kitchen and eating area, a hall for special events, and a multifunctional classroom for learning English on the second floor. Children’s artwork was exhibited in glass cases along corridors. Nhi was in A3 Class. The room was 30 m², catering for 17 children aged 5–6 years old. Ha and Thanh were primary teachers in A3 Class.

Officially, Huong Duong Preschool followed the National ECE Reformed Curriculum that was based on a child-centered approach (P. T. Dang & Boyd, 2014). Most activities in A3 Class, however, were led by teachers. A normal day at A3 Class began with morning exercises in the outdoor yard, breakfast time, and then learning activities (e.g., getting acquainted with maths, language, and early literacy), learning English with native English teachers, and free-play. Each learning activity lasted about 20 minutes. During learning activities, children were required to have “good behavior” (Thanh, conv.) and listen to teachers’ instruction. Teachers, however, reflected that children always broke this rule and made noise. Ha shared that “light penalties” must be used in these situations (e.g., standing in the corner) to remind them about boundaries. Ha had taught A3 Class as headteacher for 3 years. In her pedagogy, she wanted to become a friend of children and simultaneously believed in discipline. Children had free-play time before meals (e.g., breakfast, lunch) and during pick-up time. During breaks, children had some games or dance exercises organized by the teachers, which helped them relax while still

disciplining them (Ha, conv.). Children were aware of teachers' rules. Once, when I came to A3 Class, I did not see Nhi near Giang, her close friend, as she usually was. Nhi shared that they "talked much" in learning activities, and teachers "needed to separate them." (conv.).

During my fieldwork, Nhi was in transition to primary school. The mother and teachers underlined it as a significant event in Nhi's life. Nga chose Sun, a prestigious private primary school in Hanoi for Nhi to enroll at. She enrolled Nhi in Pre-Primary Class in Sun School every Saturday to acquire essential skills and knowledge for the exam. Nga shared that Sun School tested both parents and children to select students. In the first round of examination, parents answered a questionnaire, which helped the committee board decide if parents and their children were "ambitious" (Nga, conv.) enough to enter this school. Some questions were about secondary schools that parents aimed for their children to enroll in and when they intended to send children to study abroad. Sun School serves "bright children" (Dyson, 2016b, p. 38) who come to the first grade with fruitful knowledge of literacy and numeracy. To enter this school, young competitors must pass the entrance exam with a highly competitive ratio of 1:20⁸. The examination for children tested for intelligence quotient (IQ), emotional quotient (EQ), and a test of literacy and numeracy skills.

At home, Nga taught Nhi numeracy and literacy to prepare for this examination. Nga promised a reward for Nhi for passing the competitive exam. In A3 Class, teachers prepared more literacy learning lessons for children. These lessons were at odds with the ECE National Curriculum which recommended teachers not teach writing at preschools. Ha explained that she taught these lessons to help the students to be "well-prepared" when they faced "academic pressure" (conv.) in primary schools.

In sum, Nhi's home and ECE settings unfolded in adult-led modes, in which adults expected children to follow their guidance. Nhi, however, was not a copier and follower of adults. She purposely sought out opportunities at home and ECE settings to exercise her interests and construct herself as an independent person. The following narrative threads reveal Nhi's identity formation when she played with English and defended herself in primary school transition.

⁸ Among 20 candidates, 1 person was admitted.

“Michael Jackson is Not Hot Boy”: Playing with English

Nga valued English as a critical factor in Nhi’s future success. She invested a lot to foster Nhi’s English language ability. Speaking English was Nhi’s hobby at home and preschool. Nhi loved to record herself speaking English by iPad at home, which she considered “a play” (Nhi, conv.). Nhi, however, held a different view of using English in comparison with her mother and sister. Living Stories 26–29 convey this.

Living Story 26

At Nhi’s home, Nga, Nhi, and Hoa are sitting on the floor. Nhi is drawing while Nga shares her orientation to Nhi’s education. Nga wants Nhi to go to Hanoi Gifted Secondary School in the future, but she is worried about Nhi’s capacity. Nga talks to Hoa.

Nga: “Bây giờ thi vào cấp 2 chuyên Hanoi cũng khó lắm, chơi cao hơn cả thi đại học. Học kém tiếng Anh là không vào được đâu.” [It is now difficult to get into the Hanoi Gifted Secondary School as competition there is even higher than that of university exam. Poor English cannot help you get through the entrance exam]

Nhi: “Mẹ bảo con phải nói giỏi tiếng Anh.” [Mom tells me that I must be good at English]

Hoa: “Thế vì sao con phải nói giỏi tiếng Anh?” [So why do you have to be good at English?]

Nhi: “Tại để được có kẹo” [In order to get candy].

Nga: “Ôi thế nói giỏi tiếng Anh chỉ là để được có kẹo thôi á? Chết thật. Để làm gì nhi, để đỗ vào Trường Chuyên Hà Nội?” [Oh, being good at English just to get candy? Oh dear. What for, for passing the entrance exam of the Hanoi Gifted School?]

(Nhi smiles at Nga)

Nhi: “Để đỗ vào Trường Chuyên Hà Nội.” [For passing the entrance exam of the Hanoi Gifted School]

Nga: “Học kém tiếng Anh thì không vào được trường và có học bổng đâu, Nhi nhi?” [If you study English badly, you cannot get into that school and get scholarship, right Nhi?]

(Nhi raises her head to look at Nga, smiles, keeps silent, and continues drawing).

(Video recording, 29 March 2019)

This story described a process in which Nga’s words altered Nhi’s utterances. Initially, Nhi wanted to “be good at English” for the joy of getting candy. When she got right answers in English learning games, teachers often gave her candy. This joy, however, was rejected by Nga’s monological responses. In her mother’s words, English proficiency aligned with academic achievements to pass the competitive exam to Hanoi Gifted Secondary School. Nga wanted to shift Nhi from a player who learned for fun to a competitor who studied for success. Nhi’s play preference was refused in this story. At the end of this conversation, Nhi repeated Nga’s words and then kept silent. The story raised questions about the meanings of Nhi’s repetition and silence. Is it an act of following and relinquishing her ideas? Story 27, which happened several days later in her preschool, gave me another view of Nhi’s actions in Story 26.

Living Story 27

At A3 Class, during a drawing activity, I sit next to Nhi. Ha suggests “your dream” as the topic of drawing. Ha comes to Nhi and asks her what she wants to draw.

Nhi: “Con có ước mơ là thích học giỏi.” [I have a dream to study well]

Ha: “Ồ hay đấy.” [That’s great]

Hoa: “Tại sao, Nhi?” [Why so, Nhi?]

Nhi: “Để con được học bổng” [So that I can get scholarship]

Hoa: “Vì sao con muốn có học bổng?” [Why do you want to get a scholarship?]

Nhi: “Để được vào trường chuyên và ra nước ngoài” [I want to be enrolled in a gifted school and go overseas]

Hoa: “Thế con nói tiếng Anh để làm gì?” [What do you speak English for?]

Nhi: “Để con được nói tiếng Anh.” [So that I can speak English]

Nhi: “Để chơi thôi ạ.” [Just to play]

(Nhi smiles at me). (Fieldnote, 4 April 2019)

Echoes of Nga’s words in Story 26 can be found in Nhi’s utterances in Story 27. Nhi, however, assimilated her mother’s words in a new way. In Story 26, Nga considered English a prerequisite to achieving academic achievements (i.e., passing the Hanoi Gifted School’s entrance exam, getting a scholarship). In Nhi’s assimilation, she reversed the sequence of actions. For Nhi, earning a scholarship and becoming a gifted school student were conditions for her dream of going overseas “to speak English.” Nhi’s living story illustrated English not as a tool in the academic world but rather a wish to “speak” and “play” in freedom. Nhi was not a copier of her mother but rather an agentive person who preferred playing and attempted to find spaces for play. Living Stories 28–29 reveal Nhi’s effort to make space for herself.

Living Story 28

At home, Nga is cooking dinner. Nhi and her sister Hanh sit at the sofa and watch Nhi’s videos on the iPad in the living room.

Hanh: “Em toàn quay mấy clip vớ vẩn.” [You always record stuffy videos]

Nhi: “Kệ em, em học tiếng Anh hơn chị.” [Ignore me. I learn English better than you]

Hanh: “Toàn quay linh tinh, em đang chơi chứ có phải là học tiếng Anh đâu. Chị học tiếng Anh giỏi hơn em gấp vạn lần. Nào, em biết viết “tên tôi là Nhi” bằng tiếng Anh không?” [Oh, just stuffy things. You are playing but not studying English. I can study English much better than you. Hey, do you know how to write “My name is Nhi” in English?]

Nhi: “Nhưng em tự tin khi nói tiếng Anh hơn chị.” [But I am more confident in speaking English than you]

Hanh: “Ai tính cái đó.” [It does not count]

(Nhi stands up, does a quick shake of her right hand, and then covers her face with this hand)

Nhi: “Nhìn này. Em là Michael, nổi tiếng hơn cả Michael Jackson.” [Look at me. I am Michael, more famous than Michael Jackson]

(Hanh folds hands together and puts them down, gazes at Nhi)

Hanh: “Con lạy mẹ” [I kowtow you, Mom⁹].

Nga: “Ôi giờ ôi, chém. Thôi đi rửa tay rồi chuẩn bị ăn cơm nào.” [Oh My God, you are boasting. Let’s wash your hands and prepare for dinner.]

(Nhi stopped dancing and talking. She goes to the toilet room to wash her hands).

(Video recording, 16 March 2019)

For Nhi, videos that she recorded of herself at home honored her English capability and confidence. Hanh, however, did not recognize these videos as products of studying English. Hanh valued writing, a formal skill in her school world, as a standard in English assessment. Afterward, Nhi mimicked the Moon Dance. Dancing opened a space for Nhi to present herself as a new “Michael Jackson” who was “more famous than” the pop star. Nhi’s ideas, however, were respectively refuted by her mother and sister.

Consequently, Nhi could not make space for her interests in this story. At the end of this story, Nhi was silent and did the things that Nga required. I wonder if her silence implied her obedience or not. Story 28 prompted me to think about Nhi’s video clip that she shared with me later. Nhi recorded herself when she spoke English in her room 2 days later.

Living Story 29

As Nhi shared before dinner, she went to her room and recorded this clip on her iPad. She put her iPad on the chair, turned on the camera, jumped into her bed, stood, and gazed at the iPad to start the story.

Nhi: “Hello, everyone. My name is Nhi.”

(Nhi shakes hands and then puts her hands on her shoulders)

Nhi: “Oh. Today I want to show you my room. This is my bedroom. This is a bed and in a room.”

(Nhi turns back, points to the wall, and then turns to gaze at the iPad)

Nhi: “Oh. Do you like Paris? Paris is very beau (Nhi intended to say “beautiful”). In the *Paree*, you can *see* the *Aunt*’s Barbie.”

(Nhi points the index finger and thumb up, then points the index finger and thumb down several times)

⁹ In Vietnamese, figuratively, “I kowtow you, Mum/Dad” expresses a disregard and ridicule of interlocutors’ opinions.

Nhi: “Oh. Do you like America? In America, there is Jessy [Nhi intended to say “New Jersey,” but she forgot], dòng sông [Nhi used the Vietnamese word: river] and Donald Trump. Oh. Everyone, do you like Michael Jackson? But Michael Jackson is not hot boy.”

(Nhi spreads her arms, does a quick shake of her hands. Then she steps forward, raises her hands to cover her eyes, and then touches her head). (Nhi’s artifact, 18 March 2019)

At the end of this video, Nhi mentioned Michael Jackson. After showing me the video, she shared that “I can learn English better than Hanh.” Two ideas resonated with her precedent ones in Story 28. From a Bakhtinian view of hidden dialogicality, Nhi was creating a dialogue with invisible and imaginary interlocutors. In the link with Story 28, I could contend that Nhi was renegotiating with invisible audiences—her mother and sister in the monologue in Story 29.

In Story 28, Hanh devalued Nhi’s videos and her English capability. Story 29 was a chance for Nhi to counterclaim this. I realized that she brought a wide range of resources to create new associations in her voices. Her favorite animated movie was *Barbie: A Fashion Fairytale* that described Barbie’s visit to her aunt, who lived in Paris. Nhi, thus, linked Paris with “Aunt’s Barbie” in her introduction to this city. She also used rappers’ hand gestures (pointing the index finger and thumb up and then down) when she spoke, “in the Paris, you can see the Aunt’s Barbie” and stressed three words, *Paree*, *see*, and *Aunt*. Nhi shared that she wanted to create a rap as rappers on YouTube. For her, “Paree” and “Barbie” rhymed with each other as ended with the similar sound, /ē/. The image of Paris, thus, was interwoven with an English rap lyric and an animated movie of Barbie. Afterwards, she combined New Jersey, the river, and President Donald Trump to introduce the USA. Paris and the USA did not exist in this story as geographical places but rather imaginary spaces for Nhi to play with new ideas and reimagine the world. Through the performance, Nhi challenged Hanh’s previous depreciation and demonstrated that she could “learn English better” than her sister. Nhi defined herself as a confident person and a competent English learner who mastered the use of diverse resources to combine knowledge with her special interest in playing.

At the end of Story 29, Nhi performed the Moon Dance and said, “Michael Jackson is not hot boy.” When I asked why, she laughed and repeated the words that she had told Nga and

Hanh in Story 28, “because I am Michael Jackson, more famous than Michael Jackson.” Story 29 opened a space for her to step out of her mother’s and sister’s influence to express her interests in playing with English and establish a sphere of independence. In playing with English, Nhi constructed herself as a new norm of fame.

A narrative chain of Stories 27–29 showed the importance of media and the meaning of English for Nhi. Nhi blended media materials (i.e., pop music, rap, animated movies) into her interest in playing with English. For Nhi, English was for play. Her play with English indicated a dialogical relationship between her emergent identities. Being an English learner meant becoming an agentive person who had freedom of choice to play and do what she wanted.

“I Am a Super Sunner”—Defending Herself in the Transition to Primary School

I observed Nhi’s emergent identities in her transition to Sun School for nearly 1 year. I saw her preparation for the entrance exam, her thoughts of the school before going there, and her reflection on the first days when she entered Sun School. Nhi’s moving to Sun School conveyed herself as an agentive person who used play to connect with the new setting. Living Stories 30–37 describe this.

Preparing for the Entrance Exam

This section illustrates Nhi’s preparation of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for the examination to Sun School. Initially, getting into Sun School was not Nhi’s selection but rather her mother’s decision. Nhi, however, purposely transformed enrolling in Sun School from the mother’s option to her personal goal. She was aware of the highly competitive entrance exam for Sun School. At her 5th birthday party, she shared with me that she knew the exam was “very difficult,” and she made a wish “to pass it” (Nhi, conv.). Nhi acknowledged that reading and writing experiences were essential to help her be ready for school. Living Story 30 shows this.

Living Story 30

In the learning literacy and language activity of A3 Class, Nhi and other friends sit around Thu, the teacher. Thanh invites a boy, Phong, to reread the poem “Thương ông” (Love Grandfather) that they learned before. The poem is about Grandfather, who has foot pain; he finds it difficult to walk to the doorstep. The grandson sees it, and he helps his Grandfather to go to the doorstep. The Grandfather applauds his grandson and says

that “*Vì nó thương ông*” (It is because he loves Grandpa). Phong, however, makes a mistake in reading this sentence.

Phong: “*Vì nó xương ông.*” [Because he *xương* Grandpa]

(Nhi raises her hand, gazes at Thu)

Nhi: “Phong đọc sai rồi, *thương* chứ không phải *xương*.” [Phong reads wrong, *thương* not *xương*]

Phong: “*Cậu không có xương xem có sống được không?*” [Can you live if you don’t have “bone”?]

Nhi: “*Thương* ở đây là yêu ấy. *Thương* không phải *xương* là cái xương. *Thương* cũng không phải vết thương. Vết thương thì cậu phải dán urgo.” [*Thương* here means love. *Thương* is not *xương* that is bone. *Thương* also does not mean wound. The wound, you need to cover by a pad].

Thu: “*Bạn Nhi nói đúng rồi.*” [Nhi says it correctly]

(Phong sticks tongue out at Nhi).

Nhi: “*Cậu đọc sai thế thì không vào lớp Một được đâu.*” [If you read it wrong, you won’t be able to go to the first grade]. (Fieldnote, 6 May 2019)

Nhi built an agentive voice by expressing her comprehensive knowledge of Vietnamese homonyms. Phong mispronounced the word “*thương*” (love) as “*xương*” (bone). Nhi explained the different meanings of these words. She, furthermore, differentiated between “*thương*” (love) in the poem with its homonym “*thương*” (wound). In the last utterance, Nhi showed an awareness of reading as an important skill and academic pressure in primary school. Nhi’s utterances with Phong revealed herself as a competent and competitive learner in moving to school. This story echoed with Nhi’s sharing with me that school was a place “for studying,” and she “must study hard” (conv.). These were the things that her mother often told her at home. Her mother was invisible in this story, but her words were still available in Nhi’s comment to her friend.

Despite academic requirements, I realized Nhi’s desire to play and her using it as a tool to defend herself during preparation for the entrance exam to Sun School. Living Stories 31–33 convey this.

Living Story 31

At home, Nhi and Hanh are talking to each other. Nhi states that she can be “a Super Sunner,¹⁰” but Hanh disagrees. Hanh, Nhi’s elder sister, is already a second-grade student of Sun School, while Nhi is not. Hanh claims that she must be a super Sunner while Nhi is “a fake Sunner” because Nhi does not have a bus card for the school as Hanh does. Then Nhi requests a new “game” that if anyone wants to be a Super Sunner, they need to prove it by a high-level performance, which must be recognized by the other. Initially, Hanh refuses this idea. Nhi suggests another rule of this game; if she does not evaluate right, Hanh can tickle her. Hanh agrees and plays with Nhi. Hanh starts first. Nhi is satisfied with her performance and recognizes her as a super Sunner. And then it is Nhi’s turn.

Hanh: “Giờ đến lượt em, chị sẽ xem em diễn xem em có phải Sunner đẳng cấp không? Bây giờ chị đố em, làm sao hát vừa sôi động vừa làm chị buồn cười. Diễn.” [Now it is your turn. I will see if you are a super Sunner. Now I ask you, how to sing is both exciting and makes me laugh. Act]

(Nhi puts a finger near her mouth, gazes at the ceiling to think. Then she smiles, turns her back towards Hanh, and start singing)

Nhi: “Ah. OK. Bắc Kim Thang,¹¹ ai có hai cái kính, ngày giờ ra, la la la la.” [Ah. OK. Bắc Kim Thang. Who has two glasses, daytime holds out, la la la la]

(Nhi bends over and shakes butt)

Nhi: “Hai cái mông lên trời. Giờ hai cái tay lên trời.” [Two buttocks raise up to the sky. Raise two hands to the sky]

(Nhi stands up, raises hands up, and then bends over and shakes butt. Hanh has a belly laugh)

Nhi: “Hey. Một, hai, ba, bốn, đưa mông lên trời cao. Hey. Hết” [Hey. One, two, three, four, bring your butt to the sky. Hey. The end]

(Nhi turns back to Hanh and smiles. Hanh has a belly laugh)

¹⁰ Sunner is a word combination between the first name of Sun School – Sun and a suffix “er” to refer to students of Sun School.

¹¹ *Bắc Kim Thang* is the name of a Vietnamese folk song

Hanh: “OK, pass.”

Nhi: “Công nhận em là Sunner đẳng cấp chưa?” [Will you recognize me as a Super Sunner?]

(Hanh nods her head, thumbs up. Nhi jumps up and smiles)

Nhi: “Yeah. Em là Sunner đẳng cấp” [Yeah. I am a Super Sunner]. (Video recording, 13 April 2019)

For Hanh, a school bus card was an official way to identify as a Sunner. Although Nhi could not claim her membership in the official world, she did not give up her desire to prove herself as a Super Sunner. Nhi invented a new zone in which the eligibility of Super Sunners was set up through their capacity to play. In Nhi’s game, fairness was featured; a Super Sunner must prove herself by “a high-level performance” recognized by the other. Nhi’s performance was composed of diverse resources: Vietnamese folk song, Vietnamese nursery song “Morning exercise” (Hey; One, two, three, four; raise two hands to the sky), and her funny actions. Nhi used “buttocks”—a grotesque image, to be funny, which fulfilled Hanh’s requirement of an “exciting” and funny performance. At the end of Story 31, Hanh admitted Nhi as a Super Sunner. Nhi used the game and laughter to decline an official rule (i.e., bus card) and convert herself from a nonstudent to a student. Also, Nhi’s game led Hanh to move from her official standpoint to a shared world in which everything was treated equally through play. In play, Nhi transformed the self and her elder sister.

At home, Nga taught Nhi to read and write letters and numbers, which helped Nhi be “well-prepared” (Nga, conv.) for a competitive place as Sun School. Story 32 expresses how Nhi negotiated with Nga to sustain her rights to play during Nga’s teaching at home.

Living Story 32

At home, after breakfast, Nga teaches Nhi to learn letters and numbers. On the board are many numbers that Nga intends to teach Nhi. Nhi is writing the letter “r” below these numbers (see Figure 8). Hoa sits nearby Nhi and Nga.

Nga: “Ô, con viết chữ R kiểu gì thế con?” [Oh, why are you writing the letter “R” like this?]

Nhi: “Bạn Minh Khang bạn ấy viết thế.” [Minh Khang writes like this]

Nga: “Nhưng Nhi viết chữ r kiểu Việt Nam sai rồi. Đưa bút đây, mẹ viết lại cho Nhi.” [But you write the letter “r” in Vietnamese style wrong. Give me a pen, I will show you, Nhi]

(Nhi gives Nga her pen. Nga erases Nhi’s letters and writes two new “r” letters)

Nga: “Đây là chữ “r” kiểu Việt Nam.”

(Nga points at the “r” on the right)

Nga: “Còn đây là chữ “r” kiểu tiếng Anh này Nhi.”

(Nga points at the second “r” on the left)

Nga: “Đây, “r” tiếng Việt thì Nhi viết sai rồi” [Here is “r” in Vietnamese style. And here is the letter “r” in English style, Nhi. You write “r” in Vietnamese style wrong].

(Nhi takes the pen from Nga and draws below the two “r” letters that Nga has written)

Nhi: “Không thích viết thế. Con thích viết kiểu nào thì kệ con” [I don’t like to write like that. I like to write whatever I want]

Nga: “Ô, ngang thế nhỉ.” [Oh, you are stubborn]

(Nhi smiles at Nga, keeps silent, and continues drawing)

Nga: “Đây cô xem, bướng thế chứ. Thôi, hôm nay nghỉ. Mẹ không dạy Nhi nữa.” [You see, Hoa. She is so stubborn. Ok, today it’s enough. I stop teaching you, Nhi]

(Nga comes to the kitchen. Nhi and Hoa stay in the living room.)

Hoa: “Giờ Nhi viết gì thế?” [What are you writing now?]

(Nhi smiles, draws below her mother’s “r” letters)

Nhi: “Con vẽ lung tung để chơi thôi.” [I draw miscellaneous things to play] (see Figure 9). (Video recording, 23 March 2019)

Figure 8

Nhi's "r" Letters

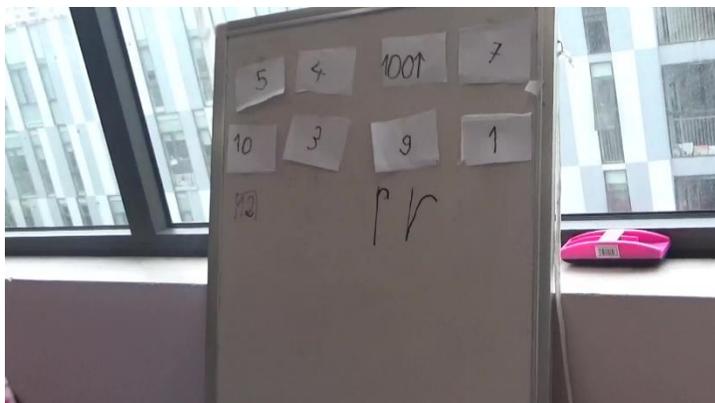


Figure 9

Nhi Draws "Miscellaneous Things"



When I compared the two styles of “r” letters in this story, I realized a mismatch between the child’s writing practice and adult expectations. “R” letters written by Nhi (Figure 8) revealed the child’s emergent knowledge of print words and writing skills. Nhi accurately identified and performed the main components of the letter “r.” The child’s handwriting, however, was evaluated “wrong” in her mother’s monological view. Nga proposed two new “r” letters that

were a mode of “formal writing” (Nga, conv.). From her mother’s perspective, writing letters beautifully was a standard to evaluate the child’s literacy skills. Nhi, however, rejected her mother’s formal teaching in favor of free writing in which she could become literate in her own way. She practiced free writing by drawing “miscellaneous things” so that she could “play.” Nhi transformed herself from a passive writer to a free player in this story.

Reciprocally, Nhi’s drawing influenced Nga’s practices. Initially, she judged Nhi as “stubborn.” Later, Nga realized her daughter’s silence when she insisted on drawing. Nga shared after my observation that she understood Nhi’s drawing and silence as signals to show that she was bored with learning. Nga, thus, decided to stop teaching and let Nhi play. Nhi successfully used play to defend her preference and change her mother’s decision.

Nhi was a key person who initiated new games and suggested innovative ideas for friends and teachers at her preschool. Living Story 33 reflects how Nhi utilized play to negotiate the right to play with the preschool teacher.

Living Story 33

In a learning activity to get acquainted with mathematics at A3 Class, Ha teaches children to divide a group into a smaller part. Ha asks children to split six counting rods into halves at the end of the learning activity. Children talk loudly. Ha requires them to “keep quiet” to complete the “essential knowledge” for students-to-be. Children stop for a while, do their work, and then continue making noise. Ha says that anyone who continues talking will be punished and made to stand in the corner. “They make noise because there is nothing funny for them to play. Shall we have a fun game to play together?” says Nhi. Other children support this idea. Ha watches the clock, only 5 minutes left. She asks children which game they want to play. Nhi has an idea that they can play the game “Doing Reversal” in a new style. Nhi explains that a selected person stands first, with the others behind to make a queue. If the selected person says or does anything, the others must do the reverse. For example, if the first person raises their hands, people behind them must lower their hands. Ha and other friends agree with Nhi. Ha asks children to tidy their counting rods and make a queue. She turns on the song “Baby Shark” on her phone and stands at the head of the queue. Children and Ha laugh and start the game together. (Fieldnote, 9 March 2019)

Ha's task and commands conveyed monological practices (Matusov, 2009), which led to a gap between the children's needs and the teacher. Nhi's game "Doing Reversal" initiated a shared context for teachers and children to enjoy "fun." Ha shared later that Nhi's saying "a lack of fun" reminded her to "let children have a break after studying" (Ha, conv.). Directed by Nhi's ideas, Ha changed herself from a disciplinarian to a playmate of children. Through playing, Ha let the child's words lead her work. Her response became dialogical, and children had more space to express their interests and joy. This story revealed Nhi's identity as an influential person who innovated fun to influence the teacher's practices and blur boundaries between adults and children.

A narrative chain of Stories 30–33 showed a dual state in Nhi's identities during her preparation for the entrance exam for Sun School. Story 30 conveyed Nhi's awareness of essential academic skills and studying pressure in primary school. Stories 31–33, meanwhile, illustrated the ways that Nhi used multimodal language to construct herself as a learner-in-playing. She used singing and dancing (Story 31), drawing (Story 32), and spontaneous talk (Story 33) to influence her mother, sister, and teacher so that she could sustain her rights to play. Through play, Nhi illustrated herself as an independent person who could defend her preference. Nhi's desire to play also contributed to her making sense of the future school during the transition, which is conveyed next.

Making Sense of the Primary School

For Nhi, Sun School was not a new place. Hanh, her sister, already studied there. Nhi also attended the Pre-Primary Class of this school every Saturday. Living Stories 34–37 reveal Nhi's perception of the school during her transition to it.

Living Story 34

At A3 Class, Nhi and Giang, a 5-year-old classmate, sit next to the table to have breakfast. Ha sits next to them. Giang turns to talk to Nhi.

Giang: “Cậu sẽ vào trường Sun School à?” [Will you go to Sun School?]

(Nhi eats and nods her head)

Nhi: “Ừ.” [Yes]

Giang: “Mẹ tớ bảo tớ vào Nam An thôi.” [Mom tells that I will go to Nam An School]

(Ha smiles and talks to Nhi).

Ha: “Nhà Nhi có điều kiện cho nên Nhi phải chọn Sun School. Vì ba mẹ Nhi làm được nhiều tiền cho nên Nhi chọn Sun đúng không Nhi?” [Nhi’s family is affluent so Nhi must choose Sun School. Nhi’s parents earn much money so you can choose Sun School, right Nhi?]

(Nhi raises her head to look at Ha, grinning, then bows to eat. She keeps silent for a while). (Fieldnote, 2 April 2019)

Inside Ha’s words was her monological perception of the schooling world in which families’ financial conditions determined children’s school options. The tuition fees for Sun School were three times higher than those of other public settings like Nam An, where Giang would enroll. In response, Nhi gazed at Ha and then was silent. When I asked why she did not say anything, Nhi replied, “I don’t like Ha to say like this. I don’t like to talk.” The silence was a way for her to show her discomfort with reference to money and financial status. In this story, Nhi did not express her thoughts about Sun School. One week later, Nhi shared it in conversation with Nga, Hanh, and me.

Living Story 35

At home, Nga, Hanh, and Nhi are sitting around the table. Hoa sits next to Nhi. Nhi shares that she wants to enroll in Sun School, and Hoa asks her reasons.

Hoa: “Vì sao con thích trường Sun?” [Why do you like the Sun School?]

Nhi: “À vì con thích nước sốt thịt ở đó. Nếu con đỗ thì ngày nào con cũng thích ăn cái nước sốt đó với cơm.” [Because I like the meat sauce there. If I can pass the exam to Sun School, then I want to eat this sauce with rice every day]

Hanh: “Ah, chị biết rồi. Nước sốt thịt chua ngọt đúng không?” [Ah, I know it. It is the sweat and sour meat sauce?]

(Nhi smiles and nods her head)

Nhi: “Đúng rồi. Yum Yum. Con với Khanh [Nhi’s friend in Pre-Primary Class] chơi trò ai ăn hết nước sốt trước thì người ấy thắng.” [Yeah, yeah. Yum yum. Khanh and I play a game of who can eat all the sauces first will win]

Nga: “Thế còn gì nữa không, con kể cho cô Hoa nghe đi?” [What else do you want to tell Hoa about Sun School?]

Nhi: “À, con còn thích trò slime ma quái nữa, mà các cô dạy con làm ở lớp tiền tiểu học ấy.” [Ah, I also like magic slime game that teachers taught me to do in Pre-Primary Class]

Nga: “Đây là ở tiền tiểu học thôi. Vào lớp Một rồi, Nhi sẽ có bài test hàng tháng đấy. Học kém là không trụ được đâu.” [This is just for Pre-Primary students. When you are the first-grade student, you will have monthly tests. If you do not study hard, you cannot pass them]

(Nhi smiles and gazes at Nga). (Video recording, 15 May 2019)

Nhi showed a different perception of Sun School in comparison with the monological opinions of her teacher and mother. In Story 34, Ha attached Sun School to ideas of children’s family income. In Story 35, Nga emphasized the school via “monthly tests,” academic goals that Nhi needed to reach. Nhi, meanwhile, described the school through her interests in delicious food and games there. Later, I asked Nhi why she did not reply to Nga’s comment about tests. Nhi answered, “I know what Mom says, but it is not funny” (conv. , 26 April 2019). When I heard Nhi’s words, her gazes in our first meeting appeared in my mind. In these gazes, Nhi

waited for a test and then was interested in my sharing about play. I carried questions of Nhi's perceptions of tests and playing over the time of my fieldwork. Now, Story 35 provides an insight. Nhi acknowledged that tests were part of her future school life, but she did not want to attach herself to these academic goals. Nhi's silences in Stories 34–35 represented disparate perceptions from her teacher and mother. Nhi's sharing about Sun School expressed that food and games were the most important things that she wanted to seek and attend to in her school life.

Story 36 occurred 1 week before Nhi passed the entrance exam to become a Sunner. Story 36 marked the end of my observation at her home and preschool. Afterward, Nhi left Huong Duong Preschool and went to Sun School. Nhi's gazes in our first meeting and her sharing about games in Story 35 continue living in me. In Story 35, Nhi imagined the future school as a place where she would have monthly tests but still play. Each child brings their unique stories and desires with them to school (Dyson, 2016a). How did the school context respond to the little girl Nhi's play preference? Would the future school match the child's imagination? Although I did not do my fieldwork in Nhi's primary school, I keep in touch with Nhi. I visited her home for follow-up contact, and Nhi purposely video-called me via Zalo Chat to share about changes in her life. The following stories that she shared with me will partly disclose her identities-in-flux in the first days in Sun School.

Living Story 36

In July 2019, Hoa visits Nhi's home. Nhi has been in Sun School for several weeks. Nhi tells Hoa about her classmate, Minh, who sits next to her. Minh is “a very fat boy, and he always teases me,” says Nhi. (Fieldnote, Nhi's home, 20 July 2019).

Living Story 37

Hoa went back to New Zealand in November 2019. In December 2019, Nhi calls Hoa via Zalo Chat. She has finished her first term in Sun School. Nhi takes the video call with Hoa at her home. Nga sits next to Nhi during the video call between Nhi and Hoa.

Hoa: “Ở trường Sun thế nào hả Nhi?” [How is the Sun School?]

Nga: “Nhi kể cô Hoa nghe về bài test cuối kì tiếng Anh đi, con vừa được ngôi sao của tháng về môn tiếng Anh đây cô ạ. Nhưng tiếng Việt vẫn kém lắm, vẫn viết sai chính tả cô ạ.” [Nhi, you can tell Hoa about the English final-

term test, you get the highest score and the month star of English subject. But your Vietnamese subject is very bad, you still misspell]

Hoa: “Thật thế không Nhi?” [Is it true, Nhi?]

Nhi: “Vâng, con được điểm cao nhất lớp môn tiếng Anh.” [Yes, I got the highest score in English test in my class]

Hoa: “Ồ, vui quá. Thế còn bạn Minh ngồi cạnh con, bạn ấy có còn trêu con không?” [Oh, so good. What about Minh who sits next to you. Does he still tease you?]

Nhi: “Không cô ạ. Con biết bạn ấy thích ăn kẹo nên con mang kẹo cho bạn ấy ăn, nên bạn ấy không trêu con nữa. Con còn dạy bạn ấy chơi trò “Lộn Cầu Vồng.” Cô nhớ trò ấy không?” [Not any more. I know he likes candy, so I bring him candy. So, he eats candy and does not tease me. I also teach him to play the game “Reversing Rainbow.” Do you remember this game?]

Hoa: “À cái trò lần đầu tiên gặp cô, con rủ cô chơi cùng đúng không?” [Ah, the game you ask me to play in our first meeting?]

Nhi: “Vâng, đúng rồi. Mà theo cô có cầu vồng lộn ngược không cô?” [Yes. Ah, do you think there is a reversed rainbow?]

Hoa: “Cô không biết, Nhi ạ.” [I don’t know, Nhi]

Nga: “Cô thấy không, từ hôm đó đến giờ về cứ hỏi mẹ, mẹ bảo đó chỉ là trong bài hát ngày xưa thôi, nhưng không tin. Nhi còn đòi mẹ hỏi giáo sư Google xem có cầu vồng lộn ngược không.” [You see, Hoa. Nhi asks me the same question and I say it is only in ancient song, but she does not believe me. She asks me to check with Professor Google¹² to see if there is a reversed rainbow on Earth]

Nhi: “Tại bạn Minh bảo là bạn ấy nhìn thấy cầu vồng lộn ngược rồi. Nếu mà con nhìn thấy con sẽ chụp ảnh gửi cô Hoa nhé.” [Because Minh says that he saw a reversed rainbow. If I see it, I will take a photo and send it to you, Hoa]

Hoa: “Ừ, nhớ gửi cho cô nhé.” [Yes, you must send it to me]. (Fieldnote, 20 December 2019)

¹² Nhi calls Google, the web search engine “Professor” as she can find anything on this web.

These two living stories reflect Nhi's identities as a student-in-play in the new school. Nhi continued holding a different view of the school in comparison with Nga. In Nga's monological words, tests and academic achievements were "the only story" (Adichie, 2009, p. 4) that she cared about in her daughter's school life. She ignored Nhi's interests in the folk game Reversed Rainbow. Nhi, meanwhile, addressed friendship and play. She used play to solve conflicts with Minh, her new friend.

The Vietnamese folk game "Lộn Cầu Vồng" (Reversing Rainbow) was a knot to tie Story 37 and the first story between us in Nhi's preschool (Story 25). This folk game and Nhi's questions about reversed rainbows revived my childhood memories. When I was a child like Nhi, I preferred playing this game with my sister. Two players stand facing each other, holding other's hands, shaking hands, and sing the folk song:

Lộn cầu vồng
Nước trong nước chảy
Có cô mười bảy
Có chị mười ba
Nào chị em ta
Cùng lộn cầu vồng.
(Reversing rainbow,
Water is clear, water runs
A 17-year-old lady
A 13-year-old girl
Our two sisters
Let's together reverse the rainbow)

When they sing the last words, "reverse rainbow," they will turn around and turn their heads over the other's hand. After the verse, they will stand with their back to each other. They repeat the song to play the second time and return to face each other.

When I played the game, I asked my father if there was a reversed rainbow on Earth. Like Nga, my father said, "No." At the age of 6, I learned to accept in sadness that there were no ways to see reversed rainbows in my life. Now, Nhi's story gives me hope, or exactly, a path to the new world. In this world, a rainbow might be reversed, Paris was described by a rap rhyme, Michael Jackson was less famous than "Michael" Nhi, and Super Sunners were tested

through their capacity to play. Tests and academic achievements do not disappear in the world, but the child's interests in play exist as a key element to heal conflicts, rename spaces and places, and declare the self. This universe is different from adults' views of a reality in which reversed rainbows exist in a folk song, and schools are attached to academic goals, tests, and children's family financial backgrounds. The unique world of reversed rainbows belongs to Nhi.

Once, Nga showed me an email from Sun School that informed requirements for Nhi's entrance exam. In this email, Nhi was called "a candidate." While I had no conflict with the idea of "candidate," the first word that appeared in my mind was "a person." A candidate implies the image of the child as an object whose capacities are measured by competition in a moment. Nhi's unique universe that she created during her moving to school conveyed the child as a proactive person who used her play preference to exercise capacities over time. Based on my experiences of seeing the world with Nhi, I want to rethink adults' words about Nhi, which are described next.

Power or Interest in Play: Rethinking Nhi's Identities-in-Flux

Nga and Ha shared about Nhi's power and influence on others in their perceptions of the little girl. In the second interview, Nga shared that Nhi was "an undercover agent" who could direct others by her "power." Ha described Nhi as a "bà già" (old woman). In Ha's phrase, Nhi appeared as a member of the adults' world rather than a child. Nhi did not use defensive actions to resist adults but a way to use "her power to influence others," which showed her maturity (Ha, Interview 2). In Stories 26, 28, 34, and 35, Nhi kept silent for a while in response to the teacher and her mother. These silences did not imply obedience or relinquishing her ideas. Instead, Nhi's silences were temporary pauses used to show her disagreement or discomfort. Nhi's reactions conveyed that she purposely looked for new chances and venues to declare herself. In this sense, Nhi was a determined person.

I wonder if her determination was a manifestation of her power, which adults used to label her identities. Nhi was aware of limited spaces for play in her contexts. Nhi, however, was not a person who was going to skip childhood to become a member of adults' world, as Ha thought. Nhi was a child who loved playing. Living stories in this chapter illustrate an ongoing process in which Nhi negotiated with others to build hybrid spaces for play. In Stories 29, 31, 32, 33, and 37, Nhi used play to invite friends, her sister, mother, and teacher to join in a zone of joy and mutuality with her. Notably, in Stories 34–35, the mother and teacher's actions were

changed by Nhi's play. Play was not a tool of power but a potential for all to engage together. I, thus, did not want to use the word "power" to illustrate Nhi. Beneath Nhi's determination was her intersecting identities as an enthusiastic player and an independent person.

Chapter Conclusion

The chapter has illustrated the child's emergent identities in playing with English and in a significant event—her transition to primary school. Play and the child's preferences were not highly valued in Nhi's stratified world. Nhi lived under the impact of academic pressure and adults' expectations of the child who should be hard-working and obedient to teachers and parents. Living stories in this chapter describe dual states in Nhi's identities-in-flux. As a member of her home and preschool settings, Nhi understood adults' emphasis on academic achievements and attempted to become a part of the school world. Simultaneously, as a young child, Nhi loved playing but comprehended that play was restricted by adults. She, thus, created and modified multimodal languages to negotiate the right to play and then made spaces for her preference. The unfinalized flow of Nhi's temporary silences, dancing, drawing, and playing with English across home and preschool demonstrated her desire to hold onto her ideas. Nhi used cultural resources from media (i.e., YouTube, video-making on iPad, movie) and folk heritage to compose knowledge and express her desire to play. These materials and the child's interest in play, however, were not totally valued by adults. The responses of Nhi's mother and teachers were monological in most stories. Nhi, in turn, did not always have free spaces to exercise her passion in play. The case of Nhi serves an example of a mismatch between adult' beliefs and practices and the child's interests.

A mismatch between adults' beliefs and practices and children's interests is not a novelty in early-years research (Genishi, 2016). This case study's contribution is to provide details of Nhi's responses to stratified contexts. Nhi's unique responses showed that the child acknowledged play as her interest and her way of beings. She traveled in-between living stories at home and preschool to seek opportunities to play. Nhi faced challenges in this journey, but she also succeeded in preserving her right to play. Nhi's multimodal language (i.e., temporary silences, drawing, dancing) showed how tough it could be for a child to raise their voice in adult-led settings and how courageous and agentive a child could become to defend her interests. Nhi's replies to contexts were also conveyed through moments in which she used joyful actions (laughter, games) to invite friends, her sister, mother, and teacher to mutual and

humorous spaces with her. Others made changes under the influence of her play. Nhi's living stories reveal play as a dialogical space (Marjanovic-Shane, 2011) to blur boundaries between adults and the child.

Chapter 7: The Case of Duong

Duong was a 4-year boy in Hanoi, Vietnam. He was enrolled in Binh An Preschool. Whenever I think about Duong, a story in my second visit to his preschool lives in my mind.

Living Story 38

In the class, Duong is sitting and holding a box. Duong sees Hoa, he immediately stands up, runs far away from Hoa, and then speaks loudly from afar.

Duong: “Cô ơi, mẹ cho con hộp này đựng đồ của con nè” [Mom gives me this box to hold my belongings]

Hoa: “Cô muốn xem có được không?” [Can I see it?]

(Duong smiles, gives Hoa the box, and then runs far away from her)

Duong: “Vâng. Nhưng cô cẩn thận đấy nhé. Chiếc hộp này rất chặt. Vì nó chứa điều bí mật thần kì nên rất chặt.” [Yes. But you need to be careful. This box is very full. It is full because it holds magical secrets inside]

(Then the teacher calls him to go out to play. He runs out and leaves the box for Hoa. Hoa opens the box; it is empty). (Fieldnote, 28 February 2019)

I stared at the box for a while. “How can I see this box? Fullness or emptiness, which is an illusion, and which is reality?” (Hoa, fieldnote, 28 February 2019). When I shared this story with Duong’s parents and teachers, they smiled and told me that Duong always started his stories by saying, “I have a magic, a secret.” The emptiness inside Duong’s box opened a new world to me. In the eyes of an adult like me, his box was empty. For Duong, the box was so “full” to cover his living stories of “magical secrets” that it could not contain any other things. The box of magical secrets was the world to Duong. Imagination was Duong’s power and unique sense to see the world and emerge himself in diverse roles. Teachers’ and parents’ smiles upon hearing this story revealed their supportive responses to the child’s secrets. This chapter is about the power of imagination and adults’ dialogical responses in the child’s identities-in-flux.

Duong’s Settings: Where Adults Learned to Be Led by the Child

Duong was born in a middle-class family in Hanoi. Duong lived with his parents and grandmother. Han, the mother, was a doctor working in a public hospital in Hanoi, while Dan,

his father, worked as an information technology engineer in a national telecommunications company. Duong and his family lived in a three-bedroom apartment in the Son Ha new urban area in Bac Tu District.

Duong's parents respected his special interests and freedom of choice. On the first day we met, Dan reflected his understanding that the child's identities were under construction. In the second interview, Han told me about her childhood roads when she lived with her family in a remote town in North Vietnam. She remembered the rough village road where she and her sister helped their mother pull a cart carrying their homemade rice wine to sell in the market in early mornings. The road was *delighted* by their laugh, folk poems, and songs that they sang together. "When I was a child, I never felt that we were poor even though it might be true. Somehow, my parents helped me go through poverty with a beautiful and happy childhood," said Han. When she became Duong's mother, "a beautiful and happy childhood" was what she wanted for Duong. Han also shared about the road that she never went on when she was a 6-year-child but travelled through her father's stories. It was the road that Han's father took from the city, where he worked to their town. Every weekend, her father carried "new things" and "amazing stories" from the city to his daughters—Hanh and Han, at hometown. Once, he brought an ice cream box home from the city. The ice cream melted before he got home, but he still wanted to give it to his daughters to let them know the taste of ice cream, which they could not find in their town. Han reflected that it was the best ice cream she ate in her life because she sensed respect from her father, who wanted his daughters to experience new things as he did. Han's ice cream is gone, but the parent's care remained in her later life. Influenced by her father, she learned to respect Duong's decisions (Interview 2). Han's roads in childhood never ended; instead, they continued in her current motherhood journey. Duong's parents acknowledged that they lived in Vietnam, and academic pressure was a part of the context (Interview 1, Duong's parents). They, however, recognized that studying was not enough for Duong to build his future. Han emphasized freedom of choice as a critical element for Duong's future. She hoped that Duong could find "the road" that he wanted to go down and "proactively do what he likes" (Han, Interview 2). Resonating with Han's ideas, Dan shared in the second interview that academic success was not "the only path" that led to happiness. Dan hoped Duong would have the "confidence" to follow his preferences.

Duong was enrolled in Binh An Preschool, which was nearby Son Ha new urban area of Bac Tu District. The preschool was part of Albert K-12 private schools. The preschool was founded in 2016, after the Albert primary and secondary schools. In 2017, the preschool was reconstructed and enlarged. At the beginning of this study, the setting was spacious with a large playground, a garden, a sandy area, and a two-floor building. In Binh An Preschool, the curriculum was based on the National ECE Reform Curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education. Additionally, the school implemented a Montessori approach.

During this study, Duong was in Bong Lua Class that comprised 18 children aged 4–5 years old. Linh and An were two primary teachers in the class. A typical day in Bong Lua Class began with breakfast time, greeting, and then continued with art and sport lessons, learning activities, Montessori activities, learning English. During breaks, children could have free-play activities in the indoor area and an outdoor yard of the preschool.

Linh was Duong’s close teacher at Bong Lua Class. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in history education and taught in a secondary school for several years. She, however, did not like the discipline that teachers could use to force students to follow them in schools. Once, she saw a poster of the course “Discipline Without Tears” that encouraged adults to respect children and practice positive education with them. She registered and was inspired by the light of positive education. Then she decided to do a degree in ECE to become a preschool teacher. Linh wanted to practice positive teaching through listening to children every day. In the interview, Linh shared about Duong and his friends going up and down the stairs to move from their class on the first floor to other classrooms on the ground floor. Duong liked to hold the hands of his close friends—Mai and Tien, two girls—while walking and sharing his “secrets” (Linh, Interview 2). While walking, Duong could see the vegetables and small creatures (e.g., worms, butterflies) in the outdoor garden. His walking, said An, was full of questions “Why?” that he asked teachers about what he saw in the garden (An, Interview 1).

In sum, Duong grew in settings in which parents and teachers respect the child’s preference. Living Story 38 showed the vitality of imagination in Duong’s self-authoring. The first narrative thread in this chapter is about Duong’s imaginary stories in his identities-in-flux. Simultaneously, Duong was on the way to constructing his confidence. Thanks to teachers and parents’ support, Duong gained diverse opportunities to emerge himself as an independent

person. The second narrative thread is about Duong's attempt to defend himself at home and preschool.

“I Have Just Turned Into a Bird”: The Role of Imagination in the Child's Identities-in-Flux

Living stories in this section reveal the “box” of secrets that Duong created by imagination. Duong enjoyed listening to Han telling Vietnamese fairy tales and his grandmother reading folk poems and songs. Han shared that Duong showed a special interest in magic and small creatures (i.e., birds, flowers, trees) which could live as humans in folk tales and poems. This interest inspired his imagination. On imaginary wings, Duong made friends with the nonhuman world, interconnected with his Vietnamese origins, and solved newly encountered problems, which will be illustrated next.

Making Friends With the Nonhuman World

Duong considered nonhumans friends and thought of himself as a part of the natural world. Duong usually used the word “friend” to call animals and inanimate objects (e.g., shoes, eggs). Living stories reveal the meaning of special friends in Duong's identity formation.

Living Story 39

Duong and other peers walk down on stairs to go to the playground. Linh accompanies them. On the corridor to the garden, he sees a small toad. Duong turns to Linh.

Duong: “Cô Linh ơi, con thấy một con cóc.” [Teacher Linh, I see a toad]

(Linh and other children come to see the toad)

Duong: “Cóc ơi, Cóc ơi.” [Dear Toad, dear Toad]

(Linh takes a branch and pushes the toad out into the garden)

Linh: “Nào các bạn lùi ra cho Cóc đi ra nào.” [Come on, get out of the way to let Toad go out]

Duong: “Cô ơi, theo cô thì bạn Cóc có chết không?” [Do you think the friend Toad will die?]

Linh: “À bạn Cóc nhảy ra ngoài vườn về với tổ của bạn ấy rồi. Theo cô thì bạn Cóc không chết đâu.” [Ah, the friend Toad jumps to his house in the garden. I think he will not die]

- Duong: “Con cũng nghĩ bạn Cóc sẽ không chết đâu, vì Cóc là cậu Ông Trời, ai mà đánh nó thì Trời đánh cho.” [I also think the friend Toad will not die, because Toad is uncle of Sir Sky, whoever beat him, Sir Sky beats them]
- Linh: “Ôi Dương thông minh thế. Đúng rồi. Sao Dương biết câu chuyện đấy?” [Oh, you are so intelligent. Exactly. How do you know the folk tale?]
- Duong: “Bà kể cho con nghe.” [My grandmother told me]. (Video recording, 24 April 2019)

Living Story 40

At the family corner in Bong Lua Class, Duong and Trung, a 4-year-old boy, sit on the floor and play cooking. Trung holds a small plastic ball and pretends it is an egg. Trung puts the imaginary egg to his mouth and tries to bite it. Duong tries to prevent Trung from doing this but cannot stop him.

- Duong: “Không cắn được. Đây là trứng giả vờ thôi, không phải trứng thật đâu. Cậu sẽ làm hỏng quả bóng đấy.” [Do not bite. This is just pretend egg, not real egg. You will make the ball broken]

(Trung continues to bite the ball)

- Duong: “Cậu đưa cho tớ đi. Cậu làm thế thì bạn Trứng sẽ bị đau đấy.” [Give it to me. If you do that, the friend Egg will hurt]

- Trung: “Sao cậu biết Trứng sẽ đau?” [How do you know that the Egg will hurt?]

- Duong: “Thì có lần tớ bị cái cửa kẹp, tớ cũng thấy rất đau.” [Once, I got clamped by the door, I also felt a lot of pain]

- Trung: “Thôi được rồi. Trả bạn Trứng cho cậu này” [Okay. I return the friend Egg to you]

(Trung gives Duong the egg). (Video recording, 16 May 2019)

Duong used imagination to turn inanimate objects and animals into spiritual beings. In his stories, the Egg could feel “hurt,” and a small toad had supreme power and became the uncle of Sir Sky. No matter in what forms these spiritual beings existed, they all lived in Duong’s stories as “friends.” Duong’s friends were created by his previous experiences, imagination, and a special connection with the natural world. He prevented Trung from breaking the imaginary Egg because he feared that this action would hurt Egg, his friend. Duong’s worry for the friend,

Egg, being hurt came from his painful memory of being clamped by the door. His concern with the friend Toad's life is rooted in his previous reading experience. In the tale "Cóc Kiện Trời" (Toad Sues Sky), Toad led all animals on land to heaven to sue Sir Sky, who forgot to make rain for them. Sir Sky was angry and wanted to punish Toad for blasphemy. Toad, however, was so clever that he could solve Sir Sky's challenges. In the end, Sir Sky agreed to make rain and nominated Toad as his Uncle. Since then, whenever Toad ground his teeth, Sir Sky would pour rain. Duong used the tale of Toad's immortality that he got from folk heritage to defend his idea that Toad will never die in conversation with his teacher. In these stories, Duong's identities emerged as a friend and savior of his living environment.

In these stories, Duong's imagination influenced interlocutors' practices. Influenced by Duong's explanation of the Egg's pain, Trung recognized the small ball as "Friend Egg" and stopped biting the Friend. Linh differed from Duong in explaining the world. Linh proposed that Toad could go back to his home in the garden so that he would not die, which was a common fact. Duong, meanwhile, innovated magic that Sir Sky would protect Toad from any harm. Linh accepted Duong's ideas. She learned to engage with Duong's "play" (Linh, conv.) and named Toad as "friend" and valued Duong as "smart." She learned to be led by Duong. Later, Linh shared that following Duong's ideas did not mean to "lie" but rather a way to "appreciate the child" (conv.). Linh also said that sometimes when she revisited Duong's stories, she "laughed alone" because they let her feel "the life was more lovely" (Linh, conv. , 28 May 2019). Linh shared that Duong was like her when she was a small child who lived in the countryside of North Vietnam, playing with friends in the rain and listening to toads' voices in wet rice fields. In Duong's stories, Linh resaw her childhood world in which toads could have voices, and every small creature should be spiritual. Duong's imaginary story interconnected him and his teacher.

Duong had a special love for the animal world and often reimagined himself as an animal in living stories. The following story illustrates how Duong played a bird.

Living Story 42

In the dancing lesson, the teacher taught children to dance along to the Vietnamese nursery song *Cánh Chim Tuổi Thơ* (The Bird Wings of Childhood). After the dancing lesson, Duong leaves the art room, and Hoa follows him. He runs and turns to talk to Hoa.

Duong: “Cô Hoa ơi, lúc nãy con vừa biến thành chim.” [I have just turned into a bird]

Hoa: “Con biến thành chim á?” [You turn into a bird, did you?]

Duong: “Lúc con học múa ấy.” [When I learn dancing]

Hoa: “Thế hả?” [Oh really?]

(Duong runs away and then turns back to see Hoa. He speaks loudly from afar)

Duong: “Vâng. Giống như bà của Tích Chu ấy. thế cô làm gì lúc con biến thành chim?” [Yes. Like Tich Chu’s grandmother.¹³ So, what do you do when I turn into a bird?]

Hoa: “À lúc con biến thành chim á, thì cô chơi với con chim đấy.” [Ah, when you turn into a bird? I will play with the bird]

Duong: “Thế nhờ con bay cao hơn, bay lên trời, con bay đi thành phố khác?” [What if I fly higher, fly into the sky, what if I fly away to another city?]

Hoa: “Thì cô cũng biến thành chim, cô bay lên trời, cô đi theo con chim Duong” [So I will turn into a bird, I will also fly into the sky to follow the bird Duong]

(Duong runs back to Hoa)

Duong: “Thế nhờ con bay đi nước ngoài, bay qua biên giới sang Trung Quốc thì sao?” [What if I fly overseas, flying over the border to China?]

Hoa: “Thì cô cũng bay sang Trung Quốc.” [So I will fly to China]

Duong: “Thế nhờ cô không tìm thấy con thì sao?” [What if you can’t find me?]

Hoa: “Ừ, thế thì làm thế nào nhỉ?” [Oh, so what can I do?]

Duong: “Con sẽ chờ cô.” [I will wait for you]. (Video recording, 24 April 2019)

¹³ In the Vietnamese fairy tale “Cậu bé Tích Chu” (English: The Boy Tich Chu), Tich Chu’s grandmother turned into a bird.

In Story 42, Duong’s self-imagination as a bird was influenced by a Vietnamese nursery song and fairy tale. In the song, the bird wing of childhood was raised by sunlight and wind. In the fairy tale, Tich Chu’s grandmother turns into a bird to fly to find water. In Duong’s story, a wide range of “what if” questions and hypothetical situations that he invented became wind to help the bird to fly “higher.” As a bird, Duong imagined new places and connected different spaces (sky—another city—overseas—border—China). The idea of becoming a bird was from his emergent geographical knowledge and a special love for nature.

Duong’s questions (What do you do when I turn into the bird and if you can’t find me?) inspired me to reimagine myself as a bird “to follow the bird, Duong.” In the last utterance, I asked him, “What can I do?” Duong’s response (“I will wait for you”) gave me magical wings to become his playmate to explore new spaces. At the beginning of the living story, I, a grown-up, stayed with Duong in the physical setting of his preschool. During the story, we left common facts in which birdmen only exist in fairy tales. In the end, Duong led me to become a dreamer who was traveling to fairy tales and boundless skies. Living Stories 39–41 show that Duong’s imagination transformed others into his playmates who interconnected with him to reimagine the world.

Making Attachment to Vietnamese Origins

Duong and his family were fans of the Vietnam U23 National Football Team. Dan told me about a special event in which Duong and his family joined the line of many people who were on the streets to celebrate the historic victory of the U23 Vietnamese National Football Team in December 2018. Duong and his parents wore t-shirts with the Vietnamese flag, shook each other’s hands, and sang the national anthem with many other people on the streets. This moment inspired Duong’s love of football, said Dan (Interview 2). Later, I learned that the love for Vietnamese football was blended in Duong’s imagination of himself in daily phenomena which made him connect with his Vietnamese origins. Living Stories 42–43 reveal this.

Living Story 42

This day, Duong has an art lesson in the early morning. Mrs. My, the art teacher, instructs children to paint fruits with watercolor. Duong is excited about this activity. He quickly completes his picture and shows the teacher. My tells Duong to ask the assistant teacher to help him hang his picture on the wall.

For over a week, we have been living in the typically humid and wet weather of Hanoi's spring with frequent drizzle and no sunshine. Today is a rare day with sunshine. Duong gets back his picture from My, runs to the end of the classroom, stands in front of the window, and pulls the curtain. He stands upright, his left hand straight down and holding the picture; his right hand rests on his left chest. He sings.

Duong: “Đoàn quân Việt Nam đi, chung lòng cứu quốc, bước chân dồn vang trên đường gập ghềnh xa.” [Army of Vietnam, forward! With the joint will to save our Fatherland, Our hurried steps are sounding on the long and arduous road]

These are the first words of Tiến Quân Ca, the Vietnamese national anthem. The sunlight shines on his face. Hoa is touched, watching him and hearing the song. Immediately, he turns around and realizes Hoa is smiling at him. He stops singing, smiles back, and looks at Hoa. Hoa sings.

Hoa: “Cờ in máu chiến thắng mang hồn nước...” [Our flag, red with the blood in victory, bears the spirit of the country]

Duong and Hoa sing together. His eyes look straight ahead; their voices become louder.

Duong and Hoa: “Tiến lên, cùng tiến lên. Nước non Việt Nam ta vững bền!” [Forward!

All together, advancing! Our Vietnam is eternally strong]. (Fieldnote, 1 March 2019)

I shared the story with Duong's parents and teachers. They reflected that he was a fan of the Vietnam National Football players. He watched on TV the Vietnamese football players stand up, put their palms on the left side of their chests, and sing the national anthem when their team scores. Whenever Duong achieved goals, he put his palm on the left side of his chest and sang the national anthem. In Story 42, Duong utilized the actions of Vietnamese football players that he had seen on TV to cherish his achievement. I was curious about the inspiration for his actions. Story 43 offered me an answer.

Living Story 43

The day is Family Sports Day in Binh An Preschool. Parents and children will join in sports activities at the preschool. Today Duong wears a t-shirt with the Vietnamese flag. Dan shares that Duong purposely chose to wear it for the event. On the stage are several big red drums that the principal will beat to open the sports day, and teachers will use to foster families' competitive spirit. Duong goes to the stage to see drums. He beats the drum and sings the national anthem *Quoc Ca* (see Figure 10).

Hoa asks Duong what he is doing. “Con làm cổ động viên cổ vũ cho đội tuyển Việt Nam” [I become a supporter who is cheering Vietnamese Football National Team¹⁴], says Duong. When Hoa asks why he drums and sings the national anthem, Duong replies, “Bởi vì con là người Việt Nam” [Because I am Vietnamese]. (Fieldnote, 21 April 2019)

Figure 10

Duong Beats a Traditional Drum



The love for Vietnamese football was a knot to link Stories 42 and 43. Duong's last utterance, “because I am Vietnamese,” gave me an answer to the question that Story 42 raised in my mind. Within his action of singing the national anthem, wearing a t-shirt with the

¹⁴ In Vietnam, supporters beat traditional drums to cheer players' competitive spirit in football matches.

Vietnamese flag, and drumming was an awareness of himself as Vietnamese. A sense of being Vietnamese interconnected Duong's joys in completing personal goals with experiences of cheering the national football team and drove his self-imagination as a "football supporter." Two stories portrayed Duong as a lover of his Vietnamese origins.

In Story 42, the Vietnam national anthem that Duong sang and his smile called for my response. I replied by singing with him. Before Stories 42–43, being Vietnamese was an obvious thing for an adult like me. Duong awoke my sense of becoming Vietnamese. The national anthem that we sang together created a shared space in which becoming Vietnamese was a unique honor.

Solving Daily Problems

Duong used fantastical stories to propose solutions for newly encountered problems in his daily life. Story 44 reveals this.

Living Story 44

In the evening, Duong and Han are sitting on the sofa. Dan comes home from work. When seeing Dan at the door, Duong runs to him.

Duong: "Bố ơi, hôm nay con định cất đi, con cất đi rồi. Lúc sau con lại nhìn thấy, ở chỗ ấy. Đó là phép màu đấy. [Daddy, today I intended to take away, I have already done it. Later I still see it there. That is a magic]

(Dan sits down and takes off his shoes)

Dan: "Thế là sao?" [What does it mean?]

Han: "Lúc chiều, mẹ tắm cho Dương xong, mẹ bảo Dương là con cất con vịt nhựa trong chậu tắm đi. Dương nói là con cất rồi. Lúc sau, mẹ vào vẫn thấy, mẹ bảo Dương là vậy là con nói dối, nên Dương sợ mẹ mách bố và bố mắng. Nên bố về mà Dương phải ra nói luôn." [In the afternoon, when I finished bathing Bon, I told Bon to take the plastic duck in the bathtub to his room. Duong told me that he did it. Later, I still saw the duck in the bathtub. I told Duong that he was lying, and he was scared that I would tell you and you will shout at him. So, when you come home, Duong tell you right away]

Dan: "Có thật thế không Dương?" [Is it true, Duong?]

(Duong tilts and bows head, gazes at Dan, smiles, two hands crisscrossed)

Duong: “Con đã định cất rồi, mà không hiểu sao lúc sao nhìn thì lại thấy nó vẫn ở chỗ đó.” [I intended to take the duck away, but I don’t know why later I still see it there]

(Dan smiles at Duong)

Dan: “Thế tức là con quên hả?” [So, that means you forgot?]

(Duong nods head, smiles, and gazes at Dan. Dan smiles, picks Duong up, and kisses Duong’s cheek). (Video recording, 1 August 2019)

Han and Duong showed different views to explain the situation with Dan. For Han, Duong told a “lie” that he forgot to take away the plastic duck. In his mother’s view, Duong’s immediate explanation to Dan resulted from his fear of being scolded by his father. Duong, meanwhile, reframed his forgetting, not as a mistake but rather “magic.” When I asked why Duong thought of his action as “magic,” he replied, “because it is interesting and funny to me.” Duong distinguished himself from being a liar that his mother assumed. The magic that he created in this story showed himself as confident magician who was capable of renovating and humanizing the world. Dan’s responses (smiling, patting Duong on the head) showed that he accepted his son’s explanation. Dan did not consider Duong’s story as “a lie” but “a lovely view” (Dan, conv. , 1 August 2019). Dan played a role as a disciplinarian in his relationship with Duong (Dan, Interview 2). Han’s utterance to Dan (“Duong was scared if I would tell you”) echoed it. Influenced by Duong’s magic, Dan shifted himself from a disciplinarian to a communicative responder. With his imagination, Duong expressed himself as a competent magician and changed his parent’s response.

The Child’s World Through Imagination: To Be or Not to Be?

A narrative chain of Living Stories 39–44 conveys the ways that Duong emerged identities through imagination. These stories called me to rethink his box of “magical secrets.” Are Duong’s box and other imaginary stories that he created a truth or an illusion? In Story 40, Duong knew that he was playing with pretend eggs. He, however, still called Egg a Friend and did not want Trung to hurt it. When I asked the reason for this, Duong replied, “because I like it. Because it is interesting to me” (Duong, conv. , 24 April 2019). He also answered in the same way when I asked why he composed fantastical ideas or new associations on other occasions.

From these conversations, I understood that Duong's intention to make the world "interesting" inspired him to compose imaginary stories. For Duong, the world would become boring when Friend Egg was a plastic ball, Toad was a small animal, and the national anthem was just a song. He blended imaginary and real things to create a new world. This world led him to emerge himself as a savior of the nonhuman world, a problem solver, a lover of Vietnam, and a guide to teach others to reimagine the world.

Living Stories 39–44 offer a new lens to reconsider the relationship between Duong's identities and the environment. He humanized objects and animals as his friends and cared about their existence (Stories 39–40), reimagined himself as a bird flying across borders (Story 41). In Story 43, Duong sang the national anthem to cherish his personal goals. A sense of being Vietnamese inspired his self-imagination as a football supporter in Story 44. Inside his imagination was a unique worldview in which himself and the outer environment were interconnected.

When I shared the idea of this interconnection with Han and Linh, they thought that it came from his special interests in nature, football, and Vietnamese folk tales. I want to add more explanation to the parent's and teachers' ideas. *Toad Sue Sir Sky* and *The Boy Tich Chu* were Duong's favorite tales. In these folk tales, Toad became courageous to go for justice, inanimate objects could raise voices, and people be transformed into animals. Vietnamese folk culture values that "vạn vật hữu linh" (all beings are spiritual), people and nonhuman beings live together in peace (N. T. Tran, 1999). Each person is a small universe in connection with Mother Nature and Vietnamese origins. Our ancients leant on nature to exist, and they found themselves in the natural world. I reunite with our folk culture through Duong's living stories.

Duong did not keep his unique world a secret. Across living stories, he invited others (i.e., friends, teacher, parents, and Hoa) to join in his imaginary world. Duong's stories showed that other interlocutors, especially adults, accepted his invitations. Although parents and teachers acknowledged that they could not imagine like Duong, they were willing to interact and be led by him. Han said that she did not consider her son's imaginary stories "lies" but rather a way that Duong "built concepts of his childhood" as she did when she was a child (Interview 2). Dan shared that he supported his son's imaginary stories because children's imagination was "a kind of intelligence" and "source of creation" (Interview 2). From a

Bakhtinian lens, the adults dialogically responded to the little child. With adults' respect and engagement, Duong's imaginary stories existed as a new truth of the world.

At the end of the second interview, Dan said, "we are already adults who cannot imagine as a child, like Duong. But Duong teaches me to see a more beautiful life." His sharing was like a confession of adulthood's imperfection and an appreciation for the child's imagination. Dan understood that imagination was a privileged gift given to children. Living Stories 39–44 show that Duong used imagination to enhance adults' worldviews and change their practices. The case of Duong revealed that the child's imagination enlarged adults' worlds.

"It Is Okay for the Little": An Attempt to Defend the Self

From parents' and teachers' perspectives, Duong was "shy" and in transformation to become "confident" (Interview 1, Han and Dan). Living Stories 45–47 reveal the ways that I attempted to see with Duong to understand the meaning of shyness and confidence from his standpoint.

Inside Shyness: An Attempt to Express Himself

Duong often started his living stories with adults (i.e., teachers, parents, relatives, Hoa) with the utterance "Con có một bí mật" (I have a secret). When an adult approached him, he stood up, ran away, and speaking from afar, which was his way to keep distance from the person. Teachers and parents identified these actions as shyness (Han, Dan, and An, Interview 1). Living Stories 45–47 prompted me to rethink his identities-in-flux inside the shyness that others perceived of him.

Living Story 45

The morning in Bong Lua Class, Duong and Linh stand next to the window and talk to each other.

Duong: "Cô Linh ơi, con có một bí mật." [Linh, I have a secret]

Linh: "Bí mật gì ấy, Dương nói cô nghe nào?" [What's secret, tell me, Duong?]

Duong: "Không nói được." [I cannot say]

(Duong and Linh sit down to the chairs. Duong crouches on the chair, puts his hands between his thighs, bows his head, smiles, and gazes at the floor. Linh sits next to Duong. She bends down to Duong and listens to him (see Figure 11))

Duong: "Không nói được." [I cannot say]

Linh: “Cô con mình là đôi bạn thân mà, có chuyện gì chả kể với nhau.” [You and I are close friends. We can share everything with each other]

(Duong smiles at Linh).

Duong: “Không nói được. Con nuốt vào bụng vào rồi. Bao giờ ăn trưa, con mới nói được.” [I cannot say. I swallow the secret into my stomach. I can only say in lunch time]

After lunchtime, Duong sees Linh go out of the class. Duong runs to ask where she is going, and she replies that she will go to the staff room. Duong runs to the corner of the class, hides behind the curtain, and speaks loudly from afar.

Duong: “Nhưng con đã nói cho cô bí mật của con đâu mà cô đi.” [But I have not yet told my secret. Why do you go?]

(Linh smiles at Duong)

Linh: “Thế Duong nói đi.” [You can tell me now]

(Duong whispers to Linh’s ears, and they smile at each other). (Video recording and fieldnote, 25 May 2019)

Figure 11

Duong Crouches on His Chair



When I asked Linh and Duong's father about Story 45, they understood Duong's behaviors (i.e., crouching on the chair, bowing his head, hiding behind the curtain) as shyness. I, however, had a different view to interpret these actions. Duong's non-verbal language (i.e., smiling, gazing at the floor, crouching on the chair, and bowing his head) in Figure 11 did not mean he was done, but rather he was contemplating the right time and suitable way to unveil his secret to the teacher. Duong's question to Linh at the end of the story showed his insistence on expressing his story. Tracing back to the child's initial nonverbal actions, I understand that story 45 illustrated Duong's emergent identity as an enthusiastic teller who added gestures and smiles into sharing a secret. Underlying adults' perceptions of Duong as not a confident person was his effort to get ready to express himself.

Inside Confidence: A Desire to Be Regarded As a Person

His parents wanted to support Duong's emergent confidence by letting him discuss problems and solve them by himself. The following narratives illustrate the ways that Duong expressed confidence in interactions with others.

Living Story 46

After I visit Duong's home, Dan and Duong see me off to the elevator. Dan takes an elevator card from his wallet. He intends to press the access control button to help me go down to the ground floor. Duong asks his father to give him the card to press the elevator button for me. Dan disagrees; he says, "You are too small to reach the button." Duong, however, takes the elevator card from his father's hand. Then he goes ahead of Dan and me, holds up the card, jumps, and roars, "Thẻ của ta, thẻ của ta" (My card, my card). When the elevator opens, Duong asks Dan to lift him up to press the card on the Access Center. And Dan does it. I farewell them. The elevator doors close, and I go down. My eyes scan the instructions for using the elevator issued by the building managers and stop at the last sentence, "Do not let children and disabled persons use the elevator themselves." I think about Duong's smile when he holds up the elevator card in his hand. Unintentionally, I also smile." (Fieldnote, 15 March 2019)

Living Story 47

Han buys a small pair of chopsticks for Duong to use. He brings it to the preschool. At lunchtime, Duong puts a chopstick box on the table. He sits beside Khang, another boy in his class. Duong holds chopsticks for eating while other children use spoons. Linh sits next to them.

Khang: "Người bé mà lại cầm đũa. Người lớn mới dùng đũa chứ." [Why is a little child like you using chopsticks? Only adults use chopsticks]

Duong: "Người bé thì có sao đâu. Tại đây là đũa bé mà, có làm sao đâu. Tớ bé như thế nên tớ dùng đũa bé." [It's ok for the little. These are small chopsticks, so no problem. I am little, so I use small chopsticks]

Linh: "Duong, con thử lấy đũa gắp miếng su su xem nào." [Duong, can you use chopsticks to pick a chayote piece up?]

(Duong uses two hands to grip the top of the chopsticks so that he could pick a chayote piece up. Then he uses chopsticks to take this piece to his mouth. Afterward, he smiles at friends and teachers; see Figure 12)

Linh: "Bạn Duong dùng đũa giỏi quá." [Duong is good at using chopsticks]
(Khang turns to Linh).

- Khang: “Cô ơi, mai con bảo mẹ mua đũa luôn.” [I will ask my mother to buy me chopsticks tomorrow]
- Linh: “Ừ. Để tuần tới cô sẽ dạy chúng mình bài ‘Gắp thức ăn bằng đũa’ nhé. Cô sẽ mua bim bim đến cho chúng mình tập với đũa.” [Yes. Next week, I will organize a learning activity “Picking up food with chopsticks.” I will buy snacks for all you to practice with chopsticks]. (Video recording, 20 March 2019)

Figure 12

Duong’s Chopstick Utilization



Living Stories 46–47 respectively reflect norms that others perceived of the child Duong. The elevator card in Story 46 was designed for only the tall—adults—not for the “small” like Duong. The instruction in the elevator indicated children as “objects of concern” (Hallett & Prout, 2003, p. 1). In Story 47, Khang disclosed that chopsticks were suitable for only adults but not “the little” to use. These norms implied an inequity between adults and children.

I observed the ways that Duong challenged these norms to exercise his confidence. In Story 46, he took the card from Dan and roared, “Thẻ của ta, thẻ của ta” (My card, my card). Duong’s selection of the first-person pronoun interested me. In this story, Duong did not use “con” (the child) to refer to himself in interactions with his father. Instead, he used “ta,” a word that superiors, especially Vietnamese royal members or Gods in ancient times, utilize to refer to themselves in conversations with their inferiors. “Con” or “ta” is translated to one word, “I/my” in English. In Vietnamese, “con” indicates a lower position of children compared to adults; meanwhile, “ta” refers to a bigger and more powerful ego (Cao, 2020). Dan shared that Duong absorbed the pronoun “ta” from reading Vietnamese fairy tales in which The King or

Gods always used this word to refer to themselves. Inside Duong's holding the card and the pronoun "ta" that he used was a yearning to be valued as a mutual and competent person by his father.

Similarly, Duong claimed an equal space in which the "little" mattered through his response to Khang (It's okay for the little...I am little, so I use small chopsticks). Afterward, Duong attempted to use chopsticks to pick a chayote piece up. His hand movement might not be skillful, but his effort was great. For Duong, chopstick utilization was not adults' privilege but rather the child's pride in his capacity. Beneath an action of taking an elevator card from his father, the pronoun "ta" and his chopstick utilization were the child's awareness of a gap between adults and him and his attempt to blur this gap. Duong's attempt revealed him as an agentive and confident person.

Through living stories, Duong asked others, especially adults, to respect him. These stories show that other interlocutors recognized his desire. Dan lifted him up to let him press the Access Center with the card he was holding. In Story 47, Khang wanted to have chopsticks like Duong to practice. Linh praised Duong's efforts in utilizing chopsticks. Then she told the children that she would organize a learning activity to let them get familiar with using chopsticks. Duong's actions changed adults' responses. Together, adults and the child decreased inequity between them.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has described the value of imagination and emergent confidence in Duong's identities-in-flux. Duong blended fantastic ideas with multimodal forms of languages to create his living stories. He also switched modes (i.e., silence, smiling, singing, dancing, drumming) to develop new meanings and express his special interests. Fantastical stories were a unique lens for Duong to make sense of himself and the world. Duong was also aware of norms that informed an inequity between adults and children in daily life. He blurred these norms in multimodal ways to defend himself as an independent and proactive person. The unfinalized chain of Duong's multimodal language in living stories described the growing flow of his imagination, interests and experiences across home and preschool.

The case of Duong revealed an interweaving of cultural resources, adults' beliefs and practices, and the child's experiences and interests in his identities-in-flux. Both contemporary culture (i.e., Vietnam National U23 football team's victory on television) and folk tales provided

materials for Duong. The child did not only absorb but also blended these cultural resources into his role play and special interests to make new ideas. The parents and teacher recognized these cultural materials and followed Duong's preferences. Duong's living stories, furthermore, made changes in his parents' and his teacher Linh's worldviews and practices. These adults learned to see the world through Duong's imaginary lens and encouraged his desire to be himself. Linh's bending down to listen to Duong and Dan's holding his son to help him press the button in the elevator were beautiful examples for adults' dialogical responses to get closer to the child physically and mentally. In sum, the little Duong and his words were present in adults' responses to him. The child needs this response to growing up in freedom, and adults need it to enrich their worlds both inside and outside.

Afterword Before Moving On

Living Story 48 marked the end of my observation in Duong's settings. When I prepared to leave, Duong brought out his box of secrets from the room and ran to me.

Living Story 48

Duong: "Con có một bí mật." [I have a secret]

Hoa: "Gì vậy Duong?" [What is it, Duong?]

(Duong opens his box, takes a memo pad from inside to show Hoa)

Duong: "Nhìn này, đây là giấy nhớ kì diệu. Mẹ cho con để con nhớ từ tiếng Anh. Giờ con tặng cô." [Look, this is a magical memo pad. Mom gives it to me to help me remember English words. Now, I gift you]

Hoa: "Để làm gì hả Duong?" [For what, Duong?]

Duong: "Để nhớ" [For you to remember]

Hoa: "Nhớ gì hả Duong?" [Remember what, Duong?]

Duong: "Để cô nhớ lời con nói." [For you to remember my sayings]

(I smile and give him my notebook. Duong sticks the memo pad on the first page of my notebook, and then he smiles at me). (Fieldnote, 26 August 2019)

For me, this memo pad was a gift and a reminder. As a gift, the pad implied Duong's willingness to share his universe of secrets and magic with me. Duong put the sticky notes on my notebook that I used to record fieldnotes in this research. As a researcher, I used cognitive skills to provide a logical explanation for young children's identities-in-flux. Adults' cognition

and logic, however, might be an obstacle that prevents me from seeing the world as a child. I stopped seeking magic in a memo pad and turned off my ears to the voices of toads on rainy nights. I had taken using elevator cards and chopsticks for granted until I observed Duong's extreme joy in using them by himself. When I received his memo pad, I opened my cognitive and logical world to let in his "magical" light. I became a witness to his magical universe. Being a witness included the responsibility of remembering and retelling. This memo pad, thus, was Duong's reminder to urge me "to remember" his "sayings" and disclose the truth inside them. The living story of Duong's memo pad stirs the flow of my writing and thinking. Which truth(s) do I need to remember of the children, and which words should I select to disclose the truth(s) of their worlds?

Children's stories have been told in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7. Now "it is the time for us to look forward again, to see where it is that we're going" (Greenfield et al., 1979, n. p.). In the following chapter, I weave findings from four cases to further explain the truth(s) of children's worlds and the lessons that adults can learn from them.

Chapter 8: Looking Across the Living Stories

A Vietnamese proverb says, “Lá vàng là bởi đất khô/Nhìn cây sửa đất, nhìn con sửa mình” [Leaves turn to gold due to dry soil/Looking into trees to adjust soil, looking into children to adjust adults ourselves]. The proverb represents the Vietnamese epistemology of relatedness between people and phenomena in the universe. Like the interdependency between trees and soil, children and adults are interbeings. When adults (e.g., parents and teachers) look into children, they can let children guide them to adjust their beliefs and practices. Then the adults’ adjustment can empower young children in their development.

The critical matter is how we, as adults, can observe children and use this view to transform our beliefs and practices with children. This chapter offers a holistic lens to see children’s worlds through their living stories and the potential for adults to use their knowledge of children’s narratives to reconstruct themselves in relationships with children. Young children are a web of living stories “waiting to be told” (Lowe, 2002, p. 2). Looking into the living stories of Dylan, Tony, Nhi, and Duong is essential to understanding their identities. Understanding leads to consciousness and transformation (Thich, 2010). When adults (i.e., parents, teachers, and educators) comprehend children’s narratives and identities, they begin to *sửa mình* (adjust themselves). This chapter emphasizes the meanings of children’s living stories, the connection between their narratives and identities-in-flux. Based on this in-depth discussion, I suggest an approach for adults to bring their knowledge of children’s worlds to change their worldview and practices.

The chapter includes four sections. The first section represents key findings that I have learned from the four young children and their stories, in relation to research questions. In the three following sections, key lessons of children are discussed with related literature of children’s narratives and identities. The interpretation of children’s living stories is derived from Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism and semiotics lens of multimodality. The second section is about multimodal communication that the four children (i.e., Dylan, Tony, Nhi, and Duong) used to compose stories and express themselves and the unfinalizability of these communications. From a Bakhtinian lens of authoring the self, identities-in-flux is an ongoing process in which children articulate others’ words to make sense of themselves and the world. Both contexts and children had impacts on their identities-in-flux. The third section identifies influential factors in young Vietnamese children’s identities-in-flux. These factors are peer interactions, cultural resources,

adults' beliefs and practices, and children's experiences and special interests. The last section promotes a need to reconsider the image of Vietnamese children.

Major Findings Learned From the Four Children's Living Stories

The findings in this section are not finalized results of the four children and their living stories. As a dialogical researcher, I resist any last word categorizing children's identities and narratives. The findings are considered key lessons I learned while engaging with the four children. These findings emerge from weaving the analysis of living stories in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, with the research questions. Dylan, Tony, Nhi, and Duong differed in their backgrounds, contexts, modes of language, experiences, and interests. They lived in different contexts: two in Vietnam and two in Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite these differences, the four children are active authors and producers of their stories and identities. Details of major findings are presented next.

Firstly, the study reveals that multimodality and unfinalizability in the chains of the children's living stories indicated the open-ended process of their identities in and across home and ECE settings. The multimodal forms in children's narratives are silences, artistic language, early literacy, and imaginary stories. The four young narrators combined, transformed, and played with these multimodal forms of language to compose their living stories and express dynamic roles. The unfinalized chains of their living stories show their growing knowledge of themselves and the world across time, spaces, and modes of language.

Secondly, findings convey that cultural resources, peer interactions, and adults' beliefs and practices are contextual factors in the construction of children's narratives and identities. Children learned and reformulated cultural resources from media and Vietnamese folklore to initiate their stories and experience diverse roles. Peer interactions supplied a mutual space for children to innovate ideas, modify content and modes of language in their stories, and exercise new roles. Adults' responses to children in living stories influenced children's freedom in telling and authoring themselves at home and ECE settings. When the parents and teachers' words were monological, they did not fully understand children's voices, and the children found it not easy to exercise their freedom of choice. When parents and teachers responded to children dialogically, the young narrators had opportunities and spaces to innovate new stories and conduct different roles.

Thirdly, findings highlight that the unfinalized chains of living stories indicated the flow of children's interests and experiences across home and ECE settings. Young tellers' special interests and prior experiences directed them to create living stories in multimodal ways in order to experiment with dynamic roles and respond to their current contexts. Children's interests proved their emergent identities as proactive persons. The weaving of key findings and the related literature is described in the following sections.

Multimodality and Unfinalizability in Children's Living Stories

This section explores multimodal language and unfinalizability in children's living stories. Forms of multimodal language that emerged from the findings are silences, art, early literacy, and imaginary stories. The discussion is underpinned by semiotic perspectives and Bakhtin's theory of dialogue and unfinalizability. Semiotic researchers (e.g., Flewitt, 2003; Kress, 2010) have identified how meanings are created in every multimodal mode. A Bakhtinian lens highlights the intersection and the unfinalized chain within these modes (White, 2009). A combination of semiotic theory and the Bakhtinian view sheds light on diversity and interrelationships within children's multimodal communications. Living as a friend of the four children, I acknowledge their narratives were not derived from theory. Children's stories have the potential to challenge and remake theories of childhood (B. S. Engel & Armstrong, 1984). I, thus, discuss the meaning of living stories with respect for their richness and potentialities. Children's silences, art, early literacy, and imaginary stories are discussed next.

Silences

I underline the diversity in children's silences in this section and suggest a new term to reformulate nonverbal communications in early-years research. Historically, children's silences was considered "non-data" (Spyrou, 2016, p. 9) and underrepresented in narrative research. Structuralist researchers (e.g., Baker & Stein, 1978; Mandler, 1978) initiated children to tell stories through prompts. These authors concluded young narrators' pauses and body language were nonstories and did not mention silences in their transcript and analysis (Baker & Stein, 1978). Recently, some narrative inquirers (Houle, 2012; Kohli, 2006; Yamat et al., 2013) investigated children's silences in institutional settings, but they interpreted the nonverbal language as evidence of the power imbalance between young narrators and adults. In these studies, children's stories were silenced by adults' authority and misunderstanding. Children's

nonverbal communications in their living stories in this study show that both these views are insufficient to understand the “many faces” (Trinh, 1989, p. 73) of silences.

Silences occur when people stop speaking but do not imply a lack of meaning (Bakhtin, 1986). Rather, silences “constitute a special logosphere, a unified and continuous structure, an open (unfinalized) totality” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 134). In other words, pauses in speech can carry voices and an unfinalized world of meanings. Instead of verbal speech, interlocutors used various forms of gestures, facial expressions, and body actions to express their ideas in silences (Matusov, 2009). Echoing this Bakhtinian view, multimodal researchers (Stewart & Ivala, 2017; Taylor, 2014; Truman et al., 2020) concluded that children’s nonverbal language might be absent of sound but full of expression.

Aligned with the Bakhtinian and multimodal lenses, this research conveyed that young children’s nonverbal language resounded when their verbal speech faltered. In smiles and gazes (Stories 35–36), Nhi showed her disagreement with adults’ ideas. Nhi’s silence revealed a gap in the interaction of the young girl and her parent/teacher. Nhi’s stories resonated with findings of prior studies (Kohli, 2006; Yamat et al., 2013) that highlighted young students abandoned narratives due to a misunderstanding between adults and children. Nhi’s silences, however, did not imply the child’s marginalization, as previous researchers (Kohli, 2006; Yamat et al., 2013) concluded. In Nhi’s case, silences were pausing that the child used to protect her own ideas and look for other chances to present herself. I interpret Nhi’s nonverbal communications in Stories 35–36 as evidence of her resilience.

Stories of Dylan, Tony, and Duong illustrated silences as an effective tool of connection in different situations. Dylan showed his acceptance of me in his world with his smile and gaze (Story 1). Through shrugs and smiles (Story 3), he engaged as a playmate with his father. Dylan’s teary eyes and nestling in Thu’s arms (Story 11) conveyed an emergence of his dual identities as a son in a relationship with his mother and a member of his Vietnamese ethnicity. Tony and Duong kept silent for a while to think deeply and transform themselves. Tony did not find it easy to follow others’ guidance. The moment in which Tony was silent and bowed his head before saying “Sorry” (Story 19) to his teacher showed his identity as an attentive listener. Duong’s crouching on the chair and bowing his head in silence indicated his readiness to prepare to talk to the teacher (Story 45). These examples revealed that silences were communicative spaces in which the four young children used their gestures and facial expressions to connect

with others and express different identities. Several studies (Iddings et al., 2005; Taylor, 2014; Truman et al., 2020; White, 2009) have uncovered meanings of children's nonverbal communication. Taylor's (2014) study of primary students' multimodal languages in science activities showed that pauses and body movements did not refer to nonresponses but rather interchanged messages. Likewise, Bakhtinian researchers (Iddings et al., 2005; White, 2009) concluded that silences were a dialogical process in which children utilized nonverbal languages to interact, defend ideas, and transform themselves. My study supports the ideas of prior scholars (Iddings et al., 2005; Taylor, 2014; White, 2009) that dialogue continues, and children's identities emerge in their silences. These studies were only conducted in schools or ECE centers. Through examples of children's silences both at home and in ECE settings, my thesis provides more evidence of how young children use nonverbal language to make meaning across two settings.

One reason why children's silences are misinterpreted as passivity and vulnerability in early-years field is because researchers usually analyze them in isolated episodes rather than viewing them in a narrative chain (Spyrou, 2016). The four children's silent moments in this study showed that silences need to be analyzed in parallel with other multimodal forms of language (e.g., gestures, smiles, gazes, artwork) and in a narrative chain of stories told by children rather than in isolation. The flow of silent moments conveyed young children's capacity and agency in authoring themselves via multimodal language. Nhi's attempt to defend herself was the reason for her temporary pauses. Inside Dylan, Tony, and Duong's silent moments were their continuity in thinking, communicating, and living. Truman et al. (2020) described the newcomer toddler's multimodal performance when her teacher asked her to tell her name in a circle time activity at a UK nursery center. The child kept silent for a moment and did not reply to her teacher's request. Later, she whispered her name, "Beth". Beth's whisper indicated that her prior pause was not a refusal but an opportunity to bring up new ideas (Truman et al., 2020). Concurring with these authors, I argue that children's silences are precious as these moments are communication-in-transition and story-in-making. The richness of children's silences in this study is important because they provoke parents and educators to challenge their stereotypes of silences as delay or refusal, and welcome "the possibility for some as-yet-unknown alternative" (Truman et al., 2020, p. 231).

I propose the term *multimodal-communication-silences* to refer to the dynamic in children's nonverbal language while they are not uttering verbal speech. This concept is created to critique structuralist ideas that view silences as nonstories (Baker & Stein, 1978) or a result of "passivity and powerlessness" (Gal, 1991, p. 1). This section has shed light on "the most ambiguous forms of linguistic communication" (Jaworski, 2005, p. 2) and clarified the link between children's silences and their identities. The following one is about the ways that the children communicate and make sense of themselves through art.

Artistic Communication

Art is a kind of utterance that people compose to communicate with others (Bakhtin, 1990). Artists invest all of their experiences and enthusiasm in artistic activities to create "the secondary nature" that might not be "wholly new" but enrich and transfigure their cognitive world (Bakhtin, 1990, pp. 279-280). From a Bakhtinian lens, children's artmaking processes represent their unfinalized dialogue with others. In this ongoing journey, children are artists who use their experiences and special interests to convey a *secondary nature* and express themselves. I did not focus only on the meanings of their artwork as several studies have done (Chaplin et al., 2017; Ronksley-Pavia, 2016). Rather, I attended to children's artmaking processes and the link between their artistic communications and identities-in-flux.

The young children played with art in multimodal ways to express their special interests and recreate the world. Dylan's artmaking was his unique language to express his love for height-related objects (i.e., mountain, sky, castle). He put magnetic letters on the bar of an iron chair to create a castle, built a sand mountain to reach the sky, and drew a picture of blue sky and white clouds. Catboy and Romeo, who were cartoon characters in Dylan's prior experiences, led to new sky colors (i.e., blue Catboy and white Romeo). The surrounding world was reimaged by Dylan's aesthetic eyes. Tony utilized multimodal language in his process of making masks and the spiderweb. He put leaves on his house design for worms and told his father that he made it with his hands. He also used old cord and tape to create a spiderweb on the window and shared that it would make his home more beautiful. Tony's artmaking stories revealed his creativity and interest in becoming a superhero. Duong performed the Vietnamese national anthem in Story 42. His gestures (standing upright in the sunshine, putting his hand on his left chest) enriched his singing and led to a live performance of the child's joy and Vietnamese origins. Nhi used dancing and the English language to perform as a new Michael

Jackson on her private stage (Story 29). She also combined funny language with grotesque actions to be funny in her performance (Story 31). The four young children invested the whole of their languages, “with the eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, whole body and deeds” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 293) into their artmaking stories. Through these narratives, they reimaged the world. The reality, thus, was humanized and enriched by their artful eyes.

Based on Bakhtin’s notion of art, researchers claimed that the art world allows artists to experience new roles (Haynes, 2002). Living stories show that children’s diverse identities emerge in their artmaking process. Artistic language allowed Tony and Duong to comprehend themselves as a member of their contexts. Tony’s spiderweb design (Story 21), a worm house (Story 22), and Captain America mask (Story 24) showed his connection with current spaces in New Zealand and his past life in Vietnam. An act of singing the Vietnam Anthem led Duong to express his joy in completing a goal and connecting with his Vietnamese origins. For Nhi, dancing (Stories 29, 29, 31) let her step out of adult domination and official rules to become a player. In playing with art, young children built a sense of belonging and freely transformed themselves.

This study supports the findings of prior researchers (Anning & Ring, 2004; Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013; Richards, 2014; Sole, 2017) that artmaking processes open hybrid spaces for young children to reimagine the world, exercise their interests, and author themselves. Previous authors, however, focused on specific kinds of art such as drawing (Anning & Ring, 2004; Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013) or music (Sole, 2017). No substantial studies have explored multiple forms of art and the intersection of art and other modes of language (e.g., verbal speech, body movements) in children’s narratives. The living stories of children’s artmaking processes in my research clarified how young narrators wove their multimodal language with various art forms in their narratives. Among studies of children’s visual art, artifacts were mostly found on paper (Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013; Richards, 2014). Two children, Tony and Dylan, created artwork in different spaces and places (i.e., floor, window, and sandy area). These examples conveyed that there was no boundary in children’s art creations. For children, the world is art-in-progress. I, thus, suggest that early-year researchers should be aware of the potential of art in children’s lives and be open to *seeing with them* to explore the beauty of their artistic stories.

Early Literacy

Bakhtin (1981, 1986) claimed that interlocutors possessed a word only when they articulated it in a dialogical communication with other's utterances. From a Bakhtinian lens, early literacy activities involve "learning to interact with others, in particular social situations" (Dyson, 1997, p. 4). Young children are "meaning negotiators" (Dyson, 1997, p. 4) who, based on their prior experiences and interests, respond to literacy resources in multimodal ways to make sense of themselves. I will discuss how the four children negotiate meanings in early literacy and how these experiences contribute to their identities-in-flux.

The four children negotiated with literacy resources in their contexts in multimodal ways. Dylan blended his prior interaction with the letter B in his young brother's name into the current activity of watching a YouTube video to invent a new association, "B for Benny" (Story 10). Then he imitated the actions of Benny, his newborn brother, to illustrate this new idea. In the story, Dylan experienced two roles. The first identity was as an emergent reader and the second one was as a brother. Tony applied knowledge of reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* into his playmaking a worm house (Story 22). The house design revealed Tony's two interdependent roles as an emergent reader and a caregiver of his center environment. Duong adopted the idea of a birdman that he had read in the Vietnamese fairy tale *Tich Chu* to play a bird (Story 42). This story illustrated Duong's identities as an emergent reader and an innovative player in his imaginary world. This thesis echoes the findings of researchers (Kuby & Vaughn, 2015; Zhou, 2019) that children combine verbal speech and other modes of language (e.g., dance, design) to make sense of themselves in early literacy. Previous research (Bengochea et al., 2018; Kendrick, 2005) has underlined young learners' proactivity in using unofficial materials (i.e., media, picture books) as literacy resources. Similarly, Dylan, Tony, and Duong found literacy materials in various sources (i.e., YouTube, picture book, Vietnamese folklore) in their daily lives, and they were experts in using these resources.

Nhi's living stories of early literacy implied tension in her meaning negotiation. On the one hand, Nhi recited her mother's previous utterances about academic learning in her interactions with peers to confirm the importance of formal reading in primary school (Story 30). In this story, Nhi engaged as a competent and competitive learner. Nhi's story reflects a dominant discourse of literacy learning in Vietnam in which reading and writing are academic requirements in schools (L. H. Pham & Fry, 2011). On the other hand, Nhi expressed herself as

a resilient writer who resisted her mother's writing standards to develop her own way to become literate (Story 32). Nhi's drawing of "miscellaneous things" showed her perception that writing must be a funny and creative action rather than a repetitive practice. Prior research (H.-A. Dang, 2007; T. H. Tran & Harpham, 2005) assessed children's literacy outcomes through their scores in regulated tasks at schools. No empirical studies have uncovered children's motivation and play in their literacy practices in Vietnam. Nhi's stories represent "a telling case" (Mitchell, 1984, p. 222) of how a young child used play to negotiate her desire to play in a writing activity in an Asian country as Vietnam. Living stories of Nhi's literacy practices conveyed that "writing is not just a subject; it is a potential tool for composing ... space in which one matters" (Dyson, 2016b, p. 40).

Few studies have been conducted to explore children's literacy practices at home and in ECE centers in non-Western contexts. Zhou (2019) pioneered investigating Chinese immigrant children's early literacy experiences at home and kindergartens in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through close observation at home and kindergarten, Zhou (2019) found that pretend play was a space for children to interact with literacy-related objects to construct themselves. The living stories of Dylan, Tony, Nhi, and Duong in this section conveyed that play was not only a venue but also a tool that children employed to communicate with literacy resources. One similarity across the four children was that they played with literacy materials across home and ECE settings, and, through play, they negotiated meanings and explored themselves. This study enhanced knowledge of Vietnamese children's play in early literacy practices across settings and in different cultural contexts. The next section is about young children's imaginary stories.

Imaginary Stories

Imaginary stories are generated when young narrators mix real and fantastical events in their spontaneous talk (Sutton-Smith, 2012). Young children's stories are alive because they propose the potentialities of "a life poised on threshold" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 63). In the world *on the threshold*, both fictional and nonfictional forms dialogically co-exist (Bakhtin, 1981). This section demonstrates the potentialities in children's imaginary stories and the dialogical relationship between the real and fantasy worlds in their narratives.

The four children in this study composed imaginary narratives to invent new rules, and these rules conveyed their insights into the worlds and solutions for real-life problems. Dylan used his favorite cartoon characters as new indicators for sky colors. Tony proposed having two

Catboys to resolve a conflict with Abbu (Story 16). Duong called the ball Friend Egg and persuaded his friend not to bite it because it would hurt the Egg (Story 40). He also created “magic” to explain his mistake with his parents (Story 44). Nhi proposed a rule-based play in which a Super Sunner could be defined through their professional and funny performance. This dramatic play became a means for her to decline the official code (i.e., bus card) and defend herself as a capable school member. Through her close observation of children in primary schools, Maybin (2007) concluded that young students engage in fantasy narratives to rejoice in their freedom of choice. I agree with her conclusion that fantastical ideas emerge as a potential venue of freedom. In this zone, children step out of predefined patterns, norms, and prohibitions to freely dialogue with others and resolve problems in new ways.

Through identifying potentialities in children’s imaginary stories, I contest the findings of some other authors (Richert & Smith, 2011; Subbotsky, 2004) that children’s magical thinking did not affect their real-life solutions. In these studies, young participants aged 4–6 were taken into quiet rooms to complete tasks and answer experimenters’ prompted questions. Tasks and interview questions focused on examining whether fictional actions affected children’s cognitive thinking. Richert and Smith (2011) claimed that fantastical thoughts were not beneficial for children to “solve real-world problems” (p. 1117).

I, however, wonder what is real and what is a fantasy for children from their perspectives. The evidence from children’s daily interactions in natural settings in this study showed that young narrators wove real and fictional events in their narratives. This weaving did not imply that young children were less aware of the difference between real and fantasy events, as Subbotsky (2004) concluded in her study. Consistent with earlier quantitative analyses (e.g., Rosengren et al., 1994; Woolley, 1997), I found that young children could differentiate between reality and fantasy. Duong knew that he was playing with pretend eggs, not real ones. Nhi recognized the existence of bus cards as an official code to symbolize Sunners. Young children did not simply think, as Richert and Smith (2011) asserted, that “just because Superman can fly, that they should try to fly themselves” (p. 1117).

The influence of children’s magical thinking on their identities-in-flux went beyond the fact that they trusted or opposed, synchronized, or separated fantasy and actual events in stories. Nhi invited me to join the folk game “Reversing Rainbow” in the beginning days when we met (Story 25). Later, she asked me about the existence of reversed rainbows in the world (Story

37). Duong shared that he wanted to create a “funny” world through his magic, and he gifted me his magical memo pad (Story 48). Dylan invented new words to describe the “beautiful” sky (Story 8). Tony created two Catboys because he learned to respect Abbu’s desire to play (Story 16). These creations showed that children’s imaginary world was not simply “a venue for social rehearsal” (Gleason, 2004), where they repracticed real-life events that they had already experienced. The web of children’s imaginary stories was a world of possibilities, “a renewed awareness of what we already know” (Timmerman, 1983, p. 1). Through imaginary stories, children expressed identities as creative makers of new rules and multiple truths. These rules and truths were synchronized with their special interests, aesthetic lens, and notions of themselves.

Intersections Within Children’s Multimodal Language

I have previously described the multimodal languages that children used in daily interactions. This section illustrates the intersection within children’s multimodal language and the contribution of these modes to their identities-in-flux. Living stories reflect two kinds of intersections within children’s multimodal language. First, children combined and switched different modes in every story. For example, Dylan used his drawing and verbal speech to compose a blue sky and white cloud. Duong combined both singing the national anthem and a saluting posture. These combinations and switching reflected children’s flexibility in using languages to express their interests and new roles (Taylor, 2014).

Second, this thesis uncovered the unfinalized chain within children’s multimodal forms of language when they expressed one event or topic over time. A story always lives in a relationship with its speakers and its responders (Bakhtin, 1986). Each story never dies; it exists in different forms and modes in every appearance (Bakhtin, 1981). Any change in language forms and meanings can indicate the shifting roles of addressers and responders. Dylan did not answer when teachers or I asked him about his newborn sibling at the ECE center. He, however, later used his physical imitation of a sleeping baby to describe how Benny looked when he was at home (Story 9). Catboy was a favorite topic of Tony and Abbu, his close friend. Initially, Tony created a drawing story of Catboy as an enemy and winner in battle with Gecko (Story 15) but later invented the idea of two Catboys with Abbu in spontaneous talk (Story 16). Nhi repeated her mother’s words in terms of the academic purpose of studying English in Story 26. The little girl, however, reformulated words in her drawing story to defend her desire to play

with English in Story 27. Nhi was silent when her sister disregarded her English competency, and her mother rejected her vision of becoming Michael Jackson (Story 28). Later, Nhi continued expressing her interest in dancing and playing with English in her bedroom (Story 29). Living stories in this study revealed an unfinalized flow of children's words and ideas across time, spaces, and modes of language.

By exploring unfinalizability within children's multimodal language in their narrative chains, my research intersects and differs from the recent discussion on children's narratives. Few semiotic scholars (e.g., Pahl, 2009; Prinsloo & Stein, 2005) have explored an intersection within children's multimodal languages in primary classrooms. While previous studies focused on mode transition in children's narrative in schools, my research reflects that children converted modes of language between home and ECE settings. Children's living stories varied in form but met all in one route—play. Examples from prior sections show that children played with nonverbal communication, arts, emergent literacy, bilingual languages, and imaginary ideas. In other words, play is the route that the young narrators use to articulate others' words in their stories. Play is not only a social venue for identities information, as several researchers (Guo & Dalli, 2016; Sairanen et al., 2020) have concluded. Young children live in telling stories and tell through playing. In the act of playing, they manipulate their experiences and interests in multimodal ways to make sense of themselves.

Children's Living Stories: A Call for Viewing Narratives and Identities in Unfinalizability

This section brings living stories into a discussion with other narrative approaches to identify the contribution of my study to research on stories and identities. So far, young children's stories have not been centered in research. In this study, I have applied Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and semiotics to identify multimodal forms and unfinalized chains in children's everyday stories. My research has both supported and challenged the contemporary knowledge of children's narratives and identities.

Firstly, this study has shed light on multimodal forms in children's everyday narratives. Previous narrative research has focused on children's verbal speech as primary data. Multimodal modes of children's narratives and the intersection within these modes have not been fully identified. Few studies (e.g., Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013; Pahl, 2009; Puroila, 2013) have explored children's multimodal language in their spontaneous stories. These researchers employed semiotic theory to identify how children combined verbal speech and

other modes of language (e.g., drawing, gestures, body movements) in their meaning-making. My study has adhered to preceding research showing that young children interact with people and the world in multimodal ways. I, however, differ from the previous work by drawing from both Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and the semiotic lens. Guided by a Bakhtinian lens of unfinalizability, I explored the intersection within children's multimodal language in a narrative chain of their stories, which is underrepresented in research. The unfinalizability in children's living stories indicates their growing experiences and continuing interests over time.

Secondly, this study provides a new theoretical concept—living stories—as a tool to explore the open-ended process of children's identities in their natural settings. Narrative identities research is drawn to emphasizing people's self-reflection through their life stories of critical events. Within this view, identities are treated as already-constructed products, and participants retell their past via interviews rather than living with their identities in real life (Bamberg & Demuth, 2016). Young children's identities construction is unexplored in research. Children aged 4–5 years old are considered unreliable narrators who are “incapable of storying the ‘truth’ of their experiences, of their lives” (Clandinin et al., 2015, p. 15). Some researchers, thus, have sought parents' and teachers' perspectives to understand children's identities formation (Harf et al., 2015; B. Y. Lee, 2013). Others became nonparticipant-observers to investigate children's identities in school settings (Manan, 2018; Wunseh, 2018). Within these examples, researchers did not directly engage with children, and children became objects in stories of others (i.e., parents, teachers, and researchers) about them. Children's voices did not enter these inquiries.

Guided by a dialogical approach, I understand that children's identities emerge in daily moments in which they interact with people and articulate others' words. Living stories are a meeting place where children open their world to transform others' words into their knowledge of themselves. The unfinalized chain of living stories indicates the emergence of children's identities in particular moments and the relationship within their roles. A movement from silence to body actions implied Dylan's growing knowledge of his newborn brother. Different images of Catboy conveyed Tony's transformation from a leader to a communicative listener who knew that all voices mattered. Playing Michael Jackson in Story 28 meant Nhi was laughed at, but afterwards, it gave her a chance to become an agentive player in Story 29. Narrative chains of children's living stories show that negotiation is an ongoing process that happens in

their articulation of others' words over the time and across settings (Dyson, 1997). Dialogical researchers (Cengiz, 2016; Ødegaard, 2007) claimed that children's identities formation is an open-ended process. Aligned with them, the web of living stories in this study reveals that children's identities are under construction.

Thinking with stories (Frank, 2010), I did not generalize children's identities in finalized patterns. From a Bakhtinian view, "people do not develop the way a seed grows into a plant; their choices at every moment reshape them bit by tiny bit" (Morson, 1991, p. 1083). I *saw with children* to understand a network of "tiny" stories in which they made "choices" to "reshape themselves" moment by moment at home and in ECE settings. Some inquirers who have engaged with young children's narratives (Garvis et al., 2015; Puroila, 2013) have concluded that the young narrators are experts in telling and constructing themselves. Likewise, this thesis conveys that young children are no longer untrustworthy tellers but rather "storying beings" (Chawla, 2011, p. 16) who are capable of composing narratives to express themselves. However, these researchers (Garvis et al., 2015; Puroila, 2013) explored children's identities via narrative snapshots and specific language modes. Adichie (2009) asserted that "there is never a single story" (p. 6) about any person. My research, thus, raises a need to *see with young children* in an unfinalized chain of stories rather than in isolated speech episodes and distinct modes. Parents and educators need to attend to the flow of children's living stories to understand their complex and dynamic identities. Narrative identities research needs the analysis of these living stories to reach a holistic view of young children as open-ended subjects in their ordinary lives.

Influential Factors in Children's Living Stories and Identities

Identities-in-flux is an ongoing process in which people articulate others' words to author themselves. This articulation occurs in "live speech communication ... and is always individual and contextual in nature" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 88). In living stories, children respond to their given contexts to make sense of themselves. This section offers an insightful way to investigate living stories to understand influential factors in the emergence of children's identities.

Children and contexts interconnect. Literature review and the current findings have shown three types of otherness in children's identities-in-flux: peer interaction, adults' beliefs and practices, and cultural resources. Each kind of otherness is underpinned by an "ideological

impression and evaluation” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 83). I, thus, considered how ideological ideas inside peer culture, adults’ beliefs and practices, and cultural resources influenced young children in their storying themselves. Contextual factors emerged via their agents—others’ words that people encountered in daily life. A given context becomes actual and valid when it “is experienced and thought” by individuals (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 33). I did not only examine the influence of contexts on children. Rather, I explored how these contextual factors emerged in the living stories of Dylan, Tony, Nhi, and Duong and were understood by them.

Children are active persons in identities-in-flux. Living is an act of communicating dialogically (Bakhtin, 1984a). People use all their experiences, expertise, and enthusiasm to respond to contextual resources so that they become capable of answering questions of themselves and others (Bakhtin, 1990). Guided by Bakhtin’s theory, educational researchers (De Vocht, 2015; Marjanovic-Shane, 2011; White, 2009) affirmed children’s prior experiences and special interests inspired them in authoring themselves. This study also confirmed that children brought all previous experiences, desires, and special interests to articulate others’ words and respond to their given contexts. Accordingly, I discuss the value of young children’s experiences and interests in their identities-in-flux. This section also offers a holistic view to see the intersection within influential factors (i.e., cultural resources, peer interactions, adults’ beliefs and practices, and children’s prior experiences and special interests). This view contributes to clarifying the link among children’s living stories, the contexts, and their identities.

Cultural Resources

The discussion of cultural resources is interwoven with Bakhtin’s theory of culture and contemporary research into the link between culture and childhood. Bakhtin (1993) offers a philosophical framework to see culture and human beings in an “essential interconnection” (p. 35). He emphasized,

Cultural values are values-in-themselves, and the living consciousness should adapt to them, affirm them for itself, because ultimately creation *is* cognition ... This is the way in which a living consciousness becomes a cultural consciousness and a cultural consciousness becomes embodied in a living consciousness. At one time man actually established all cultural values and now is bound by them. (p. 35)

Bakhtin's writing underlines seeing persons as both recipients and composers of cultural values. Culture provides resources for people in their meaning-making processes. In turn, cultural value becomes "actually valid only in an individual context" (p. 36). Through their various actions (e.g., adapting, affirming, or resisting), persons interpret cultural values in their own way. These interpretations reflect people's emergent knowledge of themselves and the world. Early-years researchers (Ødegaard, 2007; White, 2020) viewed young children as dialogical subjects who are shaped and shape cultural resources in their contexts. Contemporary research has also underlined children as negotiators who assimilate values from their given cultures to create new knowledge of themselves (e.g., Dixon, 2013; Dyson, 1997). This study is positioned in dialogue with Bakhtin's work and early-years research of culture and children. I discuss how cultural values emerged in children's stories and became potential resources for their authoring themselves.

While culture is a broad field, I purposely focus on two kinds of cultural resources that emerged from living stories, including popular culture and Vietnamese traditional values. This examination clarifies the potentialities of cultural values, in universe and specifically in Vietnamese contexts, in children's narratives and identities.

Popular Culture in Children's Living Stories and Identities. Popular culture "refers to the beliefs and practices, and the objects through which they are organized, that are widely shared among a population" (Mukerji & Schudson, 1991, p. 3). Dylan, Tony, Nhi, and Duong blended models that they learned from media channels (i.e., TV programs, YouTube, animated movies) into their living stories to express themselves. The articulation of popular culture conveyed different meanings across the four children's stories. Dylan and Tony both showed their enthusiasm for playing superheroes, especially Catboy, whom they saw on YouTube and TV programs. In some stories, voicing Catboy means to become a team leader with Tony and Dylan. They, however, still had different ways to use this role model. While Dylan connected Catboy's clothing color with the blue sky, Tony linked Catboy with his solutions in building friendship with Abbu. In Dylan's world, a finger gun action was no longer a war symbol but rather a new game to resolve conflict with his friend (Story 5). Nhi wanted to be a new version of Michael Jackson, who must be more famous than the original one (Story 29). Duong was impressed at a mass event in media and the local community—the Vietnamese National U23 football team's victory. Later, he saluted and sang the national anthem like football players to

express the happiness of completing goals (Story 42). Children did not only copy but also created new meanings for materials they absorbed from their contemporary cultures.

Some researchers (Hedges, 2011; Kelly-Ware, 2018) have explored the emergence of media in children's ordinary conversations in ECE settings in New Zealand. These authors concluded that popular culture serves children as a type of knowledge resource (Hedges, 2011) and children are capable of using this resource in their meaning-making processes. Resonating with this idea, I found that popular culture enriched children's stories. Hedges (2012) and Kelly-Ware (2018) emphasized the influence of popular culture on children's interests and meaning-making processes in kindergartens. My research, meanwhile, demonstrates the interplay among media resources, children's multimodal narratives, and their identities in and across home and ECE settings. The four children's stories showed that they used multimodal language (i.e., drawing, dancing, singing, imaginary stories) to articulate popular culture. This articulation led children to experience new roles (e.g., superheroes, Michael Jackson, Vietnamese football player), which linked with their special interests. In turn, the meanings of media-related objects were reconstructed in children's living stories. This study adds more evidence to explain the reciprocity among children's everyday narratives, identities, and popular culture.

Until recently, studies of the role of popular culture in Asian children's narratives have been rare (e.g., Savage-Shepherd, 2012; H. Xu, 1999). H. Xu (1999) investigated first-grade Chinese children's understanding of popular culture resources in their school setting in the USA. Savage-Shepherd (2012) discovered the link between media and primary students' identities formation through observing their conversations at home in Qatar. In a few studies, the participants were 5–7 years old rather than young children. No studies have explored popular culture in young Asian children's stories and identities in different contexts. As the first one being conducted in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand, this thesis reveals that popular culture emerges in young Vietnamese children's stories in both countries. This research offers a more detailed understanding of children's engagement with popular culture in their narratives and identities-in-flux in non-Western contexts.

Vietnamese Traditional Values. Traditional culture refers to values and beliefs that were inherited from past generations (Barron, 2007). One Vietnamese ontological thought is that people interconnect with their ancestors, community, nation, and the nature in their

existence (D. T. Nguyen, 1992). This section describes how young children articulated traditional values in their stories and self-authoring.

Vietnamese people value their family relationships. Researchers (T. N. Ho, 2009; Lai, 2019; T. Phan, 2005) have uncovered the connection between children and their family members in different contexts (e.g., Vietnam, USA). Their findings showed that family bonding is a vital value no matter whether children reside in Vietnam or overseas. Consistently, this thesis also reflects that family relationships influenced Dylan's and Tony's daily experiences when they were in New Zealand. Story 11 conveys how the meaning of *thuong*—a Vietnamese word—interconnected Dylan, his mother, and me in a narrative of love, empathy, and understanding. A narrative chain of Stories 14, 23, 24 reveals Tony's close contact with family members in Vietnam. Tony's New-Zealand-made mask in Story 24 proved his active role in making a connection between his home and host countries. Tony and Dylan transformed resources from Vietnamese traditions to new knowledge of themselves and their social worlds. Children's interactions with nature are discussed next.

Traditionally, Vietnamese people believe in relatedness between themselves and the surrounding environment. A native Vietnamese thought is “vạn vật hữu linh” [everything has its spirit]; humans and nature are interdependent (D. T. Nguyen, 1992). The echoes of this relatedness are found in children's stories. The reversed rainbow in a Vietnamese folk game and poem prompted Nhi to believe in miracles in her life (Stories 25, 37). Fairy tales (i.e., Tich Chu, Toad Sue Sir Sky) inspired Duong to become a birdman flying across borders and think an animal as his friend Duong's imaginary stories indicated his emergent identities as a lover and caregiver of nature. These examples revealed the existence of natural beings as the friend in children's narratives and young tellers' ability to connect with this special interlocutor. By inviting the Vietnamese ontology of relatedness into the discussion, this study is the first one that defends the potential of Vietnam's local knowledge in early-years research. The following section is about the role of peer interactions in children's living stories and identities.

Peer Interactions

Friends are primary interlocutors who respond to and co-create children's living stories. Peer interactions are seen as a dialogical relationship in which young children mutually learn and negotiate with friends to transform themselves and their peers (Cohen, 2017). This section illustrates how peer interactions influence young children's living stories and identities-in-flux.

Previous researchers (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004; Garvis, 2015; Nicolopoulou et al., 2021) explored the impact of peers on children's narratives and identities formation in ECE settings. These authors found that friendship provided children more opportunities to innovate ideas and negotiate identities in their everyday narratives. Consistent with their findings, my study reinforces peer culture as a social venue in which children dialogically communicate and learn from their friends. Thanks to this, young children enhance meanings and forms of expression in their stories and develop new knowledge of themselves and others. Dylan directed and simultaneously learned from Dave to enrich his narratives (Stories 6, 10). His inventions (clay burger, new association "B for Benny") were supported and extended by Dave. Interaction with his close friend Abbu facilitated Tony to reconstruct the story of Catboy so that all voices were respected (Story 16). Tony co-authored with friends to create a new version for a popular lyric, which let him extend his social network and build a sense of belonging with people in daycare (Story 17). The story with Minh elicited Nhi to look for the miracle of reversed rainbows (Story 37). Duong negotiated with his friend, Khang, about chopstick utilization at preschool (Story 47). Duong's gestures and body language showed his attempt to use chopsticks to defend his idea that the young child's voice mattered. In turn, Duong's attempt led Khang to change his thoughts.

These examples from the thesis proved that joining a play group was more than a chance to have fun but "an issue of existence" (Vandenberg, 2005, p. 300) for children. Blum-Kulka et al. (2004) concluded that talk between children was vital in helping young narrators explore "possible words unique to childhood" (p. 308) and transforming themselves. Resembling Blum-Kulka et al. (2004), my research demonstrates peer interactions supplied possibilities for children to become active authors of their stories and identities. In co-telling, young children spontaneously produced new information, requested changes in word and mode forms, and understood themselves and their social worlds. In the following segment, I will discuss the role of adults' beliefs and practices.

Adults' Beliefs and Practices

Bakhtin (1984a) differentiated between monologue and dialogue in conversations. Monologic talk is when speakers ignore their interlocutors' words and authoritatively highlight their own voices. Conversely, a dialogical conversation happens when speakers and interlocutors create "a contact zone" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345) in which every voice matters and

co-exists with each other. Monologic talk finalizes a speaker in fixed boundaries, while dialogical conversations position interlocutors on “thresholds” of potentialities and openness (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 68). Guided by a Bakhtinian lens of dialogicality and monologicality, this section describes the role of adults’ beliefs and practices in children’s living stories and identities.

Home and ECE settings are narrative environments in which adults and children compose living stories through their conceptions of otherness. Children’s perceptions of adults influenced how they articulated adults’ words in their living stories. In turn, parents’ and teachers’ image of children affected their responses in narratives with children. Living stories reflect how adults’ various images of children directed them to respond to the very young and how children perceived these responses in their identities-in-flux. I examined adults’ beliefs and practices in the four cases to identify their perceptions of children and the influence of these views on the emergence of children’s narratives and identities.

Particularly, early-years researchers have called attention to the impact of the curriculum on ECE teachers’ beliefs and practices (De Vocht, 2015; Zhou, 2019). ECE curricula serve as a primary part of institutional discourses, which impact teachers’ practices (White, 2009). My study endorsed the role of ECE curricula and teachers’ perceptions of the child in their daily practices with young children. Taken together, I discuss the role of parents’ beliefs and practices with a focus on their perception of children in children’s living stories and identities. Following this, I examine the ECE curricula and teachers’ beliefs and practices to see how varying conceptions of the child affected teachers’ responses to the very young.

Parents’ Beliefs and Practices. The four cases illustrated parents’ different approaches to perceiving the child and their various parenting practices. For Dylan, Tony, and Duong, parents prioritized children’s preferences in learning and playing. Dylan’s father regarded Dylan’s preference as playing in freedom. Tony’s parents were willing to support Tony to make connections with people and new settings in his own way. Similarly, Duong’s parents highlighted their child’s imagination as the root of his creativity and learning. They did not stress academic pressure but instead attempted to build a happy and free childhood for Duong. Zhou (2019) examined Chinese immigrant parents’ beliefs and practices in Aotearoa New Zealand’s kindergartens. She found that the parents respected children’s intentions and learning

interests. Consistent with her findings, the parents of Dylan, Tony, and Duong followed their children's interests and natural development.

In daily practices, the parents of Dylan, Tony, and Duong showed an understanding and engagement with their children's multimodal language. Dylan's parents used their attention, caring, and understanding to read and respond to their son's nonverbal communication (Stories 3, 11). Dylan, therefore, had more chances to express his interests and feelings in these stories. Inside Tony's living stories of making artwork were his parents' support and engaged listening (Stories 21–22). Duong's parents did not consider their son's imaginary stories as a lie but an authentically novelistic view to see the world (Story 44). Duong's fantastical stories influenced Dan and Han to see the world in a new way. Living stories between the three children and their parents reflected that the parents attended to children's voices and let these voices be present in their response. Their words to the children are dialogical. Dylan, Tony, and Duong appear as competent and active persons in their parents' responses. The three young narrators had more chances to initiate stories with the fullness of innovative ideas and multimodal language. Some Bakhtinian researchers (Cengiz, 2016; Tannen, 2006) employed dialogicality to understand parent–child interactions at home. They found that parents' engagement and comprehension of children's conversations enriched the young narrators' proactive thinking in their stories. Likewise, my study highlighted that parents' dialogical responses facilitated Tony, Dylan, and Duong to become active initiators in telling and authoring themselves.

Nhi's stories featured a different situation. Nhi's mother valued “serious learning” (Guo, 2010, p. 118) in her parental beliefs and practices. Nga's responses to Nhi showed her insistence that schools were for studying, going to primary school was to enter a competition, and the little child was seen as a competitor for academic goals. In this competition, the parents' role should be as supporters and providers for the child's knowledge, skills, and ambition. In her doctoral thesis, Guo (2010) found that Chinese immigrant parents in New Zealand expected children to “learn serious things” at home. Nga's teaching lessons of *formal writing* for Nhi at home (Story 32) emphasized her academic pursuit, which resonates with Guo's (2010) explanation of the root of Chinese parents' beliefs. In Nga's responses, stories of Nhi's right to play in the transition to primary school, the girl's usage of cultural resources and joy in peer interactions were not fully valued. Reciprocally, Nhi did not find it easy to initiate stories to show her desire in play in interactions with her mother. My study showed that different images of children could

lead to differences in parents' responses and children's types of stories. The role of the ECE curriculum and teachers' beliefs and practices is provided next.

ECE Curriculum and Teachers' Beliefs and Practices. One similarity between ECE curricula of New Zealand and Vietnam is a focus on a child-centered approach. Teachers' beliefs and practices, however, varied across living stories of Dylan, Nhi, Tony, and Duong. New Zealand's ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, highlights children's preferences in and through play (MoE, 2017). Children's free-play activities are valued by teachers in ECE contexts, as found in narratives of Dylan and Tony. Dylan's teachers respected the child's preference to play. They, however, did not always notice Dylan's nonverbal communication. Reika and Mandi held a permanent view of Dylan as a silent child. Mandi got involved with Dylan's story of making a burger, but she might not have fully noticed his gestures and body actions (i.e., eating sound, raising hands to show his clay burger) in Story 4. Mandi, thus, did not connect with Dylan's joy at making people laugh in this story. Reika and Mandi's responses resonate with ECE practitioners' practices in the study of Sairanen et al. (2020). These authors observed daily narratives between children and teachers in Finnish kindergartens. Sairanen et al. noted that teachers' ignorance of children's gestures and actions led to their misinterpretation of children's narratives and behaviors. My study also showed that the teachers' misunderstanding of Dylan's stories might result from their not fully attending to his multimodal language.

Tony's teachers expressed an engagement and empathy to see with the child and supported him in developing himself in his own way. Living stories between teachers and Tony showed that teachers' responses were beneficial to the child. Tony's anger and frustration were calmed by Yuna's stillness, engagement, and empathy in Story 18. Tony bit Yuna, but she did not criticise him. Instead, Yuna acknowledged that Tony's frustration in his living story was temporary, and he was in a positive process of dealing with it. Story 18 added a new lens of how ECE practitioners broke standard norms of young children to understand their voices. Previous studies (Jingbo & Elicker, 2005; Puroila, 2013) reported that ECE teachers tended to categorize children who offended and broke the rules as trouble-makers. Then teachers' narratives about the young trouble-makers prevented them from discovering children's other roles. Different from prior research, my study showed Yuna did not let Tony's offensive actions dominate her thoughts of the child. Instead, she *saw with Tony* to understand the cause of his anger. Yuna's momentary silence and absence after Tony's shouting was not a kind of ignorance

and rejection but rather her respect for the child's desire to be alone. Yuna supported Tony, not extinguishing but instead transforming his anger (Davies, 2014). Story 18, thus, became a living lesson for Tony to learn how to control his emotions and respect others' rights. Whether Yuna physically stayed with Tony or not, the little child and his words were available in her thoughts and practices.

Like Yuna, Sarah dialogically negotiated with Tony to co-create rules-based play so that Tony could learn to respect others in the ECE center (Story 19). Tony had a chance to talk about his past life in Vietnam based on Jenny's initial sharing of her trip to her homeland, the Netherlands (Story 23). Teachers' responses to Tony were consistent with *Te Whāriki's* emphasis on their role as living agents of *aroha*¹⁵ in evaluating and supporting children's learning (MoE, 2017). Tony's ECE setting was a narrative environment of dialogicality in which the child composed living stories in multimodal ways to enrich his knowledge of himself, others, and the world.

In Vietnam, the National ECE curriculum values a child-centered approach, but teacher-led activities are still the primary approach for learning and teaching in preschool settings (Lenaerts et al., 2017). Some researchers (e.g., Dinh, 2014; Hoang et al., 2018) concluded that Vietnamese teachers' discipline usually restricts children's activities. This study is both coincident and noncoincident with this view. Living stories showed that under an umbrella of the Vietnamese ECE curriculum, teaching and listening to the child differed between Nhi and Duong.

Ha, Nhi's teacher, believed in discipline's power to maintain children's good behavior in class. Her perception of children was linked with their family backgrounds (Story 34), which might prevent her from listening to Nhi's opinion of schools and make the child silent. Ha's initial words at the beginning of Story 33 conveyed the teacher's authority and institutional norms of good children who should be well-controlled and study hard (Dixon, 2013). Ha's authoritative practices resonated with earlier studies of teachers' leading role in Vietnamese preschools (Hoang et al., 2018; Lenaerts et al., 2017). Story 33, however, witnessed Ha's transformation in her practice. Later, she accepted Nhi's initiation to co-author a new story of playing. In telling and playing, Ha was not bounded by familiar norms of teachers' domination. She accompanied Nhi and other children to restructure the class from a monologic space of

¹⁵ *Aroha* is a Māori word, meaning love, compassion, empathy, and affection.

teachers' discipline to a narrative environment of dialogicality. Reciprocally, Nhi had more freedom to story herself as an agentive person.

Linh, Duong's teacher, preferred listening and closely observing children. This view influenced her practices with Duong. She was an attentive co-author in Duong's imaginary stories, showing curiosity and willingness to be led by the child's imagination. Her responses to Duong's silences and desire to use chopsticks (Stories 46, 47) showed her openness to listen and learn to be directed by the child. Kuby and Vaughn (2015) asserted that teachers' openness to respond to young students is vital to make school settings open to their multimodal narratives. Echoing this idea, my study conveyed that Linh's practices led the preschool setting to become "opened spaces" (Kuby & Vaughn, 2015, p. 457) of listening and storytelling. Consequently, Duong gained diverse opportunities and spaces to express himself as an innovative and confident person in his living stories.

Some Bakhtinian researchers (De Vocht, 2015; White, 2009) explored teacher–children interactions in ECE settings in New Zealand. These authors pinpointed that teachers' dialogical responses allowed them to break assumptions and norms of children to build mutual spaces. In this mutuality, teachers are willing to be led by children to understand their voices. Ha and Linh differed in their beliefs and practices. A similarity between them is when they let children lead their work, they went beyond "institutional discourses" (De Vocht, 2015, p. 46) that narrowed them in disciplines. Then the teachers could compose dialogical responses to address children's diverse needs. In these moments, children and teachers join in an interpersonal relationship and become each other's change-makers (White, 2009).

Dialogical Responses: Key Point in Adults' Beliefs and Practices. While reviewing parents' and teachers' beliefs and practices with a Bakhtinian lens of dialogic pedagogy, I realized a connection between adults' responses and children's freedom in their living stories. The quality of dialogical responses that parents and teachers could create decided how they attended to children and how much freedom children could have in their narratives with adults. This study, therefore, concurs with some previous studies (Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013; Sairanen et al., 2020) that emphasized the vitality of adults' dialogical responses in supporting children's identities-in-flux.

Living stories reflect that adults' responses were influenced by their perceptions of the child, echoing earlier studies (Cassidy & Lone, 2020; De Vocht, 2015). While adults respected

children as open-ended persons, they saw children in interrelationship with contextual factors (i.e., peer culture, cultural resources, and the adults). Consequently, adults co-authored with children to create dialogical spaces of listening and sharing (Matusov et al., 2019). Reciprocally, children found themselves and their words living “attentively, lovingly, and dialogically” (White, 2009, p. 213) in adults’ responses. Thanks to the dialogical relationship, adults and children built narrative environments of mutuality, empathy, and sharing in living stories. When parents and teachers viewed children through fixed terms and boundaries, they did not comprehend all the contextual factors around the young. Children’s cultural resources and the meanings of peer interactions became invisible to adults. In these cases, adults’ responses to children turned monological, and the children may have found it not easy to connect with adults.

Bakhtinian terms of monologicality and dialogicality contribute to reformulating adult–children interactions and the role of settings in research. There are no singular spaces in a Bakhtinian lens that only monologicality or dialogicality (Matusov, 2009). Monological and dialogical talk are hybrid terms, depending on interlocutors and their relationship (Matusov et al., 2019). One setting can be monological with someone but dialogical with another. Earlier researchers (Marsh, 2016; Prinsloo & Stein, 2005) stated that formal discourses directed children’s institutional settings while unofficial spaces like home might serve as a zone of freedom. My argument is that ECE settings are not totally formal, and home spaces might not always be free. The living stories of Duong, Tony, and Dylan showed that ECE settings could become dynamic spaces for children’s learning and telling. Nhi’s stories with her mother, meanwhile, conveyed how the home setting could be controlled by her mother’s authority. The most important thing for children telling stories and authoring themselves is not their physical settings. The vital thing is the kinds of responses that adults provide for children in these settings and which image of the child is currently guiding adults’ responses to children. The next section is about children’s experiences and special interests in their narratives and identities.

Children’s Experiences and Special Interests

This section explains the relationship between children’s experiences, their interests, living stories, and identities-in-flux. Firstly, I describe how narrative chains of living stories indicated the flow of children’s growing experiences and interests across home and ECE settings. Children bring their knowledge, experiences, and interests to articulate others’ words in living stories, and through these narratives, they build up their world. Secondly, I discuss the

contribution of children's special interests and experiences, in relation to other influential factors, to children and their unique worlds in living stories. Children's unique realms wait for adults' responses. This section ends with a request for adults to attend to children's worlds.

Children's prior experiences and special interests are familiar topics in early-years research. Many researchers (e.g., Hedges, 2008; Hume et al., 2015; Lovatt, 2020) have examined how young children's past experiences and interests shifted their identities. One challenge facing researchers is how to understand and assess children's actual interests and experiences. Some psychological studies have investigated children's interests by reflecting parents' and teachers' perceptions (e.g., Hume et al., 2015). Children's actual thoughts and their voices, thus, might be missing in these studies. To resolve this matter, sociocultural researchers (Cooper et al., 2013; Lovatt, 2020) have combined close observation in ECE settings and interviews with parents and teachers to understand children's interests from their perspectives. Their work, however, were conducted only in kindergartens. The flow of children's interests in and across home and ECE centers, has been underrepresented in their studies. In the narrative field, researchers (Karjalainen, 2020; Ødegaard, 2015) have highlighted that children use stories to work with their experiences and interests in their own ways to construct themselves. These studies used close observation as the main method to gather children's verbal stories in institutional settings (e.g., kindergartens, pre-K classes). Like Lovatt (2020), I closely observed children to understand their actual interests and experiences in real-life situations. Differing from most previous studies which were located in institutional settings, I explored children's past experiences and interests at home and in ECE settings. Guided by Bakhtin's theory, I attended to the unfinalized chains of children's multimodal modes in their living stories across settings, which are currently unexplored in narrative research. The unfinalizability of children's stories indicates the continuity and reformulation of their interests and experiences.

The unfinalized chain of children's living stories conveyed the continuity in children's past experiences and special interests, which links with their proactivity in authoring themselves. Duong's ideas of making friends with nonhuman subjects (Stories 39–40) and playing birdman (Stories 42) were partly rooted in his reading experiences of Vietnamese fairy tales. Dylan's story of being Benny (Story 9) reflected his experience of the newborn's activities. Later, Dylan's new association "B for Benny" to reconceptualize the letter B (Story 10) linked with his experience of seeing the baby's name on the balloon. Stories 9–10 conveyed

how the child wove multimodal language (body actions, gestures, verbal speech) with growing experiences to express an emergent knowledge of his newborn brother. The narrative chain of stories also indicates the flow of children's interests. A particular interest in superheroes and art flourished in Tony who became a young artist who made masks for himself and others at home and the ECE center (Stories 14 and 24). Nhi's leisure in playing with English nurtured her to draw her overseas dream at preschool, video record herself at home, and become a new Michael Jackson (Stories 27–29). Tony and Nhi used their multimodal language (e.g., drawing, designing, dancing, verbal talk) to express their special interests in and across home and ECE settings. Early-years researchers (Cooper et al., 2013; Lovatt, 2020) conclude that young children's past experiences and interests grow across their daily interactions. My research supports these authors' findings that the continuity of experiences and special interests drive children to sustain ideas and become who they are and do what they want in and across settings.

The chains of children's living stories also indicate reformulation in their special interests and experiences. Tony had a passion for superheroes. The different meanings of being Catboy in stories with his friend Abbu (Stories 15–16) showed how Tony negotiated between his desire and the other's needs. The big Catboy in Tony's drawing in Story 15 referred to his desire to be a more powerful leader than Abbu. The two Catboys who played with each other in Story 16 showed that Tony did not totally relinquish his passion, but he became a constructive listener to attend to Abbu's voice. Stories 15–16 conveyed an ongoing process in which Tony learned to reshape himself to make a connection with his friend at the ECE center. Dylan was keen on using funny actions in his living stories with friends. Dylan's eating gesture in Story 4 implied he was a joyful maker of the clay burger. This gesture in Story 5 was his funny way to resolve a potential conflict with his friend. These examples showed that children's experiences and interests are not fixed but always dynamic and changeable. Zhou (2019) emphasized that changes in children's interests and experiences led them to learn new knowledge of themselves and the world across times and spaces. Similarly, my study described that children reformulated their interests and experiences to deal with newly encountered events at home and in ECE settings. Through reformulation, children author themselves in flexible and dynamic roles.

Researchers (e.g., Lovatt, 2020; Zhou, 2019) have pinpointed that both continuity and transformation in children's special interests and experiences feature their proactivity in identities construction. Aligned with these studies, my research reveals that the continuous and

dynamic flow of children's hobbies and past experiences show themselves as agentive makers in identities-in-flux. Departing from an analysis of children's stories, I further attended to the link between multimodality, children's special interests and experiences, and their identities. Living stories emphasized how the young narrators integrated their growing experiences and continuing interests with a myriad of their multimodal language to author themselves across settings.

Children's experiences and interests in this study embraced an overarching point—their sense of play. As I previously discussed, children played with multimodal language in their stories. Through play, children wove their experiences and interests with emergent events, remade and renewed them to make their unique world (Wohlwend, 2015). So, what is the world that children intend to make through their living stories? Wohlwend (2015) observed children's play process through their literacy practices in and out of UK primary classes. She argued that children manipulated play as “a tactic” (p. 114) to create an underground world of resistance and resilience, which is out of teachers' view and control. When play is viewed as a tactic for an end purpose, play becomes combat, and children turn into competitors fighting for their own desires. Accidentally, the play loses its essence—freedom and non-profitable joys (Bakhtin, 1984b). For me, children played with their multimodal language to blend their experiences and interests into present situations, first and foremost, to enjoy the fun. Fun was the reason why Dylan laughed and showed off his clay burger with Dave and the teacher. Having joy was an explanation for Duong inventing imaginary stories. Nhi used games not to negotiate power with adults but rather to preserve her right to play.

Sealey (2000) utilized the term *childly* to honor “the relational nature of the state of being a child” (p. 9), which postpones negative connotations of *childish* and *childlike*. Drawing on Sealey's idea, I contend that children blended their experiences and interests to play with multimodal language to create their childly world. In telling and playing, children own the freedom to “have every-day-right to behave like children” (Genishi & Dyson, 2014, p. 230) or, in other words, to be themselves. Neither social norms nor tasks exist in the childly world. Children are simply children. Young children's desire to be themselves is evident to show their agency, which is understood as “a way of positioning oneself so as to allow for new ways of being, new identities” (C. Lewis et al., 2007, p. 6).

Jennings-Tallant (2018) explored the meanings of children's laughter in daycare centers. She stated that children mainly expressed their actual interests and funny actions in their private spaces or with their friends rather than adults. Children's world is considered an underground space, which are full of secrets and out of adults' control (Jennings-Tallant, 2018). Children's living stories in this study prompt me to reconsider Jennings-Tallant's view. Living stories are a place in which children take their childly world "on threshold," [see above] (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 60) invite adults to see and join it in every moment they live. The childly world inextricably links with the adults' world. Nhi asked her mother if there were reversed rainbows in the world. Dylan shared the beautiful sky with me in his speech. Tony requested his father to see the worm house that was made by his hands. Duong taught his parents to see magic in the story of the missing duck. Stories in this study showed how essential and challenging it is for adults to attend to childly desires in children's stories. As I have previously discussed, adults' beliefs and practices influenced how children encountered peer interactions and cultural resources. Adults' responses affected how much free space children could have to exercise themselves in their childly world. If something needs to be changed for children's sake, it must come first and foremost from adults and their approaches to responding to the very young. The remaining questions are how we, as adults, can reconsider children's stories to understand childly voices and use this understanding to *sửa mình* (adjust ourselves). The following section talks about this.

From Children's Stories to Adults' Transformation: A Need to Reconsider the Image of Children

Previous sections have described multimodality, unfinalizability, proactivity, and playfulness of childly words. A Vietnamese proverb says, "nhìn con sửa mình" [looking into children to adjust ourselves]. Looking into children's stories is a chance for adults to *sửa mình* (adjust themselves). Children's narratives live because they call for adults' responses (Bakhtin, 1984a). How can we, adults, as researchers, practitioners, teachers, and parents, open our minds to understand childly words? How can we use our understanding of children's stories to transform ourselves in relationships with them? These questions connect with the implications of this research. After all, what have I learned and want others to know of children's world from this? The answer to these questions comes from adults' dialogical response to young children, which the preceding sections have shown. The critical aspect of dialogicality is adults'

perceptions of children as open-ended persons who live in an interconnected relationship with adults. In this section, I discuss the need to see with children in interconnection with adults and the implications of this view.

Children and Adults as Interbeings

“Nhìn con sửa mình” [looking into children to adjust adults ourselves] underlines a Vietnamese value—the interdependency of adults and children (H. T. Luong, 2009). Underpinning this saying is a Vietnamese Zen Buddhism philosophical stance that all beings are interbeings (Thich, 2010). Thich Nhat Hanh (2010) wrote that “*to be* is to *inter-be*. We cannot just *be* by ourselves alone. We have to *inter-be* with every other thing” (p. 113). The Vietnamese proverb weaves with Bakhtin’s theory of dialogicality in a similar view of children as interbeings with adults. Several Bakhtinian scholars (Matusov, 2009; Skidmore, 2000) have emphasized that a dialogical talk emerges when addressers recognize others in interdependency and responsivity. In dialogicality, speakers see themselves in others and let others’ voices become visible in their responses. Dialogical talk leads both parties—addressers and addressees—to exist as active co-constructors of their identities or truths.

The Vietnamese proverb *nhìn con sửa mình* and a Bakhtinian lens of dialogicality provide a lens to see how young children, their parents, teachers, and I were interconnected in stories. Dylan’s living story of separating from Thu at nighttime moved her. In turn, Thu’s response of *thương* brought her and Dylan into empathy and togetherness. Dylan’s smile and gaze on a winter day in Auckland led to my new understanding of his way of communication. Yuna’s stillness, Ha’s joy, and Linh’s smile showed that they let the young children—Tony, Nhi, Duong—guide their practices. Nhi’s question about reversed rainbows called me to rethink the meaning of a miracle from the child’s perspective. Duong’s magical secrets prompted his parents and teachers to resee the world. Dan, Duong’s father, shared about adulthood and childhood in Chapter 7. He said that “we are already adults who cannot imagine as a child, like Duong. But Duong teaches me to see a more beautiful life.” Dan’s utterance is not only a confession of his inability as an adult but also a recognition of echoes of children’s words in parents’ voices. Stories, as Frank (1995) stated, never “stand alone.” Dan’s saying resembled many other dialogical moments that I have related, creating a web of narratives. This web of stories is tied by one point—the interconnection between children and adults. This interweaving makes both adults and children become change-makers of each other. In dialogical moments,

childly words were present in adults' beliefs and practices. Through these living stories, I contest prior studies (e.g., Burr, 2014; Rydstrøm, 2001) that highlighted Vietnamese adults and children in conflict. My study proves that the relationship between children and adults in the Vietnamese context is more sophisticated, including both in gaps (i.e., the relationship between Nhi and her mother) and interconnections.

From the lens of interbeings, becoming parents, teachers, and researchers might not be just adults' individual choices. Instead, it is an ongoing process of recognizing children as inextricable members and makers of our parental and educational roles. In the sense of interbeings, we comprehend children as persons with voices, like us. We also learn to let children's stories guide our living, and through children's direction, we *sửa mình* (adjust ourselves) to become their parents, teachers, and researchers. Based on the Vietnamese proverb, Bakhtin's theory of dialogicality, and the data, I propose an idea of children as interbeings with adults to conceptualize the image of the child.

An idea of children as interbeings with adults inseparably links with other contemporary notions of childhood. The interbeing between children and adults connects my work with a perception of children and teachers as "ako" (the te reo Māori word meaning teachers and learners) in *Te Whāriki*. The meaning of ako is to foster teachers and parents to let children's uniqueness lead their work. Sociologists have also raised the need to see children as competent and capable persons who are influenced by and influence adults in their adulthood-making (Cassidy & Lone, 2020; Prout, 2011). Children and adults can be viewed as "a multiplicity of becoming in which all are incomplete and dependent" (Lee, cited in Prout, 2011, p. 8). The idea of children as interbeings with adults facilitates a view of the interrelationship between adulthood and childhood.

The perception of children and adults as interbeings is ethical because it reminds adults that *seeing children* is not only an act of turning outside but also returning to look inside themselves. This internal re-viewing requires adults' responsibility to be open. Then openness implies attempts to go beyond monological barriers to let childly words dialogically exist in adults' lens. In other words, adults invite children's presence in their beliefs and practices. To be present, parents, educators, and researchers need to have their minds wholly engaged and appreciatively connecting with children in every moment. Being present is an approach to create a sense of interbeings with children, which is proposed next.

Be Present: An Approach to Creating a Sense of Interbeing With Children

Kennedy (2010) posed the question, “If children will inhabit a world that their parents can only imagine, how can adults prepare them for it?” (p. 72). Just imagine a childly world in which cartoon characters color the sky, Spiderman makes a web on the window of his house, rainbows are reversed, and a boy wants to be a bird to fly across borders. This world includes multimodality, playfulness, and unknown things. Prior sections have conveyed that rejection is not a good answer. The answer lies in adults’ approach to being present with children.

First, to be present means that we invite children and their words to exist mindfully and ethically in our beliefs and practices. This approach does not require a full-time presence in children’s settings. Instead, we need to attend to children’s words, engage with these words, and let them guide our work. Our attention and engagement will teach us to realize when we need to get involved with children or leave spaces for children to stay by themselves. Yuna’s response in Story 17 is an excellent example of how a teacher lets the child’s actions direct her existence and nonexistence, talking and not talking to Tony. An approach of being present, thus, offers an alternative lens for provoking adults’ deeper thoughts in responding to children. Instead of ignorance or instant replies without understanding, parents and teachers should position childly words in the center of their minds and use them to transform their practices (Davies, 2014).

Second, being present with children reminds us to see children in relationship with all contextual factors around them: life changes, cultural resources, peer interactions, and our beliefs and practices as adults. I concur with the words of Gaffney and Jesson (2019) that “we must know what children know and so must they” (p. 23). When adults can comprehend manifestations of children’s contexts, they become familiar with resources that children bring from other contexts into their stories. Consequently, adults can maximize opportunities for children’s learning and growing in their own ways.

Third, being present with children empowers openness in seeing with children. When we fully attend to children in here-and-now stories, we know that nothing is permanent and unchangeable. Children and adults are always engaged in an open-ended process of being and becoming (Bakhtin, 1984a). We stop judging children with finalized labels and become open to see them and ourselves in a fluid chain of changes and being changed. When we let children be present in our voices, we will “begin with what is known, but ... be open to creatively evolving into something new” (Davies, 2014, p. 21). A child’s world is “a mighty thing” (Greenfield et

al., 1979), including the unknown and playfulness. When adults go beyond borders bounded by monolocality, they will recognize the not-yet-known from childly words. Children then can be empowered to behave as they are. While adults empower children, they also have the potential to “transform adulthood as well” (Kennedy, 2010, p. 69).

Living stories matter. I have observed the different powers of stories during this study. When parents and teachers monologically responded to children, they could not engage with childly stories. When parents and teachers dialogically responded to their young interlocutors, they broke borders of assumptions and common norms to *see with children*. To cross any border is to acknowledge that the outer world and we are interbeings (Thich, 2010) and “life poised on threshold” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 299). The perception of children as adults’ interbeings and the approach of being present opens *borderless* ways of thinking for parents, teachers, and researchers to co-construct the world with children in living stories.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has examined multimodal forms and unfinalizability in the four children’s living stories, the influential factors in their identities-in-flux, and proposed a need to reconsider the image of Vietnamese children. Guided by Bakhtin’s dialogical theory and semiotic lens, I have discussed four types of children’s multimodal languages (i.e., silences, artistic communications, early literacy, and imaginary stories) and the intersection between these modes. Based on a Bakhtinian notion of unfinalizability, I found that children’s ideas and interests traveled across modes of language, time, and space. These modes of language were connected via play. The four children played with multimodal languages to compose their living stories and express themselves. The analysis of living stories in this study promotes a lens to view children’s narratives and identities in unfinalizability, which is untapped in research.

The role of contextual factors (i.e., cultural values, peer interactions, adults’ beliefs and practices) and young Vietnamese children’s special interests and experiences in their identities-in-flux have been discussed. The interplay between contexts and children’s identities has been highlighted. This study is the first one especially explaining the link between cultural resources and young Vietnamese children’s narratives and identities. The close examination of influential factors conveys that adults’ responses were vital in empowering children’s freedom to express themselves. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Dyson, 1997; White, 2009), my study highlights children as active agents in responding to their given contexts to author themselves.

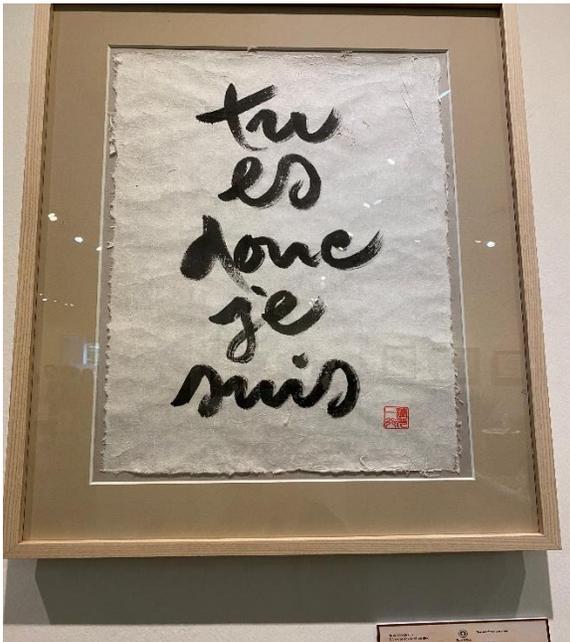
Finally, this chapter has offered a possibility to connect Vietnamese thinking and global ideas to reconceptualize the image of children. Previous studies have emphasized Confucian imprints as to why children's voices are disregarded in Vietnam's ECE context. Researchers have raised a need to employ Western theoretical systems to boost children's rights and provide adequate instructions for adults' practices (e.g., Lenaerts et al., 2017). Other Vietnamese native values—the Buddhist tradition of love, compassion, and interconnection—have been “untouched ... and therefore [have] passively contributed” (Han & Singh, 2016, p. 212) to the Vietnamese ECE system. Through an interweaving of the Vietnamese proverb *nhìn con sửa mình*, a Bakhtinian notion of dialogicality, and the findings, children are reconsidered as interbeings with adults. I contest previous views which regard Vietnamese native thought as inferior and weave international theory with Vietnameseeness to localize the concept of children.

Chapter 9: (In)Conclusion: You Are, Therefore I Am

Around the time that I began writing this conclusion in April 2021, I visited Thich Nhat Hanh’s exhibition of calligraphy “Hương thơm quê mẹ” [The fragrance of Motherland] in Hanoi, Vietnam. I stood still for a long time, looking at his calligraphy written in French, “Tu es donc je suis” (Vì em có đó nên tôi ở đây; You are, therefore I am; see Figure 13)

Figure 13

Thich Nhat Hanh’s Calligraphy



Note: Photographed by Hoa

I also read the explanation below the picture, which included Thich’s quote: “I am, therefore you are. You are, therefore I am. That is the meaning of the word ‘inter-being’” (Thich, 1987, p. 88). I was moved as I found echoes of my work in Thầy’s saying. The four children, Dylan, Tony, Nhi, and Duong, as well as their stories in this study, represent the image of *You*—the greatest Otherness in my mind—who “are, therefore I am.” I concur with V. T. Nguyen (2019), the Vietnamese Pulitzer winner, that writing is an internal urge. I wrote this thesis in the sense of being created by the children and being chosen by them to continue living their stories in a new life. Throughout the study, I learned to become a *hoa* of the very young and an engaged interpreter who thought with stories to reflect my longitudinal process of seeing, listening, and

understanding their lives. The Conclusion chapter is a good chance for me to look back on this process and reflect on the study's significant contributions. The first section underlines how this research contributes to the field of young children's narratives and identities from theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives.

From a Bakhtinian idea of unfinalizability, stories neither die nor stay alone. Stories of four children have been told and discussed in the preceding chapters. These narratives, however, provoke me to look back at my limitations and be ready to answer academic matters that will indeed arrive in the future. The last two sections are about limitations and future research.

Contributions of the Study

This study has explored young Vietnamese children's identities-in-flux through their living stories across home and ECE settings in Vietnam and New Zealand. From a Bakhtinian lens, identities-in-flux is an ongoing process in which children articulate external resources to author themselves and make sense of the world. Children's identities emerged in and through living stories that they generated in daily activities. Findings highlighted the multimodal communications that young narrators composed in their living stories to articulate others' words and author themselves. These multimodal forms are silences, art, early literacy, and imaginary stories. Influential factors in children's identities-in-flux are cultural resources, peer interactions, adults' beliefs and practices, and children's interests and experiences. Guided by Bakhtin's concept of unfinalizability, intersections between multimodal forms and influential factors were examined through the four cases. This study departs from previous research and contributes to the field of children's narratives and identities. The theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions of the thesis are presented next.

Theoretical Contribution

Theoretically, this study is the first using the concept of living stories to explore young children's everyday narratives across home and ECE settings. Based on Bakhtin's concepts of dialogues and unfinalizability and semiotic lens, I created the term living story. Children's stories are alive because they exist in multimodal forms of communication and travel in an unfinalized chain with stories of others (i.e., parents and teachers) about children. Children's words never end, they sail in-between forms, persons, times, and settings. The unfinalizability and multimodality in children's living stories indicate their dynamic and fluid identities. This study demonstrates a need to view children's narratives and identities in unfinalizability.

This research is the first in-depth multicase study to explore young Vietnamese children's everyday narratives and identities-in-flux across home and ECE settings in Vietnam and Aotearoa New Zealand. Contemporary young Vietnamese children's voices and their stories are marginalized in research. The Vietnamese community is a minority group in New Zealand (T. Tran, 1997). No empirical studies have been previously conducted to identify the narratives and identities of young Vietnamese children living here. This thesis makes a theoretical contribution to the understanding of the relationship between contexts and Vietnamese children. An exploration of how young Vietnamese narrators articulated popular media and traditional heritage in their stories illustrates them as culture composers, which has not been attended to in the Vietnam research field. The findings show that adults' perceptions of children guide their responses to children, and their responses influence children's freedom in telling and authoring themselves across settings. Reciprocally, children perform as proactive persons who utilize previous experiences and special interests to compose a childly realm in which they are who they are and do what they want. That children are active agents in authoring themselves is a primary idea promoted by this study.

At the end of his keynote address at the Vietnam Education Symposium 2020, Tesar (2020) asked the audience, "How can we utilize a global philosophy of education outlook that will link both Western understanding and Indigenous, local thinking?" (p. 4). An idea of children and adults as interbeings is my answer, as a Vietnamese-rooted researcher, to his question. The idea resulted from an interweaving of Bakhtin's notions of dialogue and unfinalizability, a global theory, the Vietnamese proverb *nhìn con sửa mình*, and the findings. This thesis proposes a potential for non-Western researchers and educators to resist colonized thinking their work.

Methodological Contribution

This thesis highlights the value of the dialogical narrative approach in which I learned to become a *hoa* (friend) of children, their parents, and teachers. Children were not participants whom I approached to collect data. Instead, the four children were playmates with whom I spent time engaging and seeing with them to understand their narratives and personal lives. This engagement was reflected through the term living stories. Children's living stories were not a concept that emerged from the literature. Rather, stories lived in the data collection and analysis. Stories interconnected children, their parents, teachers, and me, as the researcher, in the data-

collection process. Stories also drove the analytical procedure. I engaged with webs of stories to understand children's everyday narratives. The DNA is not only a methodological framework in research. This approach is my open-ended path of living, sharing, being, and becoming in a co-constructed space with young children, their parents, and teachers.

Empirical Contribution

This study invites parents, teachers, and researchers to reconsider young children as interbeings with adults. In this thesis, children are not seen as products made by adults. The very young are agentic persons who, through their living stories, guide adults to become parents, teachers, and researchers. Living stories have shown that children do not always keep their world secret but rather invite adults to join their childly spaces. Adults don't need to "turn a blind eye ... to gift children freedom", as Jennings-Tallant (2018, p. 173) suggested. My argument throughout this thesis is that freedom is not a gift given by adults' lack of presence. Instead, children's freedom of choice emerges from the co-construction of both themselves and adults to build a shared world. Parents, teachers, and researchers respond dialogically to expand their chances to engage and meet children's needs. When children and adults interconnect, children gain the freedom to author themselves in their worlds.

Being present is an approach that this study proposes for adults to engage mindfully and attentively to listen to children's voices. This approach allows us, as adults, to become engaged companions in children's lives rather than being outsiders and dominant superiors. Being present requires adults' openness and mindful listening to understand children as proactive and open-ended persons in relationship with contextual factors. When parents and ECE teachers reach an in-depth comprehension of children and their contexts, they can provide dialogical responses to young children. Letting children's uniqueness lead adults' work is suggested for parents, teachers, and researchers to accompany children in their development.

Limitations of the Research

My overall attempt was to make an unfinalized utterance to respond to stories that I listened to and encountered. I tried to include the voices of children, parents, and teachers as much as possible to preserve an unfinalizability in my interpretation of children's narratives and identities. Several issues arose throughout the participation of children, their parents, and teachers in my research, and it is crucial to acknowledge their potential impact on the findings.

A highly respectful view of young children was maintained through my approach to seeing with them. I, however, only shared data transcripts and preliminary interpretations of children's stories with their parents and teachers rather than the children. This limitation might constrain children's participation in an unfinalized interpretation of their lives. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquirers who spend time with children should share their findings and interpretation with their participants in child-friendly ways (i.e., making picture books, poems). A suggestion for children to gain more access to the researcher's interpretation is noted.

Additionally, I was aware that not all ECE teachers could collaborate with me throughout this study. Reika, Dylan's teacher, declined to be video recorded in my observation, but she agreed to participate in interviews. I contacted most teachers via emails, texts, and phone calls (if they suggested) after the data collection to share my transcripts and preliminary analysis. In Dylan's case, Reika and Mindi moved out of Happy Kids Company to work in other centers right after I returned to Vietnam in October 2019. They also no longer used their staff email addresses that they provided me at the beginning of my data collection. Due to physical distance, I could not consult with them on their ideas about the preliminary interpretation. This limitation meant that I might have missed potential data. I, however, maintained contact with the other teacher, Mandi, and the center manager, to ensure data triangulation and eliminate missing information in Dylan's case.

Future Research: New Stories Waiting to Be Unveiled

Stories that have been published in preceding chapters were just a part of vast volume of narratives that I lived and heard with children, their parents, and teachers. Here, I want to recall a living story in my fieldwork. The narrative is related to another child who was a co-participant in this study, but his existence prompted me to think about future research activities.

Living Story 49

Hoang is a young Vietnamese boy who recently moved to New Zealand 1 month before the data collection in Manuka Center. His mother and he arrived in Auckland to reunite with his father. Hoang is enrolled in the afternoon session in Manuka Center together with Dylan. His father works as a chef in a local Vietnamese restaurant, while Linh, his

mother, is looking for a casual job. I invite Hoang to join as co-participant for the fieldwork.

On the first day when I meet Linh in the center to talk about my work, she is frustrated. Instead of talking about the research, she shares her worry about limited income, and expensive living costs in Auckland. She is especially concerned about her family's flatmates, who are drug and alcohol addicts. Linh does not have her own phone number; she shares it with her husband. "For saving money. I don't know English, and no one needs to call me," says Linh. The only communication I have with Linh is our talk during her drop-off and pick-up time in Manuka Center. In these conversations, I introduce her to free community English courses, job vacancies in Vietnamese shops that I know and persuade her to find a new living place for her family.

Hoang is an active and talkative child. He adapts well with teachers and friends in the center. He loves playing in the sandy area with Dylan and Dave. His English language quickly improves. "I love New Zealand, but I hate my flatmates. They smoke too much. They are bad guys," says Hoang. Hoang, however, unexpectedly does not return to the center after the second week of my fieldwork. On the day I come to the center, the teacher Mandi gives me Linh's note.

"Cảm ơn Hoa vì đã chia sẻ với chị. Hoàng nghỉ học nên không tiếp tục tham gia nghiên cứu của em được nữa. Chúc em mọi sự tốt lành. Chị Linh." [Thank you, Hoa, for your sharing. Hoang will leave the center so we will not continue participating in your study. I wish you the best. Linh]. (Fieldnote, 15 June 2018)

When I received Linh's note, my mind filled with unsettling questions. I wasn't worried them discontinuing to participate in this study. Rather, I was concerned whether Hoang would move to another ECE center or stay at home with his mother. Whether the family could find a better space to live or find a feasible solution to deal with their addicted flatmates? After all, how could a migrant child in an insecure situation, like Hoang, feel, think, and reflect his opinions in stories? What stories did Hoang and his family carry, which I had missed and not yet known?

The story of Hoang and his family did not exist in the data interpretation officially. This narrative, however, lives. The story exists in my mind and heart, calling me to be aware that not all Vietnamese children come from stable family situations and secure financial backgrounds

as the four focal participants in this current study. Further applications for living stories and identities of Vietnamese children from diverse backgrounds and contexts, in their broadest sense, should be a potential for future research activity. These new narratives will portray a holistic picture of Vietnamese childhood, of which this thesis is just the starting point.

“Everything is still in the future and will always be in the future” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 166). In the light of unfinalizability, I comprehend that this thesis is just a beginning step to recognize my responsibility for stories that I have heard mindfully and heartfully. Throughout the study, I learned to become a *hoa* (friend) of children. As friends, children and I learned from each other to share, live, and co-construct the world. Living in this unfinalized friendship, I recognize that all old and new stories from known and not-yet-known children will come to me. These narratives will stay with me not academically, sequentially, and temporally but personally, incidentally, and enduringly. My work with young children, thus, never ends. Being present is my ethical approach to live in the unfinalized flow of children’s stories.

Bakhtin’s notion of dialogue and unfinalizability directs me to realize that a dialogical utterance lives in its calling for other responses. The understanding of children’s stories in this current study is just one potential way to interpret their worlds. My interpretation is only completed when future readers continue addressing it. I leave my work “poised on [the] threshold” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 63) of openness and call for future dialogical inputs to enrich the beauty of childhood and child time that I have highlighted in this thesis.

*Xin mời vào*¹⁶—*Haere mai*¹⁷—*Welcome!*
You are, therefore I am.

¹⁶ *Xin mời vào*, a Vietnamese greeting, means Welcome.

¹⁷ *Haere mai*, a Māori greeting, means Welcome.

References

- Adichie, C. N. (2009, June). *The danger of a single story* [Video]. TED Conferences. https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare
- Ahn, J., & Filipenko, M. (2007). Narrative, imaginary play, art, and self: Intersecting worlds. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(4), 279–289. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-006-0137-4>
- Anning, A., & Ring, K. (2004). *Making sense of children's drawings*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410613561>
- Applebee, A. N. (1978). Children's narratives: New directions. *The Reading Teacher*, 34(2), 137–142. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20195194>
- Archibald, J.-A. (2008). Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit. In J. G. Knowles & A. L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 371–393). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226545>
- Atkins, K. (2004). Narrative identity, practical identity and ethical subjectivity. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 37(3), 341–366. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-004-5559-3>
- Baker, L., & Stein, N. L. (1978). *The development of prose comprehension skills* (Technical report no. 102). University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/17710/ctrstreadtechrepv01978i00102_opt.pdf?sequence=1
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (Vol. 1). University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1984a). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* (Vol. 8). University of Minnesota Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1984b). *Rabelais and his world*. Indiana University Press.

- Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1990). *Art and answerability: Early philosophical essays* (Vol. 9). University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1993). *Toward a philosophy of the act*. University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M., & Medvedev, P. N. (1985). *The formal method in literary scholarship: A critical introduction to sociological poetics*. Harvard University Press.
- Baldassar, L., Pyke, J., & Ben-Moshe, D. (2017). The Vietnamese in Australia: Diaspora identity, intra-group tensions, transnational ties and ‘victim’ status. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43(6), 937–955. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1274565>
- Bamberg, M., & Demuth, C. (2016). Narrative inquiry: An interview with Michael Bamberg. *Europe’s Journal of Psychology*, 12(1), 14. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v12i1.1128>
- Bamberg, M., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. *Text & Talk*, 28(3), 377–396. <https://doi.org/10.1515/TEXT.2008.018>
- Barone, T. (2001). *Touching eternity: The enduring outcomes of teaching*. Teachers College Press.
- Barron, I. (2007). An exploration of young children’s ethnic identities as communities of practice. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(6), 739–752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690701610001>
- Bateman, A., & Carr, M. (2017). Pursuing a Telling: Managing a Multi-unit Turn in Children’s Storytelling. In A. Bateman & A. Church (Eds.), *Children’s Knowledge-in-Interaction: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (pp. 91-109). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1703-2_6
- Bengochea, A., Sembiente, S. F., & Gort, M. (2018). An emergent bilingual child’s multimodal choices in sociodramatic play. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 18(1), 38–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798417739081>

- Blum-Kulka, S. (1993). “You gotta know how to tell a story”: Telling, tales, and tellers in American and Israeli narrative events at dinner. *Language in Society*, 22(3), 361-402. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500017280>
- Blum-Kulka, S., Huck-Taglicht, D., & Avni, H. (2004). The social and discursive spectrum of peer talk. *Discourse Studies*, 6(3), 307–328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445604044291>
- Blum-Kulka, S., & Snow, C. E. (1992). Developing autonomy for tellers, tales, and telling in family narrative events. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 2(3), 187–217. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.2.3.02dev>
- Bold, C. (2012). *Using narrative in research*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446288160>
- Brewer, W. F., & Lichtenstein, E. H. (1982). Stories are to entertain: A structural-affect theory of stories. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 6(5–6), 473–486. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(82\)90021-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(82)90021-2)
- Brown, L. M. (1998). *Raising their voices: The politics of girls’ anger*. Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J., & Lucariello, J. (1989). Monologue as narrative recreation of the world. In K. Nelson (Ed.), *Narratives from the crib* (pp. 73-97). Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. S. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674251083-002>
- Brzozowska, A., & Postuła, A. (2019). Feel at home. Vietnamese immigrants in Poland. *Space and Culture*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331219884499>
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4–5), 585–614. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407>
- Burr, R. (2006). *Vietnam’s children in a changing world*. Rutgers University Press. <https://doi.org/10.36019/9780813539898>

- Burr, R. (2014). The complexity of morality: Being a ‘good child’ in Vietnam? *Journal of Moral Education*, 43(2), 156–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2014.893421>
- Cao, X. H. (2020). *Máy vấn đề về văn hóa trong cách xưng hô của người Việt* (Cultural matters in Vietnamese people’s vocative words. Văn hoá Nghệ An. <http://www.vanhoanghean.com.vn/component/k2/30-nhung-goc-nhin-van-hoa/13796-may-van-de-ve-van-hoa-trong-cach-xung-ho-cua-nguoi-viet>
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), 541–547. <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547>
- Cassidy, C., & Lone, J. M. (2020). Thinking about childhood: Being and becoming in the world. *Analytic Teaching and Philosophical Praxis*, 40(1), 16–26.
- Cengiz, Ö. (2016). The effect of socioeconomic status on parents’ dialogicality. *Creative Education*, 7(4), 676–686. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2016.74071>
- Centrie, C. (2004). *Identity formation of Vietnamese immigrant youth in an American high school*. Lfb Scholarly Pub.
- Chaplin, T. M., Klein, M. R., Cole, P. M., & Turpyn, C. C. (2017). Developmental change in emotion expression in frustrating situations: The roles of context and gender. *Infant and Child Development*, 26(6), 20–28. <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2028>
- Chawla, D. (2011). *Narratives on longing, being, and knowing envisioning a writing epistemology*. Brill Sense. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-591-8_8
- Cimpian, A., Arce, H.-M. C., Markman, E. M., & Dweck, C. S. (2007). Subtle linguistic cues affect children’s motivation. *Psychological Science*, 18(4), 314–316. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01896.x>
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Left Coast Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315429618>

- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Huber, M., Murphy, M. S., Orr, A. M., Pearce, M., & Steeves, P. (2006). *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203012468>
- Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Menon, J., Murphy, M. S., & Swanson, C. (2015). Narrative inquiry: Conducting research in early childhood. In A. Farrell, S. L. Kagan, & E. K. Tisdall (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of early childhood research* (pp. 240–254). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473920859>
- Cohen, L. (2017). Preschool discourse interactions: Playful meaning making from a carnival lens. *Knowledge Cultures*, 5(3), 60–70.
- Cohen, L. M., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (Vol. 7). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ahs.2015.44023>
- Cohen, L., & Uhry, J. (2011). Naming block structures: A multimodal approach. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39(1), 79–87. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-010-0425-x>
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 477–487). Erlbaum.
- Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing*, 25(6), 435–437.
- Cooper, M., Hedges, H., Lovatt, D., & Murphy, T. (2013). Responding authentically to Pasifika children's learning and identity development: Hunter's interests and funds of knowledge. *Early Childhood Folio*, 17(1), 6–11. <https://doi.org/10.18296/ecf.0126>
- Corsaro, W. A., & Eder, D. (1990). Children's peer cultures. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 16(1), 197–220. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.16.080190.001213>

- Corsaro, W. A. (2003). *We're Friends, Right?: Inside Kids' Culture*. Joseph Henry Press.
- Cote, L. R., & Bornstein, M. H. (2009). Child and mother play in three US cultural groups: Comparisons and associations. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23(3), 355.
- Cresswell, J., & Baerveldt, C. (2011). Bakhtin's realism and embodiment: Towards a revision of the dialogical self. *Culture & Psychology*, 17(2), 263–277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X11398308>
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.20258>
- Dam, I. (2018). Love and politics: Rethinking biculturalism and multiculturalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In Z. L. Rocha & M. Webber (Eds.), *Mana tangatarua: Mixed heritages, ethnic identity and biculturalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (pp. 135–150). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315309811-8>
- Dang, H.-A. (2007). The determinants and impact of private tutoring classes in Vietnam. *Economics of Education Review*, 26(6), 683–698. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2007.10.003>
- Dang, H.-A., Hiraga, M., & Nguyen, C. V. (2019). *Childcare and maternal employment: Evidence from Vietnam* (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper). World Bank.
- Dang, H. L. (2015). Referral report. In H. Dang (Ed.), *Proceedings of English in Vietnamese kindergarten: Challenges and solutions conference* (pp. 5–20). College of Vietnam National Early Childhood Education.
- Dang, P. T., & Boyd, W. A. (2014). Renovating early childhood education pedagogy: A case study in Vietnam. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22(2), 184–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2014.909306>
- Davies, B. (2014). *Listening to children: Being and becoming*. Routledge.
- De Beaugrande, R., & Colby, B. N. (1979). Narrative models of action and interaction. *Cognitive Science*, 3(1), 43–66. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog0301_3

- De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2011). *Analyzing narrative: Discourse and sociolinguistic perspectives*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139051255>
- De Vocht, L. (2015). *Reconceptualising teacher–child dialogue in early years education: A Bakhtinian approach* [Doctoral thesis, University of Canterbury]. UC Research Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/10092/10936>
- Dicks, B. (2014). Action, experience, communication: Three methodological paradigms for researching multimodal and multisensory settings. *Qualitative Research*, 14(6), 656–674. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794113501687>
- Dinh, D.-H. T. (2014). *The early childhood curriculum (2009) in Vietnam: Tensions in the first three years of implementation* [Doctoral thesis, Victoria University of Wellington]. VUW Research Archive. <http://hdl.handle.net/10063/8726>
- Dixon, K. (2013). A change of perspective: Seeing through children at the front of the classroom, to seeing children from the back of the classroom. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 32(3), 273–284. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-012-9347-y>
- Dowling, R. (2005). Power, subjectivity and ethics in qualitative research. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in human geography* (pp. 19–29). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2007.5.2.204>
- Dumitrache, G. (2018). *Between theory and memory: Negotiating a new cultural identity as an immigrant teacher in New Zealand* [Master's thesis, University of Auckland]. Research Space. <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/45983>
- Dyson, A. H. (1997). *Writing superheroes: Contemporary childhood, popular culture, and classroom literacy*. Teachers College Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2655195>
- Dyson, A. H. (2016a). Making space for missing childhoods: Implications for theory, policy, and pedagogy. In A. H. Dyson (Ed.), *Child cultures, schooling, and literacy global perspectives on composing unique lives* (pp. 167–180). Routledge.

- Dyson, A. H. (2016b). Ta'Von: Negotiating inclusion in a stratified world. In A. H. Dyson (Ed.), *Child cultures, schooling, and literacy: Global perspectives on composing unique lives* (pp. 28–40). Routledge.
- Enache, M. (2017). *Becoming teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand: A collaborative autoethnographic study about Romanian immigrant teacher identity and practice* [Master's thesis, University of Auckland]. <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/32669>
- Engel, B. S., & Armstrong, M. (1984). Interview with Michael Armstrong. *The Elementary School Journal*, 84(3), 350–356.
- Engel, S. (2006). Narrative analysis of children's experience. In S. G. Hogan (Ed.), *Researching children's experience: Approaches and methods* (pp. 199–216). Sage.
- Fang, N. (2020). Imaginal dialogue as a method of narrative inquiry. *Narrative Inquiry*, 30(1), 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.18045.fan>
- Flewitt, R. (2003). *Is every child's voice heard? Longitudinal case studies of 3-year-old children's communicative strategies at home and in a preschool playgroup* [Doctoral thesis, University of Southampton]. University of Southampton Institutional Repository. <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/id/eprint/184047>
- Flewitt, R. (2016). Equity and diversity through story: A multimodal perspective. In R. F. T. Cremin, B. Mardell, & J. Swann (Eds.), *Storytelling in early childhood* (pp. 150–168). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315679426>
- Frank, A. W. (1995). *The wounded storyteller: Body, illness, and ethics*. University of Chicago Press.
- Frank, A. W. (2000). The standpoint of storyteller. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), 354–365. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973200129118499>
- Frank, A. W. (2005). What is dialogical research, and why should we do it? *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(7), 964–974. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305279078>
- Frank, A. W. (2010). *Letting stories breathe: A socio-narratology*. University of Chicago Press.

- Frank, A. W. (2012). Practicing dialogical narrative analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Varieties of narrative analysis* (pp. 33–52). Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506335117.n3>
- Freedman, S. W., & Ball, A. (2004). Ideological becoming: Bakhtinian concepts to guide the study of language. In S. W. Freedman, & A. Ball (Eds.), *Bakhtinian perspective on language, literacy, and learning* (pp. 3–33). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511755002.001>
- Friesen, L. (2012). Animal-assisted literacy learning as carnival: A Bakhtinian analysis. *International Journal of Learning*, 18(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2012.662124>
- Gaffney, J. S., & Jesson, R. (2019). We must know what they know (And so must they) for children to sustain learning and independence. In M. B. McVee, E. Ortlieb, J. S. Reichenberg, & P.D. Pearson (Eds.), *The Gradual release of responsibility in literacy research and practice* (pp. 23–36). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2048-045820190000010002>
- Gal, S. (1991). Between speech and silence: The problematics of research on language and gender. *IPrA Papers in Pragmatics*, 3(1), 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.1075/iprapip.3.1.01gal>
- Garvis, S. (2015). Narratives between children. In S. Garvis, E. E. Ødegaard, & N. Lemon (Eds.), *Beyond observations: Narratives and young children* (pp. 107–117). Brill Sense. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789462099685>
- Garvis, S., Ødegaard, E. E., & Lemon, N. (Eds.). (2015). *Beyond observations: Narratives and young children*. Brill Sense. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789462099685>
- Gaskins, S., Miller, P. J., & Corsaro, W. A. (1992). Theoretical and methodological perspectives in the interpretive study of children. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 1992(58), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.23219925803>

- Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In C. Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (pp. 3–30). Basic Books.
- Genishi, C. (2016). The power of language: Towards remixing language policy, curricula, and child identities. In A. H. Dyson (Ed.), *Child cultures, schooling, and literacy: Global perspectives on composing unique lives* (pp. 149–164). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315736518>
- Genishi, C., & Dyson, A. H. (2014). Play as the precursor for literacy development. In L. Brooker, M. Blaise, & S. Edwards (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of play and learning in early childhood* (pp. 228–239). SAGE Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473907850.n20>
- Georgakopoulou, A. (2006). Thinking big with small stories in narrative and identity analysis. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 122–130. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.16.1.16geo>
- Ghiso, M. P. (2013). Playing with/through non-fiction texts: Young children authoring their relationships with history. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 13(1), 26–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798411430093>
- Gillespie, A. (2006). Descartes' demon: A dialogical analysis of *Meditations on First Philosophy*. *Theory & Psychology*, 16(6), 761–781. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354306070527>
- Gleason, T. R. (2004). Imaginary companions and peer acceptance. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 28(3), 204–209. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01650250344000415>
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday.
- Goodwin, C. (1986). Audience diversity, participation and interpretation. *Text-Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, 6(3), 283–316. <https://doi.org/10.1515/text.1.1986.6.3.283>
- Graham, A. P., Phelps, R. A., Nhung, H. T. T., & Geeves, R. (2014). Researching with children in Vietnam: Cultural, methodological and ethical considerations. *Qualitative Research*, 14(1), 37–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112455038>

- Greenfield, E., Little, L. J., & Jones, P. R. (1979). *Childtimes: A three-generation memoir*. Crowell.
- Greidanus, J. A. (2007). *A narrative inquiry into the experiences of bereaved children* [Doctoral thesis, University of Alberta]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Guo, K. L. (2010). *Chinese immigrant children in New Zealand early childhood centres* [Doctoral thesis, Victoria University of Wellington]. ResearchArchive Home. <http://hdl.handle.net/10063/3754>
- Guo, K., & Dalli, C. (2016). Belonging as a force of agency: An exploration of immigrant children's everyday life in early childhood settings. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 6(3), 254–267. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043610616665036>
- Guo, K., & Mackenzie, N. (2015). Signs and codes in early childhood: An investigation of young children's creative approaches to communication. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 40(2), 78–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911504000210>
- Ha, T. (2016). *Con nghĩ đi, mẹ không biết* [You think by yourself, I don't know]. Van hoc Publisher.
- Hall, J. K., Vitanova, G., & Marchenkova, L. A. (2005). *Dialogue with Bakhtin on second and foreign language learning: New perspectives*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611659>
- Hallett, C., & Prout, A. (2003). *Hearing the voices of children: Social policy for a new century*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203464618>
- Han, J., & Singh, M. (2016). Localising/internationalising teacher education with Anglo-Chinese theoretic-linguistic characteristics: producing dǐngtiān lìdì teacher-researchers. In D. R. Cole & C. Woodrow (Eds.), *Super dimensions in globalisation and education* (pp. 207–224). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-10312-7_13
- Harf, A., Skandrani, S., Sibeoni, J., Pontvert, C., Revah-Levy, A., & Moro, M. R. (2015). Cultural identity and internationally adopted children: Qualitative approach to parental representations. *PloS One*, 10(3), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0119635>

- Haynes, D. (1998). Answers first, questions later: A Bakhtinian interpretation of Monet's Mediterranean paintings. *RSSI. Recherches Sémiotiques. Semiotic Inquiry*, 18(1–2), 217–230.
- Haynes, D. (2002). Bakhtin and the visual arts. In P. Smith & C. Wilde (Eds.), *A companion to art theory* (pp. 292–302). Blackwell Publishing.
- Hedges, H. (2008). “Even when we’re big we’ll still be friends”: Working theories in children’s learning. *Early Childhood Folio*, 12, 2–7. <https://doi.org/10.18296/ecf.0188>
- Hedges, H. (2011). Rethinking Sponge Bob and Ninja Turtles: Popular culture as funds of knowledge for curriculum co-construction. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 36(1), 25–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911103600105>
- Hedges, H., Cullen, J., & Jordan, B. (2011). Early years curriculum: Funds of knowledge as a conceptual framework for children’s interests. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43(2), 185–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2010.511275>
- Hedges, H., & Cooper, M. (2016). Inquiring minds: Theorizing children’s interests. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 48(3), 303–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2015.1109711>
- Heydon, R. M. (2012). Multimodal communication and identities options in an intergenerational art class. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 10(1), 51–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X11402751>
- Ho, E., Cheung, V., & Didham, R. (2017). *Starting strong: Nurturing the potential of our Asian under-fives* (0994140967). <https://www.asianz.org.nz/assets/reports/Starting-Strong-Nurturing-the-potential-of-Asian-under-fives-report.pdf>
- Ho, H. T. (2020). The experiences of Vietnamese students in New Zealand: A new country—A new home. *Transitions: Journal of Transient Migration*, 4(2), 203–221. https://doi.org/10.1386/tjtm_00022_1
- Ho, T. N. (2009). *Beginning and development of Buddhist education in Vietnam* [Doctoral thesis, University of the West]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

- Hoang, N., Holopainen, L., & Siekkinen, M. (2018). Quality of teacher–child interactions and its relations to children’s classroom engagement and disaffection in Vietnamese kindergartens. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 26(4), 387–402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2018.1478281>
- Hoang, V.-N., Nghiem, S., & Vu, X.-B. (2019). Stunting and academic achievement among Vietnamese children: new evidence from the young lives survey. *Applied Economics*, 51(18), 2001–2009. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2018.1537476>
- Holland, D., Lachicotte Jr, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Harvard University Press.
- Houle, S. T. (2012). *A narrative inquiry into the lived curriculum of Grade 1 children identified as struggling readers: Experiences of children, parents, and teachers* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. University of Alberta, Canada.
- Huang, S.-T., Tran-Chi, V.-L., & Hsiao, T.-E. (2018). An exploration of the development Of Vietnamese children’s self-control ability. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 76(3), 309. <https://doi.org/10.33225/pec/18.76.309>
- Huf, C., & Kluge, M. (2021). Being (with) Batman: Entangled research relations in ethnographic research in early childhood education and care. *Ethnography and Education*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2021.1903961>
- Hume, L. E., Lonigan, C. J., & McQueen, J. D. (2015). Children’s literacy interest and its relation to parents’ literacy-promoting practices. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 38(2), 172–193. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9817.2012.01548.x>
- Iddings, A. C. D., Haught, J., & Devlin, R. (2005). Multimodal rerepresentations of self and meaning for second language learners in English-dominant classrooms. In J. K. Hall, G. Vitanova, & L. Marchenkova (Eds.), *Dialogue With Bakhtin on second and foreign language learning* (pp. 33-53). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410611659>
- Jacobs, M. M. (2013). “ *Get up and get on*”: *Literacy, identity work and stories in the lives of families residing at a homeless shelter* [Doctoral thesis, University of Iowa]. <https://doi.org/10.17077/etd.eo9tawly>

- Jaworski, A. (2005). Introduction: Silence in institutional and intercultural contexts. *Multilingua*, 24, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mult.24.1-2.1>
- Jefferson, G. (1978). Sequential aspects of storytelling in conversation. In *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction* (pp. 219–248). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-623550-0.50016-1>
- Jennings-Tallant, L. (2018). *Children and their underworld: An exploration of young children's humour as Bakhtinian carnivalesque* [Doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia]. UEA Digital Repository. <https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/id/eprint/70511/>
- Jewitt, C. (2012). *An introduction to using video for research*. NCRM. http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2259/4/NCRM_workingpaper_0312.pdf
- Jingbo, L., & Elicker, J. (2005). Teacher–child interaction in Chinese kindergartens: An observational analysis. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 13(2), 129–143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760500171139>
- Juutinen, J., & Viljamaa, E. (2016). A narrative inquiry about values in a Finnish preschool: The case of traffic lights. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 48(2), 193–207. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-016-0165-1>
- Juzwik, M. M., & Ives, D. (2010). Small stories as resources for performing teacher identity: Identity-in-interaction in an urban language arts classroom. *Narrative Inquiry*, 20(1), 37–61. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.20.1.03juz>
- Karjalainen, S. (2020). Joy as a practice: performing joy in children's everyday relations in early childhood education settings. *Early Child Development and Care*, 190(10), 1654–1665. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1775593>
- Kelly-Ware, J. (2018). The influence of “Frozen”: Young children, performative gender, and popular culture. *Early Childhood Folio*, 22(2), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.18296/ecf.0052>
- Kendrick, M. (2005). Playing house: A ‘sideways’ glance at literacy and identity in early childhood. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 5(1), 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1468798405050592>

- Kennedy, D. (2010). *Philosophical dialogue with children: Essays on theory and practice*. Edwin Mellen Press.
- Kim, J.-H. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry: The crafting and analysis of stories as research*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071802861>
- King, T. (2003). *The truth about stories: A native narrative*. House of Anansi.
- Kinnunen, S., & Einarsdottir, J. (2013). Feeling, wondering, sharing and constructing life: Aesthetic experience and life changes in young children's drawing stories. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 45(3), 359–385. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-013-0085-2>
- Kirkland, D. E. (2013). *A search past silence: The literacy of young Black men*. Teachers College Press.
- Klingemann, J., & Klingemann, H. (2016). Beyond narratives: "Free drawings" as visual data in addiction research. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 51(6), 682–691. <https://doi.org/10.3109/10826084.2015.1135951>
- Kohli, R. K. (2006). The sound of silence: Listening to what unaccompanied asylum-seeking children say and do not say. *British Journal of Social Work*, 36(5), 707–721. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bch305>
- Kress, G. (1997). *Before writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203992692>
- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203970034>
- Kuby, C. R., & Vaughn, M. (2015). Young children's identities becoming: Exploring agency in the creation of multimodal literacies. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 15(4), 433–472. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1468798414566703>
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (pp. 12–44). University of Washington Press.

- Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Labov, W. (1978). *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Lai, Q. K. (2019). Loving-kindness and compassion in Buddhism and moral education for young adults: A case study of Vietnam. *The Journal of International Association of Buddhist Universities*, 12(2), 14–26. <https://hs.kku.ac.th/ichuso/096-ICHUSO-2019-N.pdf>
- Lee, B. Y. (2013). Heritage language maintenance and cultural identity formation: The case of Korean immigrant parents and their children in the USA. *Early Child Development and Care*, 183(11), 1576–1588. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2012.741125>
- Lee, S. W., & Hassett, D. D. (2017). The multiple modes of ideological becoming: An analysis of kindergarteners' appropriation of school language and literacy discourses. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 25(3), 462–475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2017.1308169>
- Lee, W., Carr, M., Soutar, B., & Mitchell, L. (2020). *Understanding the Te Whariki approach: Early years education in practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203075340>
- Lenaerts, F., Braeye, S., Nguyen, T. L. H., Dang, T. A., & Vromant, N. (2017). Supporting teachers in Vietnam to monitor preschool children's wellbeing and involvement in preschool classrooms. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 49(2), 245–262. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-017-0188-2>
- Leroy, L. M., Nguyen, T. C., & Nguyen, D. K. D. (2021). Preschool in CITIES: Learning in Da Nang, Vietnam. *Childhood Education*, 97(1), 50–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2021.1873694>
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1955). The Structural Study of Myth. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 68(270), 428-444. <https://doi.org/10.2307/536768>
- Lewis, A. (2010). Silence in the context of 'child voice'. *Children & Society*, 24(1), 14–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2008.00200.x>

- Lewis, C., Enciso, P., & Moje, E. B. (Eds.). (2007). Introduction: Reframing sociocultural research on literacy. In *Reframing sociocultural research on literacy: Identity, agency, and power*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003064428>
- Lobok, A. (2012). Preschool education bullied: An experiment in establishing a dialogue with a kindergarten educator. *Journal of Russian & East European Psychology*, 50(6), 92–114. <https://doi.org/10.2753/RPO1061-0405500605>
- Lovatt, D. (2020). *Developing, fostering, and enriching young children's STEM related working theories: Mediating influences and models* [Doctoral thesis, University of Auckland]. ResearchSpace@Auckland. <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/54042>
- Lowe, K. (2002). *What's the story? Making meaning in primary classrooms*. ERIC.
- Luong, H. T. (2009). *Vietnamese existential philosophy: A critical appraisal* [Doctoral dissertation, Temple University]. Pennsylvania. <https://scholarshare.temple.edu/handle/20.500.12613/1789>
- Luong, H. V. (1987). Plural markers and personal pronouns in Vietnamese person reference: An analysis of pragmatic ambiguity and native models. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 49–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30028089>
- Luong, H. V. (1992). *Revolution in the village: Tradition and transformation in North Vietnam, 1925–1988*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Malarney, S. K. (1996). The limits of “state functionalism” and the reconstruction of funerary ritual in contemporary northern Vietnam. *American Ethnologist*, 23(3), 540–560. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1996.23.3.02a00050>
- Malone, K. (2011). My island home: Theorising childhood in the Cook Islands. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 12(5), 462–477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2011.611817>
- Malone, K., Tesar, M., & Arndt, S. (2020). *Theorising posthuman childhood studies*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-8175-5>

- Manan, S. (2018). Silencing children's power of self-expression: an examination of coercive relations of power in English-medium schools in Pakistan. *L1 Educational Studies in Language and Literature*, 18(Running Issue). <https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2018.18.01.14>
- Mandler, J. M. (1978). A code in the node: The use of a story schema in retrieval. *Discourse Processes*, 1(1), 14–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01638537809544426>
- Mangan, D. (2017). *Understandings of identities among university students from forced migrant backgrounds: A dialogical narrative analysis* [Doctoral thesis, University of Manchester]. Manchester Research Explorer. <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/uk-ac-man-scw:312202>
- Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2011). You are “nobody!”: Three chronotopes of play. In E. J. White (Ed.), *Bakhtinian pedagogy: Opportunities and challenges for research, policy and practice in education across the globe* (pp. 201–226). Peter Lang Publishers. <https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/21720>
- Marr, D. (2000). Concepts of ‘individual’ and ‘self’ in twentieth-century Vietnam. *Modern Asian Studies*, 34(4), 769–796. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00003851>
- Marsh, J. (2016). Gareth: The reluctant writer. In A. H. Dyson (Ed.), *Child cultures, schooling, and literacy: Global perspectives on composing unique lives* (pp. 17–28). Routledge.
- Martalock, P. L. (2012). “What is a wheel?” The image of the child: Traditional, project approach, and Reggio Emilia perspectives. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, 40(3), 3–12.
- Matusov, E. (2009). *Journey into dialogic pedagogy*. Nova Science Publishers.
- Matusov, E. (2018). Ideological and real socialism of my Soviet childhood, schooling, and teaching: Multi-consciousness. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.5195/dpj.2018.240>

- Matusov, E., Marjanovic-Shane, A., & Gradovski, M. (2019). *Dialogic pedagogy and polyphonic research art: Bakhtin by and for educators*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58057-3>
- Maybin, J. (2007). Literacy under and over the desk: Oppositions and heterogeneity. *Language and Education*, 21(6), 515–530. <https://doi.org/10.2167/le720.0>
- McAdams, D. P. (2003). Identity and the life story. In R. Fivush & C. A. Haden (Eds.), *Autobiographical memory and the construction of a narrative self: Developmental and cultural perspectives* (pp. 187–207). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10288-008>
- McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(3), 233–238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413475622>
- McFerran, K. S., & Baird, K. (2013). Is music really my best friend?: Reflections of two maturing women on one's relationship with music. In L. O. Bonde, E. Ruud, M. S. Skånland, & G. Trondalen (Eds.), *Musical life stories. Narratives on health musicking* (pp. 117–138). Centre for Music and Health. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/196704>
- McLean, K. C. (2008). Stories of the young and the old: Personal continuity and narrative identity. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(1), 254. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.44.1.254>
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Mestechkina, T., Nguyen, D. S., & Jin, S. Y. (2014). Parenting in Vietnam. In H. Selin (Ed.), *Parenting across cultures: Childrearing, motherhood and fatherhood in non-Western cultures* (pp. 47–57). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7503-9_5
- Miller, P. J. (2016). Concluding commentary. In A. H. Dyson (Ed.), *Child cultures, schooling, and literacy: Global perspectives on composing unique lives* (pp. 181–184). Routledge.
- Miller, P. J., Fung, H., & Mintz, J. (1996). Self-construction through narrative practices: A Chinese and American comparison of early socialization. *Ethos*, 24(2), 237–280. <https://doi.org/10.1525/eth.1996.24.2.02a00020>

- Miller, P. J., & Mehler, R. A. (1994). The power of personal storytelling in families and kindergartens. In A. H. Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story: Cultural diversity in classroom and community* (pp. 38–54). National Council of Teachers of English.
- Miller, P. J., & Sperry, L. L. (1988). Early talk about the past: the origins of conversational stories of personal experience. *Journal of Child Language* 15(2), 293–315. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000900012381>
- Minami, M. (2002). *Culture-specific language styles: The development of oral narrative and literacy*. Multilingual Matters.
- Ministry of Education. (1997). *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa early childhood curriculum*. Author.
- Ministry of Education. (2017). *Te Whāriki. He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early childhood curriculum*. <https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf>
- Ministry of Education. (2019). *He taonga te tamaiti Every child a taonga: Early learning action plan 2019-2029*. https://conversation-space.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/SES_0342_ELS_10YP_Final+Report_Web.pdf
- Ministry of Education and Training. (2009). *Chương trình Giáo dục Mầm non (The National Early Childhood Education Curriculum)*. <https://luatvietnam.vn/giao-duc/thong-tu-17-2009-tt-bgddt-bo-giao-duc-va-dao-tao-44312-d1.html>
- Ministry of Education and Training. (2017). *Chương trình Giáo dục Mầm non sửa đổi (The revised National Early Childhood Education Curriculum)*. <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Giao-duc/Thong-tu-28-2016-TT-BGDDT-sua-doi-Chuong-trinh-giao-duc-mam-non-kem-theo-17-2009-TT-BGDDT-323937.aspx>
- Mitchell, C. J. (1984). Typicality and the case study. In R. F. Ellen (Ed.), *Ethnographic research: A guide to general conduct* (pp. 238–241). Academic Press.

- Moore, G. (2003). Return migration of Vietnamese Aucklanders. *New Zealand Journal of History*, 37(2), 189–209. http://www.nzjh.auckland.ac.nz/docs/2003/NZJH_37_2_06.pdf
- Morgenstern, A. (2021). The other's voice in the co-construction of self-reference in the dialogic child. *Bakhtiniana: Revista de Estudos do Discurso*, 16(1), 63–87. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2176-457347133>
- Morson, G. S. (1991). Bakhtin, genres, and temporality. *New Literary History*, 22(4), 1071–1092. <https://doi.org/10.2307/469079>
- Morson, G. S., & Emerson, C. (1990). *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a prosaics*. Stanford University Press.
- Mukerji, C., & Schudson, M. (1991). *Rethinking popular culture: Contemporary perspectives in cultural studies*. Univ of California Press.
- Nakhid, C. & Devere, H. (2015). Negotiating multiculturalism and the Treaty of Waitangi. In G. Ghosh & J. Leckie (Eds.) *Asians and the new multiculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand*, (pp. 61-89). Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press.
- National Assembly Vietnam. (1998). *Luật Giáo dục* [Education laws]. <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Giao-duc/Luat-giao-duc-1998-11-1998-QH10-44857.aspx>
- National Assembly Vietnam. (2013). *The constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*. https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/tranlation_of_vietnams_new_constitution_enuk_2.pdf
- National Assembly Vietnam. (2016). *Children Law*. <http://ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/103522/125796/F-1725767197/VNM103522%20Eng.pdf>
- Nelson, K. (1989). *Narratives from the crib*. Harvard University Press.

- Nguyen, D. T. (1992). *Lịch sử tư tưởng Việt Nam* [The history of Vietnamese philosophy]. Ho Chi Minh City Publisher House.
- Nguyen, P. (2017). *Generational change in parenting styles among Vietnamese in Nebraska*. UCARE Research Products.
- Nguyen, T. D. (2011). *Văn hóa xưng hô của người Việt* (Vietnamese culture in vocative language). *Researching and Teaching Vietnamese Studies and Vietnamese Language*, Hanoi.
- Nguyen, T. M., Bui, T. T., Xiao, X., & Le, V. H. (2020). The influence of self-compassion on mindful parenting: A mediation model of gratitude. *The Family Journal*, 28(4), 455–462. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480720950421>
- Nguyen, V. T., & Tram, A. (2019). Viet Thanh Nguyen—Writing is an internal urge from inside. *L'officiel*. <https://www.lofficiel.vn/nhan-vat/viet-thanh-nguyen-viet-lach-la-su-thoi-thuc-tu-ben-trong.html>
- Nicolopoulou, A. (1997). Worldmaking and identity formation in children's narrative play-acting. In C. L. Brian & D. Cox (Eds.), *Sociogenetic perspectives on internalization* (Vol. 157, pp. 157–187). Erlbaum. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203773963>
- Nicolopoulou, A. (2011). Children's storytelling: Toward an interpretive and sociocultural approach. *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, 3, 25–48. <https://doi.org/10.1353/stw.2011.0002>
- Nicolopoulou, A., Ilgaz, H., & Shiro, M. (2021). “And they had a big, big, very long fight:” The development of evaluative language in preschoolers' oral fictional stories told in a peer-group context. *Journal of Child Language*, 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305000921000209>
- O'Connor, P. (2004). The conditionality of status: experience-based reflections on the insider/outsider issue. *Australian Geographer*, 35(2), 169–176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0004918042000249476>

- Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living Narrative: Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling*. Harvard University Press.
- Ochs, E., & Taylor, C. (1995). "The Father Knows Best": Dynamic in Dinnertime Narratives. In K. Hall & M. Bucholtz (Eds.), *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self* (pp. 97-120). Routledge.
- Ødegaard, E. E. (2007). What's up on the teachers' agenda? *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 39(2), 45–64. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03178224>
- Ødegaard, E. E. (2015). Narratives by children. In S. Garvis, Ødegaard, E. E., & Lemon, N. (Eds.), *Beyond observations* (pp. 83–106). Brill Sense.
- Ødegaard, E. E. (2020). Dialogical engagement and the co-creation of cultures of exploration. In M. Hedegaard & E. E. Ødegaard (Eds.), *Children's exploration and cultural formation. International perspectives on early childhood education and development* (Vol. 29, pp. 83–104). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36271-3_6
- Oh, J., & Lee, K. (2019). Who is a friend? Voices of young immigrant children. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 27(5), 647–661. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2019.1651967>
- Orr, A. E., Murphy, M. S., & Pearce, M. (2007). Stories of school, stories in school: Understanding two Aboriginal children's competing and conflicting stories of curriculum. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 30(2), 275.
- Page, R., Harper, R., & Frobenius, M. (2013). From small stories to networked narrative: The evolution of personal narratives in Facebook status updates. *Narrative Inquiry*, 23(1), 192–213. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.23.1.10pag>
- Pahl, K. (2009). Interactions, intersections and improvisations: Studying the multimodal texts and classroom talk of six-to seven-year-olds. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 9(2), 188–210. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798409105586>
- Paley, V. G. (1990). *The boy who would be a helicopter*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjz82t5>

- Pham, L. H., & Fry, G. W. (2011). Vietnam as an outlier: Tradition and change in education. In C. Brock, & Symaco, L. P. (Ed.), *Education in South-East Asia* (pp. 221–243). Symposium Books. <https://experts.umn.edu/en/publications/vietnam-as-an-outlier-past-tradition-and-change-in-education>
- Pham, V. B. (2013). *The Vietnamese family in change: The case of the Red River Delta*. Routledge.
- Phan, H. (2012). Current curriculum and pedagogy reform in Vietnamese early childhood education: A socio-historical interpretation. In P. W. Chan (Ed.), *Asia Pacific education: Diversity, challenges and changes* (pp. 87–102). Monash University Publishing. <https://research.monash.edu/en/publications/current-curriculum-and-pedagogy-reform-in-vietnamese-early-childh>
- Phan, N. (1998). *Bản sắc văn hoá Việt Nam (Vietnamese cultural identity)*. The Culture and Information Press.
- Phan, T. (2005). Interdependent self: Self-perceptions of Vietnamese-American youths. *Adolescence*, 40(158). <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16114602/>
- Phelps, R., Graham, A., Tuyet, N. H., & Geeves, R. (2014). Exploring Vietnamese children's experiences of, and views on, learning at primary school in rural and remote communities. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 36, 33–43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2013.12.004>
- Pitcher, E. G., & Prelinger, E. (1963). *Children tell stories*. International Universities Press.
- Polanyi, L. (1981). Telling the same story twice. *Text-Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, 1(4), 315–336. <https://doi.org/10.1515/text.1.1981.1.4.315>
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Suny Press.
- Prinsloo, M., & Stein, P. (2005). “Down, up, and round”: Setting children up as readers and writers in South African classrooms. In M. K. J. Anderson, T. Rogers, & S. Smythe (Eds.), *Portraits of literacy across families, communities, and schools: Intersections and tensions* (pp. 117–139). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410612830>

- Prout, A. (2005). *The future of childhood*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203323113>
- Prout, A. (2011). Taking a step away from modernity: Reconsidering the new sociology of childhood. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 1(1), 4–14. <https://doi.org/10.2304/gsch.2011.1.1.4>
- Puroila, A.-M. (2013). Young children on the stages: Small stories performed in day care centers. *Narrative Inquiry*, 23(2), 323–343. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.23.2.06pur>
- Puroila, A.-M., & Estola, E. (2014). Not babies anymore: Young children's narrative identities in Finnish day care centers. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 46(2), 187–203. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-013-0096-z>
- Qin, K. (2016). *Language, positioning, and masculinities: A critical sociolinguistic ethnography of immigrant adolescent boys' identity performances and learning experiences in a US high school* [Doctoral thesis, Michigan State University]. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1812323079/?pq-origsite=primo>
- Qin, K. (2019). Performing curriculum and constructing identity: small stories as a framework for studying identity and learning in classroom discourse. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 13(3), 181–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2019.1623638>
- Qvortrup, J. (2004). The waiting child. *Childhood*, 11(3), 267–273. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568204044884>
- Reese, E., Gunn, A., Bateman, A., & Carr, M. (2019). Teacher-child talk about learning stories in New Zealand: A strategy for eliciting children's complex language. *Early Years*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2019.1621804>
- Richards, R. (2014). The private and public worlds of children's spontaneous art. *Studies in Art Education*, 55(2), 143–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2014.11518924>
- Richert, R. A., & Smith, E. I. (2011). Preschoolers' quarantining of fantasy stories. *Child Development*, 82(4), 1106–1119. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01603.x>
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.

- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford University Press.
- Ronksley-Pavia, M. (2016). *The lived experiences of twice exceptional children: Narrative perceptions of disability and giftedness* [Doctoral thesis, Griffith University, Australia]. https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/bitstream/handle/10072/367172/Ronksley-Pavia_2016_01Thesis.pdf?sequence=1
- Rosengren, K. S., Kalish, C. W., Hickling, A. K., & Gelman, S. A. (1994). Exploring the relation between preschool children's magical beliefs and causal thinking. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 12(1), 69–82. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-835X.1994.tb00619.x>
- Röttger-Rössler, B., & Lam, A. T. A. (2018). Germans with parents from Vietnam: The affective dimensions of parent–child relations in Vietnamese Berlin. In J. S. B. Röttger-Rössler (Ed.), *Affect in relation* (pp. 72–90). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315163864>
- Rózycka-Tran, J., Truong, T. K. H., Ciecuch, J., & Schwartz, S. H. (2017). Universals and specifics of the structure and hierarchy of basic human values in Vietnam. *Health Psychology Report*, 5(3), 193-204. <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-162937>
- Rydstrøm, H. (2001). 'Like a white piece of paper'. Embodiment and the moral upbringing of Vietnamese children. *Ethnos*, 66(3), 394–413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141840120095159>
- Sacks, H. (1970). *Lectures on conversation* (G. Jefferson, Ed.). Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444328301>
- Sairanen, H., Kumpulainen, K., & Kajamaa, A. (2020). An investigation into children's agency: children's initiatives and practitioners' responses in Finnish early childhood education. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1739030>

- Saldanha, K., & Nybell, L. (2017). Capturing/captured by stories of marginalized young people: Direct scribing and dialogic narrative analysis. *Qualitative Social Work, 16*(2), 206-223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325016656750>
- Savage-Shepherd, M. (2012). *Home literacy and agency: An ethnographic approach to studying the home literacy practices of six multiliterate children in Qatar* [Doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield]. White Rose eTheses Online. <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/15010/>
- Save The Children. (2020). *Young voices in Vietnam* [Report]. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/17792/pdf/young_voices_in_vietnam_full_report_eng_final.pdf
- Scheinfeld, D. R., Haigh, K. M., & Scheinfeld, S. J. (2008). *We are all explorers: Learning and teaching with Reggio principles in urban settings*. Teachers College Press.
- Sealey, A. (2000). *Childly Language: Children, language and the social world*. Longman/Pearson Educational.
- Simas, V. F., Prado, G. d. V. T., & Domingo, J. (2018). Possible Dimensions of consciousness in narrative inquiry and in self narrative: A Bakhtinian perspective. *Bakhtiniana: Revista de Estudos do Discurso, 13*(1), 113–131. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2176-457332164>
- Simon-Kumar, R. (2014). Difference and diversity in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Post-neoliberal constructions of the ideal ethnic citizen. *Ethnicities, 14*(1), 136–159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796812466374>
- Singh, P., & Zhang, K. C. (2018). Parents' perspective on early childhood education in New Zealand: Voices from Pacifika families. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 43*(1), 52–58. <https://doi.org/10.23965/AJEC.43.1.06>
- Skidmore, D. (2000). From pedagogical dialogue to dialogical pedagogy. *Language and Education, 14*(4), 283–296. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780008666794>
- Skinner, D., Valsiner, J., & Holland, D. (2001). Discerning the dialogical self: A theoretical and methodological examination of a Nepali adolescent's narrative. *Forum Qualitative*

- Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2(3).
<https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-2.3.913>
- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2006). Narrative inquiry in psychology: Exploring the tensions within. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(3), 169–192.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qrp068oa>
- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2008). Contrasting perspectives on narrating selves and identities: An invitation to dialogue. *Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 5–35.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794107085221>
- Sole, M. (2017). Crib song: Insights into functions of toddlers’ private spontaneous singing. *Psychology of Music*, 45(2), 172–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735616650746>
- Souralová, A. (2021). “My parents did everything for us but nothing with us”: Parenting and mothering in Vietnamese immigrant families in the Czech Republic. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 0117196820981376.
- Souto-Manning, M. (2017). Is play a privilege or a right? And what’s our responsibility? On the role of play for equity in early childhood education. *Early Child Development and Care*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2016.126658>
- Spector-Mersel, G. (2010). Narrative research: Time for a paradigm. *Narrative Inquiry*, 20(1), 204–224. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.20.1.10spe>
- Speer, S. (2008). Natural and contrived data. In P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman, & J. Brannen (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social research methods* (pp. 290–312). Sage.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446212165.n17>
- Spray, J. (2018). *The practices of childhood: Coproducing child health in Aotearoa New Zealand* [Doctoral thesis, University of Auckland]. ResearchSpace@ Auckland.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2292/37490>
- Spyrou, S. (2011). The limits of children’s voices: From authenticity to critical, reflexive representation. *Childhood*, 18(2), 151–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568210387834>

- Spyrou, S. (2016). Researching children's silences: Exploring the fullness of voice in childhood research. *Childhood*, 23(1), 7–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568215571618>
- Spyrou, S. (2019). An ontological turn for childhood studies? *Children & Society*, 33(4), 316–323. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12292>
- Stats NZ. (2018a). *Census QuickStats about culture and identity: Vietnamese ethnic group* <https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/2018-census-ethnic-group-summaries/vietnamese>
- Stats NZ. (2018b). *Ethnicity*. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/topics/ethnicity>
- Stein, N. L. (1982). What's in a story: Interpreting the interpretations of story grammars. *Discourse processes*, 5(3–4), 319–335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01638538209544548>
- Stephens, M., & Neill, R. (2011). 'You do know it's only got one bathroom': Biography, wine and small stories. *Memory Studies*, 4(2), 221–233.
- Stewart, K. D., & Ivala, E. (2017). Silence, voice, and “other languages”: Digital storytelling as a site for resistance and restoration in a South African higher education classroom. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 48(5), 1164–1175. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12540>
- Subbotsky, E. (2004). Magical thinking in judgments of causation: Can anomalous phenomena affect ontological causal beliefs in children and adults? *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 22(1), 123–152. <https://doi.org/10.1348/026151004772901140>
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1981). Early stories as poetry. *Children's Literature*, 9(1), 137–150.
- Sutton-Smith, B. (2012). *The folkstories of children*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Tannen, D. (1981). New York Jewish conversational style. *International Journal of The Sociology of Language*, 1981(30), 133–149. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1981.30.133>
- Tannen, D. (2006). *Intertextuality in interaction: Reframing family arguments in public and private*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/TEXT.2006.024>

- Taylor, R. (2014). Meaning between, in and around words, gestures and postures—multimodal meaning-making in children’s classroom discourse. *Language and Education*, 28(5), 401–420. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2014.885038>
- Tesar, M. (2014). Reconceptualising the child: Power and resistance within early childhood settings. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 15(4), 360–367. <https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2014.15.4.360>
- Tesar, M. (2020). *Rethinking and innovating education in the pandemic? Philosophy of education at the forefront of ‘educational futures.’* Vietnam Education Symposium 2020, Hanoi, Vietnam. https://ves.sciencesconf.org/data/Tesar_Educational_Futures.pdf
- Theobald, M. (2016). Achieving competence: The interactional features of children’s storytelling. *Childhood*, 23(1), 87–104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568215571619>
- Thich, N. H. (1987). *Being peace*. Parallax Press.
- Thich, N. H. (2010). *Peace is every step: The path of mindfulness in everyday life*. Random House.
- Timmerman, J. H. (1983). *Other worlds: The fantasy genre*. Popular Press.
- Todorov, T., & Weinstein, A. (1969). Structural analysis of narrative. *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 3(1), 70–76.
- Tracey, T. J. (2002). Development of interests and competency beliefs: A 1-year longitudinal study of fifth-to eighth-grade students using the ICA-R and structural equation modeling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 49(2), 148. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.49.2.148>
- Tracey, T. J., & Ward, C. C. (1998). The structure of children’s interests and competence perceptions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 45(3), 290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.45.3.290>

- Tran, D. H. (1991). Traditional families in Vietnam and the influence of Confucianism. In R. Liljeström & T. Lai (Eds.), *Sociological studies on the Vietnamese family* (pp. 27–55). Social Sciences Pub. House.
- Tran, H. T. (2019). An autobiographical narrative inquiry into the experiences of a Vietnamese mother: Living alongside children in transition to Canada. *In Education*, 25(1), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.37119/ojs2019.v25i1.410>
- Tran, Nhuan Kien & Yoon, H. (2008). Doi moi policy and socio-economic development in Vietnam, 1986–2005. *International Area Review*, 11(1), 205–232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/223386590801100112>
- Tran, N. T. (1999). *Cơ sở văn hoá Việt Nam* (The fundamentals of Vietnamese culture). Education Press.
- Tran, N. T. (2016). *Hệ giá trị Việt Nam từ truyền thống đến hiện đại và con đường tới tương lai* (System of Vietnamese values: From traditions to modernity and the pathway to future). Nhà xuất bản Đại học KHXHNV.
- Tran, Q. V. (2000). *Văn hoá Việt Nam: Tìm tòi và suy ngẫm* [Vietnamese culture: Exploration and discussion]. Nhà xuất bản văn hóa dân tộc & Tạp chí văn hóa nghệ thuật.
- Tran, Trung (1997). *(De)constructing the 'Asian' other : a case study of the Vietnamese community in Auckland* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Auckland.
- Tran, Trung (2015). All images and media of Vietnam. *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/vietnamese/media>
- Tran, Thu Ha & Harpham, T. (2005). Primary education in Vietnam: Extra classes and outcomes. *International Education Journal*, 6(5), 626–634. https://rtccd.org.vn/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2_-PrimaryEducation.pdf
- Tran, T. M. T., Gu, X., & Nguyen, H. D. (2021). Complex modernization: The value of children and social transformation in contemporary Vietnam. *Child Indicators Research*, 14(2), 511–536. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-020-09791-z>

- Tran, ThamThiThu & Bifuh-Ambe, E. (2021). Ethnic identity among second-generation Vietnamese American adolescents. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 8(2), 167–186. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/622>
- Trinh, T. M.-H. (1987). Difference: ‘A special Third World women issue.’ *Feminist Review*, 25(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1987.1>
- Trinh, T. M.-H. (1989). *Woman, native, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Indiana University Press.
- Truman SE, Hackett A, Pahl K, et al. (2020) The capaciousness of No: Affective refusals as literacy practices. *Reading Research Quarterly* 56(2): 223-236.
- Tsai, M.-L. (2007). Understanding young children’s personal narratives: What I have learned from young children’s sharing time narratives in a Taiwanese kindergarten classroom. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 461–488). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226552.n18>
- United Nations Children’s Fund. (2016). *A situation analysis of children in Vietnam in 2016*. <https://www.unicef.org/vietnam/media/3621/file/A%20situation%20analysis%20of%20children%20in%20Viet%20Nam%202016.pdf>
- Vandenberg, B. (2005). Real and not real: A vital developmental dichotomy. In D. S. Ziegler, & S. Bishop-Josef (Eds.), *Children’s play: The roots of reading* (pp. 295–305). Zero To Three Press.
- Vedder, P., Sam, D. L., van de Vijver, F. J., & Phinney, J. S. (2006). Vietnamese and Turkish immigrant youth: Acculturation and adaptation in two ethnocultural groups. In J. W. Berry, J. S. Phinney, D. L. Sam, & P. Vedder (Eds.), *Immigrant youth in cultural transition* (pp. 185–209). Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780415963619-8>
- Vitanova, G. (2010). *Authoring the dialogic self: Gender, agency and language practices*. John Benjamins Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ds.8>

- Vitanova, G. (2013). Narratives As zones of dialogic constructions: A Bakhtinian approach To data in qualitative research. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 10(3), 242–261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2013.816827>
- Vitanova, G. (2016). Exploring second-language teachers' identities through multimodal narratives: Gender and race discourses. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 13(4), 261–288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2016.1165074>
- Volkman, C. S. (2005). 30 years after the war: children, families, and rights in Vietnam. *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*, 19(1), 23–46. <https://doi.org/10.1093/lawfam/ebi002>
- Vu, T. T. (2021). Early childhood education in Vietnam, history, and development. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 15(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-020-00080-4>
- Ward, C. (2010). Acculturation and social cohesion: Emerging issues for Asian immigrants in New Zealand. In C.-H. Leong & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Intercultural relations in Asia: Migration and work effectiveness* (pp. 3–24). World Scientific Publishing.
- Watson, C. (2007). Small stories, positioning analysis, and the doing of professional identities in learning to teach. *Narrative Inquiry*, 17(2), 371–389. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.17.2.11wat>
- Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching*. Routledge.
- White, E. J. (2009). *Assessment in New Zealand early childhood education: A Bakhtinian analysis of metaphoricity* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.
- White, E. J. (2020). Mikhail Bakhtin: A two-faced encounter with child becoming(s) through dialogue. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1840371>

- Wohlwend, K. E. (2015). *Playing their way into literacies: Reading, writing, and belonging in the early childhood classroom*. Teachers College Press.
- Woolhouse, C. (2017). Multimodal life history narrative: Embodied identity, discursive transitions and uncomfortable silences. *Narrative Inquiry*, 27(1), 109–131. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.27.1.06woo>
- Woolley, J. D. (1997). Thinking about fantasy: Are children fundamentally different thinkers and believers from adults? *Child Development*, 68(6), 991–1011. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1132282>
- Wright-St Clair, V., & Nayar, S. (2017). Older Asian immigrants' loneliness in New Zealand. *Innovation in Aging*, 1(Suppl 1), 1030. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igx004.3750>
- Wunseh, Q. K. (2018). *Language brokering and identity construction: Exploring immigrant children's language practices in a multilingual South African context* [Doctoral thesis, University of the Western Cape]. Dissertations Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/11394/5837>
- Xu, H. (1999). Young Chinese ESL children's home literacy experiences. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 40(1), 47–64. https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=reading_horizons&httpsredir=1&referer=
- Xu, S., & Connelly, M. (2010). Narrative inquiry for school-based research. *Narrative Inquiry*, 20(2), 349–370. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.20.2.06xu>
- Yamat, H., Fisher, R., & Rich, S. (2013). Young Malaysian children's silence in a multicultural classroom. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 103, 1337–1343. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.10.464>
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods (applied social research methods)*. Sage Publications

- Zentall, S. R., & Morris, B. J. (2010). "Good job, you're so smart": The effects of inconsistency of praise type on young children's motivation. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *107*(2), 155–163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2010.04.015>
- Zhou, B. (2019). *The reciprocal influences of Chinese immigrant children's home-kindergarten experiences on their literacy learning and identity construction in Aotearoa New Zealand* [Doctoral thesis, University of Auckland]. ResearchSpace@ Auckland. <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/docs/uoa-docs/rights.htm>
- Zilber, T. B., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Lieblich, A. (2008). The embedded narrative: Navigating through multiple contexts. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *14*(6), 1047–1069. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800408321616>

Appendices

Appendix A: Invitation Letter



EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623
8898 www.education.auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

INVITATION LETTER

(Manager/Principal of the Early Childhood Education Settings)

Dear Manager/Principal,

I am Hoa Pham Minh, a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. At the moment, I am conducting research for my Doctoral Thesis in Education, under the supervision of Professor Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar. My research project is called, 'The construction of Vietnamese young children's identities: A focus on their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand. [*For participants in New Zealand*] Through information on ERO website, I have learnt that there are Vietnamese children at your centre but the website has not yet provided information of children's age. I would like you to let me know if Vietnamese children in your centre are aged 4–5 years old. If the answer is 'yes', I would like to invite you to take part in my project during 10 weeks from ... 2018 to ... 2018. [*For participants in Vietnam*] I know about your early childhood education (ECE) setting through the website of Hanoi Department of Education and Training. I am writing this email to invite you to take part in my project during 10 weeks from ... 2018 to ... 2018.

The purpose of this project is to explore the construction of Vietnamese young children's identities through their personal stories and the role of contexts in children's identities development. I would like you to let me access to one Vietnamese child aged 4-5, his/ her ECE teachers, their peers, and their families in your ECE setting, who are interested in participating in this project. I would like to have a visit to your ECE setting one week prior to data collection to get familiar with children and teacher participants. I would like to observe the child by video-recordings, field-notes at home and your centre as well as interview teachers and audiotape it at your ECE setting. I, moreover, would like to visit the child's family, observe him/her at home and interview parent. Two interviews within 30-45 minutes per each will be conducted with

participating teachers and parent. After completing each child's case record, it will be sent to their parent and teachers to check and comment upon its accuracy. I have a responsibility to fulfil the requirements outlined in Manager of Early Childhood Education Centre Participant Information Sheet (that is attached) about the rights of the participants.

If you agree with my invitation, please spending your time for a conversation with me in your appropriate time via phone and then at your setting to let me introduce myself and further explain about my work. In this email, please let me attach the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) to help you better understand my study and the role of participants in my study.

Thank you so much for your consideration for this invitation. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Hoa Pham Minh.

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet, Manager /Principal of PreschoolEDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
(Manager /Principal of early childhood education settings)**

Project title: The construction of Vietnamese young children's identities: A focus on their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor (s): Prof. Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar

Name of Student Researcher: Hoa Pham Minh

Researcher introduction

I am Hoa Pham Minh, a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. At the moment, I am conducting research for my Doctoral Thesis in Education, under the supervision of Professor Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar.

Project description and invitation

The purpose of this project is to explore the construction of Vietnamese young children's identities through their personal stories and the role of contexts in children's identities development. I would like to invite you to take part in my project during 10 weeks from ... 2018 to ... 2018.

One Vietnamese child (4-5 years old) in your centre/preschool will be chosen as the focal child. Their parents, siblings (if he/she has), teachers and peers will be chosen as co-participants. This study involves my observations, informal conversations with children, individual semi-structured interviews with at least one teacher and one parent from each centre/preschool.

I have attached the Participant Information Sheets, Consent Forms, and Assent Forms with an invitation letter sent to you. Teachers will be asked to sign a Consent Form if they agree to be part of this study. Parents/guardians will be asked to sign a Consent Form to participate in the research and to provide permission for their children to participate in this study. PIS and CS will also be sent to parents of other children who are the focal child's friends. Assent Forms will be completed by the children participants with the assistance of their parents/guardians.

I would kindly to seek your help to arrange a date to introduce me to teachers at staff meetings and then to approach Vietnamese families during drop-off/pick-up times. In the first meetings with teachers and families, I intend to introduce myself and my work and invite them to participate in my study. When the first interested Vietnamese teachers and parents give their acceptance, I will ask and discuss them appropriate times to meet children at home and your setting to introduce myself and my study. In the

first visit to Vietnamese homes, I will explain my study in detailed, have conversation with parents to know their family routines, ask parents to introduce me to children. I also will ask parents and teachers to have a chance to converse with children at ECE setting and home to get familiar with them. The visit and conversations will help me select the focal children and their families in my research.

I would like you to help me distribute PIS, CF, and AF to other participants (including teachers, parents, and children). Assent forms will be written in simple language and include a happy face and a sad face to colour showing their assent. All forms will be provided in bilingual languages (i.e. English and Vietnamese) so that potential participants can understand my work. I will meet teachers and parents of focal children's friends at ECE settings during drop-off/pick-up time to review the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and Consent Form (CF) to clarify my work and address any questions from them. I will ask parents of focal children to meet them at homes to review the PIS and CF and answer any questions from them. Vietnamese, our home language will be used to converse with Vietnamese parents to ensure their comfort and understanding. I will explain the procedure to children verbally first, be willing to answer their questions, and send the assent form to them via their parents/guardians. I will suggest children colouring a happy face or sad face on the assent form to express their satisfaction to participate in the project. I will give assent forms to the children via the parents/guardians along with the PIS. PIS, CF and children's assent forms will also be sent to parents of other children who are the focal child's friends to seek their permission for their children to participate in the research. I will inform participants that they need return signed CF and children's assent forms in a sealed box kept in the ECE settings with the managers/ principals' permission.

The sealed box will be collected after two weeks.

Project procedures

Once consent of all participants is obtained, I will spend one week before data gathering to get familiar with participants (children, parents, teachers), let them know the purpose of interview and observation, discuss the time and the way to interview and observe.

Observation is a necessary part of the project and the intended observation methods are video recording and note taking. The focal child will be recorded on different days during2018, beginning.....2018 at the child's home and ECE setting. Each observation will be up to 4 hours at centre/preschool and up to 1 hour at home and this will be completed within ten weeks. Non-participating adults may be incidentally video recorded during the recording of children. However, I will make every effort to turn the video recorder off before non-participating children or adults move into the frame. I will provide a notice to put up on the front /main door of the service to advise any visitors that recording is taking place. Informal conversations will be conducted with the focal child during observation.

Teachers and peers will be observed when they interact with the focal child at ECE settings. Parent and siblings (if the child has) will be observed when they interact with him/her at home. Teachers and parent will be invited to commit to two individual semi-structured interviews within 30-45 minutes per each at a time that is convenient for them. The first interview with teachers and parent at the beginning of data collection will let me access to information about participants' background and adult's perspectives about their child's identities. At the end of data collection period, the second interview will be conducted to enable me to further understand their opinions about the child's storytelling experience and the role of contexts in the child's identities development.

Only selected audio-video recordings will be interpreted and analysed by the researcher for the final thesis. If I perceive that any of the participants do not wish to be observed or audio-video recorded at any given time, I will cease recording.

Observation data, field note data, and interview transcripts will be transcribed to verbatim by the researcher for further analysis.

Data storage/ retention/ destruction/ future use

[For participants in New Zealand] Selected written/printed data and video recordings on DVD will be kept for six years and will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and will then be destroyed. Data in electronic formats will be stored separately and securely by researcher's password-protected computer. Consent Forms and data in print format will be stored separately and securely in different locked cabinet located in the principal investigators' office at the University of Auckland. *[For participants in Vietnam]* Data collected in Vietnam will be kept safe and secure by the researcher via the University Web Dropoff box as well as on the researcher's password-protected computer. After the researcher returns to the University of Auckland, data in print forms will be stored in locked cabinet located in researcher's office at the University of Auckland.

After six years, written/printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of your setting although anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Analysed data will be utilized for Hoa Pham Minh's doctoral thesis, for academic publications, such as books, book chapters and academic journal articles, educational conference presentations, which are related to the research topic.

Right to withdraw participation

I will inform and ensure that the participation of the children, teachers, and parents is voluntary. Participants will have the right to withdraw from this research any time before the data-gathering process starts, or within the first two weeks once the data-gathering process starts. Participants will have right

to withdraw information that has been provided up to the two weeks following the receipt of transcripts without giving a reason.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

In the research report, all information will be presented objectively. The identity of participants will be protected by the researcher's choosing culturally similar names as pseudonyms to represent participants and settings' names. The identity of the child participants will be treated with utmost care and respect in the selection of children's story episodes. Parents/guardians will have the opportunity to edit or withdraw data before data collection ceases on,, 2018, without giving a reason. I will make changes accordingly.

In the study, I will capture all of children's stories and respect diverse perspectives of parents and teachers in interviews. Sensitive themes (if having) within children's stories and interviews with parents and teachers will be valued without any discrimination. I, however, will inform participants that if they do not want the sensitive data to be informed of such a finding, they would be excluded from the research. I also seek your assurance that the teachers' and parent/guardians' decisions to participate or not in this research will not affect the teachers' employment status or parent/guardians' or child's relationship with yourself as the manager/principal. At the completion of the study, participants will receive a summary (by post or e-mail) of the main findings. As the researcher, I will retain ownership of all of the collected data. If you have any further queries please contact me or my supervisors. I do hope you will agree to your service participating in this research. If so, I would appreciate you signing the Consent Form and returning it to me in the envelope provided.

Contact details and approval

Researcher

Hoa Pham Minh

Email: hpha510@aucklanduni.ac.nz; h.pham@auckland.ac.nz

Research supervisor

Prof. Janet Gaffney

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy,

Faculty of Education,

The University of Auckland.

Email: janet.gaffney@auckland.ac.nz

Phone: (09) 6238899 Ext 48323 (Office)

Research co-supervisor

Dr. Marek Tesar

School of Learning, Development and
Professional Practice

Faculty of Education,

The University of Auckland.

Email: m.tesar@auckland.ac.nz

Phone: (09) 373 7999 Ext 46375 (office)

Head of Department:

Dr. Helen Hedges

School of curriculum and pedagogy, Faculty of Education,

The University of Auckland.

Private Bag 92019

Auckland 1142.

Email: h.hedges@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09)373 7999 Ext 48606.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09373-7599 (ext.83711;ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz).

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS
COMMITTEE ONFOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 020988**

Appendix C: Consent Form, Manager/ Principal of Preschool



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
 Faculty of Education
 Epsom Campus
 Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
 Auckland, New Zealand
 Telephone 64 9 623 8899
 Facsimile 64 9 623 8898 www.education.auckland.ac.nz
 The University of Auckland
 Private Bag 92019
 Auckland 1142
 New Zealand

CONSENT FORM

(Manager of the Early Childhood Education Centre/Principal of Preschool)

This form will be held for a period of six years

Project title: The construction of Vietnamese young children's identities: A focus on their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor (s): Prof. Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar

Name of Student Researcher: Hoa Pham Minh

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been asked to give permission for the researcher to approach the parents/guardians, children and teachers in my service to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I understand that the parents/guardians will be asked to sign a consent form if they agree to be part of the research and for their child to be part of this study and that they will be invited to help their children to complete an assent form. I understand that teachers will be asked to sign a consent form if they agree to participate.
- I understand that observation involves written field notes, video recordings of conversations with teachers and children on one day per week during2018, beginning2018. Each observation period will be up to four hours duration. I understand that if the researcher sees that a child is disturbed by the observation or recording she will cease recording immediately. I understand that other people may be incidentally video recorded, including myself.
- I understand that the focal child and their self-talk or their conversations with teachers and peers at my centre/preschool will be video recorded, and that edited clips of this data, including children's first names, will be stored on DVD and included in the Doctoral thesis and may be used in presentations, conferences and publications. I understand that the edited clips will be carefully selected from the data by Hoa Pham Minh as the researcher and by the principal investigator Prof. Janet Gaffney and co-investigator Dr. Marek Tesar.
- I understand that the DVD will be kept for six years as part of the Doctoral thesis, and stored securely at the researcher's office, after which it will be destroyed.

- I understand that children’s parents/guardians will have the opportunity to edit or withdraw data and that the researcher will make changes accordingly.
- I understand that the researcher will be keeping a personal reflective journal in written form.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that the participation of the teachers, children and parents/guardians is voluntary, and I give my assurance that their decision to participate, or not, in the research will not affect their employment status (teachers) or their relationship with myself as the manager (children and parents/guardians).
- I understand that all of the selected data will be transcribed by the researcher.
- I agree that participants and setting will be represented by the researcher’s choosing culturally similar names as pseudonyms.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time any time before the data-gathering process starts, or within the first two weeks once the data-gathering process starts.
- I understand that this Consent Form will be stored securely by the principal investigator at the University of Auckland for six years beyond the completion of the research, while the data will be stored separately and securely at the researcher’s home on a password protected computer. I understand that all of the data will be kept for six years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings.
- **I agree/ do not agree to participate, provide permission to undertake this study at (name of ECE setting) and access to the teachers, children aged 4-5, and their parents.**

Manager/Principal’s Name:
Signature:

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 27/04/2018 FOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 020988.

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet, Teacher



**EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK**



School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Teacher)

Project title: The construction of Vietnamese young children's identities: A focus on their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor (s): Prof. Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar

Name of Student Researcher: Hoa Pham Minh

Researcher introduction

I am Hoa Pham Minh, a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. At the moment, I am conducting research for my Doctoral Thesis in Education, under the supervision of Professor Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar.

Project description and invitation

The purpose of this project is to explore the construction of Vietnamese young children's identities through their personal stories and the role of contexts in children's identities development. I would like to invite you to take part in my project during 10 weeks from ... 2018 to ... 2018.

One Vietnamese child (4-5 years old) in your centre/school will be chosen as the focal child. Their parents, siblings (if he/she has), teachers and peers will be chosen as co-participants. This study involves my observations, informal conversations with children, individual semi-structured interviews with at least two teachers and one parent from each centre.

For this research, I have selected the early childhood education (ECE) setting in which you work. I would like you to let me come to meet you and explain my work. I will seek your help to let me access to Vietnamese children aged 4-5 in your ECE setting and their families to introduce myself and explain my research. I will seek manager's permission to place a sealed collection box in your centre for all participants to return their Consent Forms and Assent Forms at their convenience within two weeks of the receipt of their forms. The sealed box will be collected after two weeks.

Project procedures

Once consent of all participants is obtained, I will spend one week before data gathering to get familiar with participants (children, parents, early childhood education teachers), let them know the purpose of interview and observation, discuss the time and the way to interview and observe.

Observation is a necessary part of the project and the intended observation methods are video recording and note taking. The focal child will be recorded on different days during2018, beginning.....2018 at their home and ECE setting. Each observation will be up to four hours duration at ECE setting and up to one hour at homes and this will be completed within ten weeks. Non-participating adults may be incidentally video recorded during the recording of the child. However, I will make every effort to turn the video recorder off before non-participating children or adults move into the frame. I will provide a notice to put up on the front /main door of the service to advise any visitors that recording is taking place. Informal conversations will be conducted with the focal child during observation.

You will be observed when you interact with the focal child at centre/school. You will be invited to commit to two individual semi-structured interviews within 30-45 minutes per each at a time and place that are convenient for you. In the first interview, you will be invited to share information about background and perspectives about the focal child's identities. At the end of data collection period, you will be invited to share opinions about the focal child's storytelling experience and the role of contexts in their identities development.

Only selected audio-video recordings will be interpreted and analysed by the researcher for the final thesis. If I perceive that any of the participants do not wish to be observed or audio-video recorded at any given time, I will cease recording.

Observation data, field note data, and interview transcripts will be transcribed to verbatim by the researcher for further analysis.

Data storage/ retention/ destruction/ future use

[For participants in New Zealand] Selected written/printed data and video recordings on DVD will be kept for six years and will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and will then be destroyed. Data in electronic formats will be stored separately and securely by researcher's password-protected computer. Consent Forms and data in print format will be stored separately and securely in different locked cabinet located in the principal investigators' office at the University of Auckland. *[For participants in Vietnam]* Data collected in Vietnam will be kept safe and secure by the researcher via the University Web Dropoff box as well as on the researcher's password-protected computer. After the researcher returns to the University of Auckland, data in print forms will be stored in locked cabinet located in researcher's office at the University of Auckland.

After six years, written/printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of your setting although anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Analysed data will be utilized for Hoa Pham Minh's doctoral thesis, for academic publications, such as books, book chapters and academic journal articles, educational conference presentations, which are related to the research topic.

Right to withdraw participation

I will inform and ensure that your participation is voluntary. You will have the right to withdraw from this research any time before the data-gathering process starts, or within the first two weeks once the data-gathering process starts. You will have right to withdraw information that has been provided up to the two weeks following the receipt of transcripts without giving a reason. While participating in the semi-structured interview, you may leave the room where the interview is taking place, at any time during the interview if you do not want to be audio recorded, without giving a reason, or if you choose to withdraw from the study.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

In the research report, all information will be presented objectively. Your identity will be protected by my choosing culturally similar names as pseudonyms to represent your name and your settings.

In the study, I will capture all of children's stories and respect diverse perspectives of parents and teachers in interviews. Sensitive themes (if having) within children's stories and interviews with you will be valued without any discrimination. I, however, will inform you that if you do not want any piece of your data to be informed of such a finding, they would be excluded from the research.

I also seek your assurance that your decisions to participate or not in this research will not affect your employment status or parent/guardians' or child's relationship with yourself as teacher. At the completion of the study, you will receive a summary (by post or e-mail) of the main findings. As the researcher, I will retain ownership of all of the collected data. If you have any further queries please contact me or my supervisors. I do hope you will agree to your service participating in this research. If so, I would appreciate you signing the Consent Form and returning it to me in the envelope provided.

Contact details and approval

Researcher

Hoa Pham Minh

Email: hpha510@aucklanduni.ac.nz; h.pham@auckland.ac.nz

Research supervisor

Prof. Janet Gaffney
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy,
Faculty of Education,
The University of Auckland.
Email: janet.gaffney@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 6238899 Ext 48323 (Office)

Research co-supervisor

Dr. Marek Tesar
School of Learning, Development and
Professional Practice
Faculty of Education,
The University of Auckland.
Email: m.tesar@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 373 7999 Ext 46375 (office)

Head of Department:

Dr. Helen Hedges
School of curriculum and pedagogy, Faculty of Education,
The University of Auckland.
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142.
Email: h.hedges@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09)373 7999 Ext 48606.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09373-7599 (ext.83711;ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz).

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 27/04/2018 FOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 020988.

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet: Parents

**EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK**

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(The focal child's parent)

Project title: The construction of Vietnamese young children's identities: A focus on their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor (s): Prof. Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar

Name of Student Researcher: Hoa Pham Minh

Researcher introduction

I am Hoa Pham Minh, a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. At the moment, I am conducting research for my Doctoral Thesis in Education, under the supervision of Professor Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar.

Project description and invitation

The purpose of this project is to explore the construction of Vietnamese young children's identities through their personal stories and the role of contexts in children's identities development. I would like to invite you to take part in my project during 10 weeks from ... 2018 to ... 2018.

One Vietnamese child (4-5 years old) in your family will be chosen as the focal child. You, your other children (if you have), teachers and peers will be chosen as co-participants. This study involves my observations, informal conversations with children, individual semi-structured interviews with at least two teachers and one parent from each centre.

For this research, I have selected the early childhood education (ECE) setting in which your child enrolls. I would like you to let me come to meet you and explain my work. I will seek your help to let me access to your child at your home to introduce myself and explain my research. I will send you Participant Information Sheet (PIS), Consent Form and an Assent Form to your child via you. I will seek principal/manager's permission to place a sealed collection box in your child's centre for you to return Consent Forms and Assent Forms at your convenience within two weeks of the receipt of your forms. The sealed box will be collected after two weeks.

Project procedures

Once consent of all participants is obtained, I will spend one week before data gathering to get familiar with participants (children, parents, early childhood education teachers), let them know the purpose of interview and observation, discuss the time and the way to interview and observe.

Observation is a necessary part of the project and the intended observation methods are video recording and note taking. The focal child will be recorded on different days during2018, beginning.....2018 at their home and ECE setting. Each observation will be up to four hours duration at ECE setting and up to one hour at homes and this will be completed within ten weeks. Non-participating adults may be incidentally video recorded during the recording of the child. However, I will make every effort to turn the video recorder off before non-participating children or adults move into the frame. I will provide a notice to put up on the front /main door of the service to advise any visitors that recording is taking place. Informal conversations will be conducted with the focal child during observation.

You will be observed when you interact with your child at home. You will be invited to commit to two individual semi-structured interviews within 30-45 minutes per each at a time and place that are convenient for you. In the first interview, you will be invited to share information about background and perspectives about your child's identities. At the end of data collection period, you will be invited to share opinions about their storytelling experience and the role of contexts in their identities development. Only selected audio-video recordings will be interpreted and analysed by the researcher for the final thesis. If I perceive that any of the participants do not wish to be observed or audio-video recorded at any given time, I will cease recording.

Observation data, field note data, and interview transcripts will be transcribed to verbatim by the researcher for further analysis.

Data storage/ retention/ destruction/ future use

[For participants in New Zealand] Selected written/printed data and video recordings on DVD will be kept for six years and will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and will then be destroyed. Data in electronic formats will be stored separately and securely by researcher's password-protected computer. Consent Forms and data in print format will be stored separately and securely in different locked cabinet located in the principal investigators' office at the University of Auckland. *[For participants in Vietnam]* Data collected in Vietnam will be kept safe and secure by the researcher via the University Web Dropoff box as well as on the researcher's password-protected computer. After the researcher returns to the University of Auckland, data in print forms will be stored in locked cabinet located in researcher's office at the University of Auckland.

After six years, written/printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of your setting although anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Analysed data will be utilized for Hoa Pham Minh's doctoral thesis, for academic publications, such as books, book chapters and academic journal articles, educational conference presentations, which are related to the research topic.

Right to withdraw participation

I will inform and ensure that the participation of yourself and your child is voluntary. You and your child have the right to withdraw from this research any time before the data-gathering process starts, or within the first two weeks once the data-gathering process starts. You and your child have right to withdraw information that has been provided up to the two weeks following the receipt of transcripts without giving a reason. While participating in the semi-structured interview, you may leave the room where the interview is taking place, at any time during the interview if you do not want to be audio recorded, without giving a reason, or if you choose to withdraw from the study.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

In the research report, all information will be presented objectively. The identity of your self and your child will be protected by my choosing culturally similar names as pseudonyms to represent your name, your child's name and your settings.

In the research publication, all information will be presented objectively. I require approval from you for the selection of your child's video recordings, identified with your child's chosen pseudonym.

In the study, I will capture all of children's stories and respect diverse perspectives of parents and teachers in interviews. Sensitive themes (if having) within children's stories and interviews with parents and teachers will be valued without any discrimination. I, however, want to inform your that if you do not want any piece of your data and your child's story episodes to be informed of such a finding, they would be excluded from the research.

I also seek your assurance that your decision to participate or not in this research will not affect your relationship, your child's relationship or your child's enrolment with this early childhood service. At the completion of the study, you will receive a summary (by post or e-mail) of the main findings. As the researcher, I will retain ownership of all of the collected data. If you have any further queries please contact me or my supervisors. I do hope you will agree to your service participating in this research. If so, I would appreciate you signing the Consent Form and returning it to me in the envelope provided.

Contact details and approval

Researcher

Hoa Pham Minh

Email: hpha510@aucklanduni.ac.nz; h.pham@auckland.ac.nz

Research supervisor

Prof. Janet Gaffney
School of curriculum and pedagogy,
Faculty of Education,
The University of Auckland.
Email: janet.gaffney@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 6238899 Ext 48323 (Office)

Research co-supervisor

Dr. Marek Tesar
School of Learning, Development and
Professional Practice
Faculty of Education,
The University of Auckland.
Email: m.tesar@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 373 7999 Ext 46375 (office)

Head of Department:

Dr. Helen Hedges
School of curriculum and pedagogy, Faculty of Education,
The University of Auckland.
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142.
Email: h.hedges@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09)373 7999 Ext 48606.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09373-7599 (ext.83711; ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz).

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 27/04/2018 FOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 020988.

Appendix F: Consent Form: Parents



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

CONSENT FORM

(The focal child's parent)

This form will be held for a period of six years

Project title: The construction of Vietnamese young children's identities: A focus on their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor (s): Prof. Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar

Name of Student Researcher: Hoa Pham Minh

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been asked to give permission for myself and for my child to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree that my child will be observed and video recorded, and that they will be identifiable.
- I agree that my child's name will be represented by a culturally similar pseudonym by the researcher. I understand that observation involves video recording, and note taking of my child. I understand that the research takes place on up to two different days during and 2018 at my home and my child's early childhood education setting. Each observation period will be up to four hours duration at centre and one hour at my home. I understand that if the researcher sees that my child is disturbed by the observation or recording she will cease recording immediately.
- I understand that I will be video recorded while I interact with my child at home.
- I agree to be digitally audio recorded by the researcher in a teacher interview, which will be held during non-contact time.
- I agree that during the interview, I may leave the room where the interview is taking place at any time during the interview, without giving a reason, if I do not want to be audio recorded or if I choose to withdraw from the study.

- I understand that the DVD will be kept for six years as part of the Doctoral thesis, and stored securely at the researcher's office, after which it will be destroyed.
- I understand that I will have the opportunity to edit or withdraw data and that the researcher will make changes accordingly.
- I understand that the researcher will be keeping a personal reflective journal in written form.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. My child and I have rights to withdraw from this research at any time or withdraw information that will be provided up until 2 weeks of the receipt of the transcript to be reviewed, without giving a reason.
- I understand that my decision to participate, or not, in the research will not affect my relationship, my child's relationship or my child's enrolment with the early childhood service.
- I understand that all of the selected data will be transcribed by the researcher.
- I agree to let researcher choose a culturally similar pseudonym to represent my name.
- I understand that this Consent Form will be stored securely by the researcher at the University of Auckland for six years beyond the completion of the research, while the data will be stored separately and securely at the researcher's office on a password protected computer. I understand that all of the data will be kept for six years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings.
- **I agree/ do not agree to participate in this study, provide permission for my child to participate in this research project.**

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 27/04/2018 FOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 020988.

Appendix G: Participant Information Sheet: Parents of Co-Participants



**EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK**



**EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK**

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623
8898 www.education.auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Parents of children co-participants')

Project title: The construction of Vietnamese young children's identities: A focus on their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor (s): Prof. Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar

Name of Student Researcher: Hoa Pham Minh

Researcher introduction

I am Hoa Pham Minh, a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. At the moment, I am conducting research for my Doctoral Thesis in Education, under the supervision of Professor Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar.

Project description and invitation

The purpose of this project is to explore the construction of Vietnamese young children's identities through their personal stories and the role of contexts in children's identities development. I would like to invite you to take part in my project during 10 weeks from ... 2018 to ... 2018.

One Vietnamese child (4-5 years old) in your child's centre/preschool will be chosen as the focal child. Your child, your child's teachers and the focal child's parent and siblings (if he/she has) will be chosen as co-participants. This study involves my observations, informal conversations with the focal child, individual semi-structured interviews with at least two teachers from each centre/preschool and one parent.

For this research, I have selected the early childhood education (ECE) setting in which your child enrolls. I would like you to let me come to meet you and explain my work. I will seek your help to let me access your child at ECE setting to introduce myself and explain my research. I will send you Participant Information Sheet (PIS), Consent Form and an Assent Form to your child via you. I will seek principal/manager's permission to place a sealed collection box in your child's centre for you to return

Consent Forms and Assent Forms at your convenience within two weeks of the receipt of your forms. The sealed box will be collected after two weeks.

Project procedures

Once consent of all participants is obtained, I will spend one week before data gathering to get familiar with participants (children, parents, early childhood education teachers), let them know the purpose of interview and observation, discuss the time and the way to interview and observe.

Observation is a necessary part of the project and the intended observation methods are video recording and note taking. Your child will be observed when he/she interacts with the focal child at centre/preschool on different days during2018, beginning.....2018. Each observation will be up to four hours duration at ECE centre/preschool and this will be completed within ten weeks. Non-participating adults or children may be incidentally video recorded during the recording of the child. However, I will make every effort to turn the video recorder off before non-participating children or adults move into the frame. I will provide a notice to put up on the front /main door of the service to advise any visitors that recording is taking place. Informal conversations will be conducted with the focal child when he/she plays alone or with groups during the project.

Only selected audio-video recordings will be interpreted and analysed by the researcher for the final thesis. If I perceive that any of the participants do not wish to be observed or audio-video recorded at any given time, I will cease recording.

Observation data, field note data, and interview transcripts will be transcribed to verbatim by the researcher for further analysis.

Data storage/ retention/ destruction/ future use

[For participants in New Zealand] Selected written/printed data and video recordings on DVD will be kept for six years and will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office and will then be destroyed. Data in electronic formats will be stored separately and securely by researcher's password-protected computer. Consent Forms and data in print format will be stored separately and securely in different locked cabinet located in the principal investigators' office at the University of Auckland. *[For participants in Vietnam]* Data collected in Vietnam will be kept safe and secure by the researcher via the University Web Dropoff box as well as on the researcher's password-protected computer. After the researcher returns to the University of Auckland, data in print forms will be stored in locked cabinet located in researcher's office at the University of Auckland.

After six years, written/printed data will be shredded and video/digital audio recording data will be erased. Every attempt will be made to protect the identity of your setting although anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Analysed data will be utilized for Hoa Pham Minh's doctoral thesis, for academic publications, such as books, book chapters and academic journal articles, educational conference presentations, which are related to the research topic.

Right to withdraw participation

I will inform and ensure that the participation of yourself and your child is voluntary. You and your child have the right to withdraw from this research any time before the data-gathering process starts, or within the first two weeks once the data-gathering process starts. You and your child have right to withdraw information that has been provided up to the two weeks following the receipt of transcripts without giving a reason.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

In the research report, all information will be presented objectively. The identity of your self and your child will be protected by my choosing culturally similar names as pseudonyms to represent your name, your child's name and your settings.

In the research publication, all information will be presented objectively. I require approval from you for the selection of your child's video recordings, identified with your child's chosen pseudonym.

In the study, I will capture all of children's stories and respect diverse perspectives of parents and teachers in interviews. Sensitive themes (if having) within children's stories and interviews with parents and teachers will be valued without any discrimination. I, however, want to inform your that if you do not want any piece of your data and your child's records to be informed of such a finding, they would be excluded from the research.

I also seek your assurance that your decision to participate or not in this research will not affect your relationship, your child's relationship or your child's enrolment with this early childhood service. At the completion of the study, you will receive a summary (by post or e-mail) of the main findings. As the researcher, I will retain ownership of all of the collected data. If you have any further queries please contact me or my supervisors. I do hope you will agree to your service participating in this research. If so, I would appreciate you signing the Consent Form and returning it to me in the envelope provided.

Contact details and approval

Researcher

Hoa Pham Minh

Email: hpha510@aucklanduni.ac.nz; h.pham@auckland.ac.nz

Research supervisor

Prof. Janet Gaffney
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy,
Faculty of Education,
The University of Auckland.
Email: janet.gaffney@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 6238899 Ext 48323 (Office)

Research co-supervisor

Dr. Marek Tesar
School of Learning, Development and
Professional Practice
Faculty of Education,
The University of Auckland.
Email: m.tesar@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09) 373 7999 Ext 46375 (office)

Head of Department:

Dr. Helen Hedges
School of curriculum and pedagogy, Faculty of Education,
The University of Auckland.
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142.
Email: h.hedges@auckland.ac.nz
Phone: (09)373 7999 Ext 48606.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09373-7599 (ext.83711;ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz).

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 27/04/2018 FOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 020988.

Appendix H: Consent Form: Parents, Co-Participants



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
 Faculty of Education
 Epsom Campus
 Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
 Auckland, New Zealand
 Telephone 64 9 623 8899
 Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz
 The University of Auckland
 Private Bag 92019
 Auckland 1142
 New Zealand

CONSENT FORM

(Children co-participants' parents)

This form will be held for a period of six years

Project title: The construction of Vietnamese young children's identities: A focus on their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor (s): Prof. Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar

Name of Student Researcher: Hoa Pham Minh

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I have understood the nature of the research and why I have been asked to give permission for my child to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree that my child will be observed, and video recorded when they interact with the focal child at early childhood education (ECE) centre/preschool, and that they will be identifiable.
- I agree that my child's name will be represented by a culturally similar pseudonym by the researcher. I understand that observation involves video recording, and note taking of my child as co-participant. I understand that the research takes place on up to two different days during and 2018 at my child's early childhood education setting. Each observation period will be up to four hours at centre and one hour at my home. I understand that if the researcher sees that my child is disturbed by the observation or recording she will cease recording immediately.
- I understand that the DVD will be kept for six years as part of the Doctoral thesis, and stored securely at the researcher's office, after which it will be destroyed.
- I understand that I will have the opportunity to edit or withdraw data and that the researcher will make changes accordingly.
- I understand that the researcher will be keeping a personal reflective journal in written form.

- I understand that my child's participation is voluntary. My child has rights to withdraw from this research at any time or withdraw information that will be provided up until 2 weeks of the receipt of the transcript to be reviewed, without giving a reason.
- I understand that my decision to participate, or not, in the research will not affect my relationship, my child's relationship or my child's enrolment with the early childhood service.
- I understand that the researcher will transcribe data of observation sessions.
- I understand that this Consent Form will be stored securely by the researcher at the University of Auckland for six years beyond the completion of the research, while the data will be stored separately and securely at the researcher's home on a password protected computer. I understand that all of the data will be kept for six years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I understand that while every attempt will be made to protect the child's identities through self-chosen pseudonyms or numbers, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings.
- **I agree/ do not agree to participate in this study, provide permission for my child to participate in this research project.**

Name:

Signature:

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 27/04/2018 FOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 020988.

Appendix I: Assent Form: Focal Child



EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK



EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand



ASSENT FORM- Child

This form will be held for a period of six years

Child-Centre/Preschool:

Parent/Guardian:

Project title: Young Vietnamese children (4-5 years old)'s identities construction through their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor (s): Prof. Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar

Name of Student Researcher: Hoa Pham Minh

Hello! My name is Hoa. I will be coming to (name of early childhood education centre/preschool) and your home because I would like to talk to you and listen to your stories. You can see a photo of me above. I want to know what do you think and feel at centre/preschool and home and how you show that through telling stories.

I can only work with you if you agree to the following statements:

- I understand that my participation in Hoa's study is voluntary, which means that I don't have to take part if I don't want and nothing will happen to me.
- Anytime I want to stop, that's okay. I don't have to give a reason.

- I understand that Hoa will video record me and converse with me at my home and my centre/preschool.
- I know that Hoa will stop audio-video recording and talking to me if I don't like and that's fine.
- If I have any worries or if I have any other questions, then I can talk about these with Hoa, my parents/guardians or teachers.
- I understand that my name, or a name that I choose, will be written next to the videos of me.
- I can get a copy of my stories if I want them.
- I can say no if I don't want any of my stories and other things to be included in Hoa's work.
- **I am happy / not happy to take part in the study.**

(Please colour one)



Child's name:

Parent/Guardian's name:

Parent/Guardian's signature:

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 27/04/2018 FOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 020988.

Appendix J: Assent Form, Co-participant Child



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK



School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Faculty of Education
Epsom Campus
Gate 3, 74 Epsom Avenue
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623
8898 www.education.auckland.ac.nz

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand

ASSENT FORM- Child

This form will be held for a period of six years

Child-Centre/Preschool:

Parent/Guardian:

Project title: Young Vietnamese children (4-5 years old)'s identities construction through their personal stories in Vietnam and New Zealand

Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor (s): Prof. Janet Gaffney and Dr. Marek Tesar

Name of Student Researcher: Hoa Pham Minh

Hello! My name is Hoa. I will be coming to (name of early childhood education setting) because I would like to talk to you and your friend (the focal child's name) and listen to your conversations with him/her. You can see a photo of me above.

I can only work with you if you agree to the following statements:

- I understand that my participation in Hoa's study is voluntary, which means that I don't have to take part if I don't want and nothing will happen to me.
- Anytime I want to stop, that's okay. I don't have to give a reason.
- I understand that Hoa will video record me and converse with me at my home and my centre/preschool.

- I know that Hoa will stop audio-video recording and talking to me if I don't like and that's fine.
- If I have any worries or if I have any other questions, then I can talk about these with Hoa, my parents/guardians or teachers.
- I understand that my name, or a name that I choose, will be written next to the videos of me.
- I can get a copy of my conversations if I want them.
- I can say no if I don't want any of my conversations and other things to be included in Hoa's work.
- **I am happy / not happy to take part in the study.**

(Please colour one)



Child's name:

Parent/Guardian's name:

Parent/Guardian's signature:

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 27/04/2018 FOR THREE YEARS. REFERENCE NUMBER 020988.

Appendix K: Sample Questions for Interviews With Parents

Semi-structured interviews with parents will be utilized to provide information about children's background and the impact of family on children's identities development.

The first interview is to access to information about parents' background (i.e. education, experiences, culture, ethnicity, language) and parents' perspectives about their children's identities.

- Can you please tell me about your name and your work?
- What ethnicity can you identify yourself?
- What ethnicity can you determine your child?
- Can you please tell me about your family?
- What languages are spoken at your home?
- What languages do you usually use to interact with your child?
- Can you please tell me about your child? How would you describe him or her?
- What does your child do when he or she is not at school?
- What kinds of events do your family usually love and join with each other?
- What is the most important occasion in your family? What do you and your child do on this event?
- Can you please tell me about your home culture?
- What are the important cultural values that you believe in?

The second interview facilitates to further understand parents' opinions about children's storytelling experience and the role of contexts in children's identities development.

- Do you usually converse to your child at home?
- Does your child usually tell their stories with you?
- Could you please tell me a story told by your child, which you remember?
- How do you think about this story?
- How do you tell your child about Vietnamese cultural traditions?
- Do you think that parents should encourage their children to explore their identities? If yes, by how?

Appendix L: Sample Questions to Interview With Teachers

Semi-structured interviews with parents will be utilized to provide information about children's background and the impact of ECE settings and teachers on children's identities development.

The first interview is to access to information about teachers' background (i.e. education, experiences, culture, ethnicity, language) and teachers' perspectives about their children's identities.

- Can you tell me about your name and yourself?
- Can you tell me about your work as an ECE teacher?
- What ethnicity can you identify yourself?
- What languages can you speak?
- Can you please tell me about your home culture?
- What are the important cultural values that you believe in?
- Can you tell me the student's name?
- Can you tell me about the child's family background?
- How do you know this information?
- What contact have you had with the child's family?
- How would you describe the child's performance at school?
- What kinds of activities does the child most like to do at school?
- Who are the child's close friends?
- What ethnicity can you identify the child?
- What languages can the child speak?
- What languages do you use to interact with the child at school?

The second interview facilitates to further understand parents' opinions about children's storytelling experience and the role of contexts in children's identities development.

- Do you usually converse to your child at kindergarten?
- Does your child usually tell their stories with you?
- Could you please tell me a story told by your child, which you remember?
- How do you think about this story?

Do you think that teachers and schools should encourage their students to explore their identities? If yes, by how?