

Dannica Anya Carreon

3-5-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON "FRIENDSHIP"

Faculty of Education and Culture
Bachelor's Thesis
March 2022

ABSTRACT

Dannica Anya Carreon: 3-5-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON "FRIENDSHIP"

Bachelor's Thesis

Tampere University

Degree Programme in Early Childhood Education and Care

March 2022

There is a vast number of studies involving childhood friendship. Often, children's friendship is interpreted from an adult perspective. The aim of this thesis is to provide insights on the children's account of their friendship experiences. This study employed phenomenological approach in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of friendship from children's perspectives. The results intend to improve the knowledge of early childhood practitioners on children's friendship, that may subsequently lead to a higher quality of support for children and their friendship experiences in the day-care.

This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted with six children, aged three to five. Utilizing a range of methods (mosaic approach) such as drawings, small-world play interviews, and the use of camera (Clark & Moss, 2001), to encourage children's expressions and efforts of communication, the research examines their everyday friendship experiences in the day-care.

This thesis discusses the value of the sociocultural and emotional attributes of children's friendship including the organization of space, the role of play, sibling relationships and significance of proximity with regards to the practices, development, and maintenance of the relationship. This study stresses on the active role a child is making in constructing the meaning of friendship, and emphasizes the value of listening to children.

Keywords: friendship, children's perspective, children's agency

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	6
2.1	<i>Children as active agents</i>	6
2.2	<i>Definitions of Friendship</i>	7
2.3	<i>Friendship vs other social interaction</i>	8
2.4	<i>Friendship: children's views and experiences</i>	9
3	METHODOLOGY	12
3.1	<i>Mosaic Approach</i>	12
3.2	<i>Phenomenological Research</i>	13
3.3	<i>Methods</i>	14
3.4	<i>Data Collection</i>	14
3.5	<i>Small World Play Interview</i>	15
3.6	<i>Drawings</i>	15
3.7	<i>Photography</i>	16
3.8	<i>Interviews</i>	16
3.9	<i>Documentation</i>	17
3.11	<i>Ethics</i>	19
3.12	<i>Data management plan</i>	20
4	CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF FRIENDSHIP	21
4.1	<i>Friendship rules: Fairness</i>	21
4.2	<i>Mutual affection and homophily</i>	23
4.3	<i>Language</i>	25
4.4	<i>Space and proximity</i>	26
4.5	<i>Friendship amongst siblings</i>	29
4.6	<i>Play and friendship</i>	30
4.7	<i>Friendship as a continuous act</i>	32
5	CONCLUSION	34
5.1	<i>Summary</i>	34
5.2	<i>Significance and Limitations</i>	37
6	APPENDICES	41

1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of children's social relationship has always been an area of my interest. In my relatively limited experience in working with children, I occasionally have found myself curious about their everyday social interaction. How they accept, neglect, or treat other children in general. Given that I am curious about children's social relationship, in this study I intend to focus more on children's friendship, which is considered to be a particular kind of social interaction. The significance of friendship in the everyday socialization of a child is irrefutable. It has brought about various studies of various disciplines aiming to fully understand its nature. Most of these studies developed their own distinct definitions of childhood friendship. Therefore, it is important that we understand how friendship is defined and the common assumptions regarding this relationship.

Corsaro (2017) mentions that there are two models of socialization process. One of those is the deterministic model in which the child plays a basically passive role, the child is simultaneously a novice with potential to contribute to the maintenance of society. In the other model, the child is considered as an untamed threat who must be controlled through careful training. In the constructivist model, the child is seen as an active agent and eager learner who constructs her social world and her place in it. My understanding of friendship stands closest to the latter, as I have always and will always consider children's rights and active agency. This research does not focus only on the children's ability to articulate, but also their capacity to make their own decisions.

Corsaro (1985) suggests that constructivists are convinced that children interpret, organize, and use information from the environment in the process of acquiring or constructing adult skills and knowledge; that their socialization is not entirely based on adult facilitation. Corsaro also clarified that other information contributes as well, and that information should always be interpreted, organized, and acted upon from the child's point of view. The constructivist approach

remained as the guiding principle for this project, which involved a participatory design that was intended to capture the children's perspectives, not through the traditional adult observations, but through the very language of the children themselves.

According to Smith (2002) and Karlsson (2012) "research on early childhood education highlights a child's point of view, experiences, perspectives, and abilities to act and express ideas and views in different historical and social contexts" (cited in Leinonen and colleagues, 2014, p2.). While so much have been written in the vast subject of children's social interaction and peer relationships; I noticed that only a limited number of studies emphasize how the children view and experience friendship based on their own account. Hence, this small-scale study was conducted with a profound effort to listen and hear the children's views, ideas, and experiences of friendship.

Howes (1983) discusses that children, as early as toddlerhood start to differentiate among their peers and select specific companions as friends from their peer groups (as cited in Öneren Şendil, 2014). I believe that peer relationship is an important aspect of children's socialization. However, I think that greater attention should be given to other aspects, such children's friendship. I believe it would be beneficial for ECEC practitioners to understand how early childhood friendship functions, as well as its connection to the development of individual characteristics, socioemotional, and intellectual skills that may be associated with the children's ability to develop friendships.

In this study, I explore children's notion and experiences of friendship in order to provide insights on children's everyday friendship and friendship experience based on their own understanding and narrative. This study is guided by the question: ***How do 3-5-year-old children view and experience friendship?***

This small-scale phenomenological study employs various methods (*mosaic approach*) such as drawings, role play interviews, and photography (Clark & Moss, 2001), in order to give options and to encourage children's expressions and efforts of communication. It was conducted with six children aged three to five years old, in a bilingual (Finnish/English), and an English-speaking daycare of Tampere, Finland, where I was working as a part-time

substitute teacher. This study was implemented as a part of regular everyday activities in the daycares. Moreover, I am familiar with most of the children involved in this study as I have been working with them for a substantial amount of time.

In the next chapter, I will discuss children's agency, the different definitions of friendship and its distinction from other social relationships, as well as prior significant studies that examine how children view and experience friendship. Next, I present the methodology and research methods of this study, along with the ethical considerations and data management plan, after which, I discuss how I analyzed the collected data and the research findings. Lastly, I present the summary of this research, its significance in relation to previous and future research, as well as its limitations.

2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 *Children as active agents*

The last century is considered by Oswell (2012) as the age of children's agency, in which children's capacity to do has progressed as they are seen as actors, authors, authorities, and agents, capable of making a difference in the world we live in. According to Pufall and Unsworth (2004) "agency refers to the fact that children are much more self-determining actors than we generally think" (p. 8). Engdahl (2012) explains that in this theoretical perspective children are seen as agents that are continuously interacting with their surrounding environment. They are experts in their own lives, with competence to communicate insights into their experiences and perspective, they are meaning makers, capable of influencing and interacting with the world around them (Clark & Moss 2001). However, children's agency is still often overlooked by adults, which is why it is vital that we consciously broaden our perspective when it comes to recognizing their agency.

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) specifies that children who are capable of forming their own views has the right to express them freely in all matters affecting them, and that the views of the children should be given importance. In Finland, the mission of the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2018) includes the promotion of children's holistic growth, the strengthening of children's participation and active agency in society, and the promotion of equality and equity among children and the prevention of their social exclusion. Therefore, as adults who are responsible for taking care of children, it is significant that we recognize and respect children's effort to practice their agency in everyday life situations, if we are bound to support their holistic development.

2.2 *Definitions of Friendship*

According to Corsaro (1985) the discovery of friendship is significant in children's acquisition of social knowledge. Both Howes (1983) and Öneren Şendil (2014) explain that as early as toddlerhood, children begin to differentiate among their peers and select particular companions as friends within peer groups. Rubin and colleagues (2015) consider "homophily" as the primary principle in the establishment of friendship in early childhood; meaning the concept of being attracted to others who are similar to them, in some regard. Dunn (2004; in Carter & Nutbrown, 2016) insists that aspects of friendship are greatly affected by the child's stage in the social development. However, within this vast definitions of friendship, significant perspectives from various disciplines needs to be reviewed.

Bagwell & Schmidt (2011) discuss the definition of friendship from a psychological perspective viewing friendship as a dyadic relationship that is commonly described as 'horizontal' relationship because the sense of equality is at its core, and it is also based on mutual affection or reciprocity of liking. From a sociological perspective, the definition of friendship is usually broad and marked by inclusiveness (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016). Sociologists examine how friendship is interpreted within a larger social structure and how factors such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status organize friendships (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011). Often, friends are assumed to be the peers with whom a child usually interacts, and friends often include small groups of peers in contrast to dyads only (Corsaro, 1985).

While Bagwell & Schmidt (2011) state that the primary contribution of the sociological approach to studying friendship is identifying friendship by how the children themselves define friendship. To avoid focusing only on the Western world, and taking a more global perspective, both Bell & Coleman (1999) and Bagwell and Schmidt (2011) state that anthropologists reject the idea of universal definition of friendship, rather they focus on how it develops in particular social and cultural contexts. Various studies agree that the anthropologists' definitions of friendship as a form of interaction, or an expression of affinity and togetherness, have enabled for different understandings of friendship across

cultures without imposing a set of specific criteria with which to define the relationship.

Considering my interest in children's peer culture, this research relates closely with the sociological perspective, in which friends are assumed to be someone that the child constantly interacts with in the group. Nevertheless, this study aims to withdraw from any general classification or definition of childhood friendship. Instead, I want to focus more on exploring and obtaining individual children's account of their experiences of friendship in a contextual way with respect to the active role of a child.

2.3 Friendship vs other social interaction

As previously stated, the aim of this study is to explore the 3 to 5- year-old children's experiences of friendship. Therefore, it must be apparent that the investigation focuses on friendship, instead of any other type of social interaction. Beazidou & Botsoglou (2016) consider peer acceptance and friendship as two of the most critical aspects of peer relation, with an interconnecting nature. They also suggest that peer acceptance can be one sided and consider it as a lower degree of emotional connection, as compared to friendship, which is voluntary and reciprocal while peer groups allow access to play and working partners in the classroom. Children also spend their time in a formal group setting where membership is not only defined by friendship (Rubin et al, 2005). Peer groups as described in various studies, often range in size from 3 to over 10 children, with an average of 5 or 6 members, and often comprise same-gender peers. This group may progress on the basis of dyadic social relationships and thus may be considered as a combination of relationships (Hinde, 1987, cited Rubin et al, 2005). Thus, it can be considered that friendship is a closer and more intimate kind of relationship as opposed to other social interaction.

2.4 Friendship: children's views and experiences

Earlier studies about children's friendship have mostly focused on adults' observations and interpretations. As previously stated, the aim of this study is to understand the children's views and experience of friendship by emphasizing the children's voice. In order to better understand children's views and experience of friendship, I consider recent significant studies that explored and revealed significant findings on how friendship is viewed and experienced by children of various ages.

Based on observing young children during play, Howes (2009) suggests that mutual friendship of infants and toddlers involves mutual affection, companionship, complementary play, and the prevalence of initiations towards and from particular peers were considered markers of friendship (Rubin and colleagues, 2015). Similarly, Engdahl (2012) suggests that during friendship interactions, very young children employ strategies such as observing, non-verbal gestures and approaching another child which is similar to older children. Their distinct actions include greeting another child, smiling, laughing, and giving each other hugs. Engdahl (2012) sees young children as social actors with motives, social preferences, and they are socially competent and capable of expressing themselves through various means of communication.

Much research has studied friendship along play, as it is an essential aspect of children's friendship. Rubin and colleagues (2015) believe that friendship activities of young children centers on play. For instance, "children play with their friends, and they develop friendship while playing" (Engdahl, 2012, p.86). Children participate in play with peers and friends. However, friendship adds a more profound experience, and enhances children's socioemotional competences (Engdahl, 2012).

Participatory research conducted with preschool children aged 4–6-year-olds claims that children are conscious social actors. Papadopoulou (2016) explains that children's social interactions and expressions of friendship involve a.) proximity, to be able to share and enjoy things together; b.) a 'territory', a physical space for friendship to dwell; c.) assumption of roles during interaction, such as becoming a leader or a follower; d.) children often implement friendship 'rules' to reason out or convince others during negotiations, arguments and fall-

outs; e.) friendship comes with privileges, such as receiving support, encouragement and being taken care; f.) complementary meshing, where roles are not the same but complementary, as opposed to those who are connected by their similarities.

Papadopoulou (2016) concludes that children are intrinsically determined to make and maintain friendships. They have the initiative to approach others, participate and share activities together, they understand the meaning of friendship and being a friend, through sharing, upholding the rules of friendship and reciprocity, they look after their friends, they are affectionate and able to understand the emotions of others (Papadopoulou, 2016). Consistent findings by Carter and Nutbrown (2016) indicate that “children’s peer culture include specific rules, routines, concerns, and practices” (p.402). Time and space are crucial, as children’s friendships are formed through shared activities and interactions and children spend great energy and effort in making and maintaining friendships (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016).

Bergnehr and colleagues (2020) and Øksnes and Greve (2015) agree with the notion that friendship is formed culturally, is socially situated and subjectively experienced. Although it is significant for some cultures to develop friendships along with caring for and respecting family members, some cultures stress on family or community relationships instead of extra familial friendships (Rubin et al., 2015). The study of Bergnehr and colleagues (2020) on the friendship formation of 12 refugee adolescent girls indicates that relatives and family members allow opportunities for friendship and socializing. Participants of the research collectively claimed that they appreciate and enjoy spending much of their time with families and other relatives, as opposed to friendship at school that were claimed to be treacherous and can potentially be appalling. Bergnehr and colleagues (2020) summarize the apparent potential for friendship between family members to have a more intimate type of relationship than friendships in school.

According to Korkiamäki and O’Dare (2021), intergenerational friendship or friendship between young and older people who are not related is consistent with a standard idea of friendship. In addition, it also includes caring qualities, enjoyment, belonging and inclusion in unconventional ways (Korkiamäki and O’Dare, 2021). While close intergenerational friendship has many benefits, it was

found to have the potential to hinder other relationships and the broadening of networks is not always guaranteed. Yet, this type of friendship is collectively viewed as an utmost meaningful social relationship by young people and a significant source of happiness and social connectedness by the older participants (Korkiamäki and O'Dare, 2021).

In conclusion, children's views and experiences of friendship seemed to vary across each developmental age. For instance, friendship interactions of very young children rely deeply on non-verbal gestures, while friendship between pre-school children is a bit more complex, as it comes with specific rules, concerns, and practices. Affinity and sameness or homophily are found to be a constant ground in the formation of friendship from a young age until adolescence. Moreover, family, and direct community may also determine the significance and overall quality of social interactions of children, including how they view and experience friendship.

3 METHODOLOGY

This qualitative phenomenological study involved six children of age three to five years old, from two separate daycares of Tampere, Finland, one bilingual (Finnish/English) and one exclusively English-speaking daycare. I have chosen these settings since I have been occasionally working as a substitute early childhood teacher assistant in these daycares during the past few years (2019-present). These children were randomly selected with the help of their teacher and according to my personal discretion of wanting to include boys and girls from different cultural backgrounds with different personality types (outspoken, shy, thoughtful, melancholic). It is also important to note that another aspect of the selection process was the children's ability to communicate and willingness to speak in English. Moreover, based on my limited skills in Finnish language, it meant that children who exclusively speak in Finnish were not considered to participate in this study.

The implementation of the methods in this study is done in cooperation with the teachers and children that was purposely designed to establish and build on their existing ways of working. I participated in and audio-recorded most of the activities and interviews. Utilizing a range of methods (mosaic approach), such as drawings, small-world play interviews, and photography were means to encourage children's expressions and efforts of communication.

3.1 *Mosaic Approach*

Mosaic approach was originally developed to effectively listen to and include children's voices. Aside from the traditional qualitative methods, the development of the research mainly involves children's direct participation. Clark and Moss (2001) devised a multi-method approach that outlines multiple voices, views, and opinions, in order to build with children a concept of their worlds. By

utilizing a range of methods, combined with conversations and observations, mosaic approach is claimed to be an efficient approach in gaining a better understanding of children's perspectives. Clark and Moss (2001) emphasize that the purpose of mosaic approach is not about obtaining the 'truth', but the chance to make meanings by allowing research participants to dwell on their views and experiences. With an agentic child construct, this study has employed a collection of methods (mosaic approach) that were chosen and tailored to each and every individual child's strength and needs.

3.2 Phenomenological Research

Phenomenological research involves information gathering that emphasizes on human life experiences. Drawing on perspectives in philosophy and psychology, researcher seeks to explain the lived experiences of the research participants regarding a phenomenon as they describe it (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The idea is to highlight the distinct aspects in order to identify phenomena by how they are being recognized by the research participants. Lester (1999) suggests that phenomenological approaches are centered on personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasizes the essence of individual perspective and interpretation. Through qualitative interviews, research participants can provide and expand on their explanations, making it a notable tool in understanding subjective experience, views, actions, as well as in inspecting usual assumptions and commonly accepted notions.

3.3 *Methods*

This phenomenological study adopted a range of methods that are child-appropriate and can be used individually and collectively, such as drawings, small world play interviews and photography. Variations and modifications were made according to the children's developmental age in order to accommodate their strengths and needs. These methods were carefully chosen and designed in order to allow the children's voices to be heard and gave various opportunities for the children to express themselves and their friendship experiences. This selection of methods was based on the notion of a socially competent child, who is capable, and has the agency to participate (Clark & Moss 2001).

3.4 *Data Collection*

Data collection took place at two daycares, in three separate days. Allowing approximately two hours a day for each activity. These are the following methods:

- 1.) drawing: a child was asked to imagine and draw 'a day with friends', while being encouraged and interviewed at the same time by the researcher.
- 2.) small world play interviews: 2 children were invited to play with miniature figures (dinosaur toys), while being interviewed with semi-structured questions by the researcher.
- 3.) photography: 3 children were provided with cameras, and were asked to take photos of others whom they consider as friends and the things that they like to do with their friends (the researcher assisted with the manipulation of cameras, as needed). After they have taken the photos, the children were interviewed one-by-one in order to gain their thoughts. The photos along with the children's thoughts were collectively analyzed.
- 4.) interviews: as an overall method, all of the involved in this study children were interviewed with semi-structured interviews in order to gain better understanding of their views.

3.5 *Small World Play Interview*

Children's play has been described as freely chosen, actively engaging, opportunistic, pleasurable, creative, and concerned more with means than ends (Ashiabi, 2007; Sturgess, 2003, Pyle & Danniels, 2017). Inspired by the role-play method, 'small world play method' (Clark & Moss, 2001) uses role play figures that are often familiar to children (Carter & Nutbrown, 2016). By participating in children's play, researchers can share authority with children and, in so doing, raise and explore the range of issues that are important to them (Mukherji & Albon, 2018, 326). Children in this study were invited to play with a set of dinosaur toys to answer semi-structured questions about their thoughts and experiences of friendship. The dinosaur toys were utilized considering the children's interest as suggested by their teacher.

3.6 *Drawings*

Drawing is common and often favored activity by the children in the early childhood setting. As a meaning-making activity, drawing is positioned in the sociocultural contexts which have communicative potential, (Papandreou, 2014). Carter & Nutbrown (2016) suggest that "drawings can help children to make sense of the world and express their thoughts and feelings in relation to a particular phenomenon; something often explored further depending on what children say about their drawings" (p.399). Drawing can "serve as a means for recalling and expressing previous experiences and knowledge, elaborating new information, and organizing all the above" (Papandreou, 2014, p.93). In situations in which children are unable to communicate emotions verbally, drawing allows a containment of the feelings that may otherwise be contradictory, confusing, or difficult to say with words (Malchiodi, 1998 in Looman, 2016). Although not all children are interested in drawing, the child in this study was encouraged, and not any way forced to participate.

3.7 Photography

Mukherji & Albon (2018) cite the work of Cook and Hess (2007) to highlight the benefits of using cameras. They suggest that a.) using cameras is an engaging strategy for children; b.) acceptable results can be produced by young children with modern equipment; and c.) as young children are able to operate many modern cameras, they are able to be in control of what they take pictures of. As the resulting pictures are likely to reflect the children's interests and concerns d.) using photographs is more tangible strategy than direct interviewing, particularly if the topic under discussion is complex or abstract, an important point to consider in research with young children; e.) photographs enable the researcher to return to a topic at a later date as they act as visual prompt for the children; f.) photographs can be used when writing up a research project, making the resulting work accessible and interesting to children as well (p.321).

After the photography activity session, the children were encouraged to discuss their thoughts about the pictures they have taken and share them with the researcher. Supplementary research interview questions were asked for the purpose of this study.

3.8 Interviews

In the past, children were seen as socially incapable, and interviewing them was considered to be challenging and uncomfortable by some researchers (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016). However, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNRC) that was adopted by the United Nations in 1989 brought about the development and value of listening to the children (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). According to O'Reilly and Dogra (2016), interviewing children and young people may provide an abundance of interesting information, as a technique it allows direct engagement with the child and gives the researcher opportunities to verify children's understanding of the questions, it allows to build rapport with children and an opportunity to look over more sensitive issues.

In this study, I opted to utilize a semi-structured interview with the children in order to be more flexible and optimize the data collection. Semi-structured interview questions are more fluid, as they only consist of few predetermined questions and the rest are unplanned. Unplanned questions were asked according to the flow of the conversations to support the predetermined interview questions. This is done as means to engage children and give room for them to fully express themselves. The list of predetermined questions is attached in Appendix 1.

3.9 Documentation

Data gathered in this study of was documented through notes and audio-recording parts of the interviews, description of the drawing, transcribing small-world play interview, and as photos from photography sessions. I only transcribed parts of the recorded data that I thought to be relevant in the subject of this inquiry. Reviewing the drawing, photos, audio recordings, and the semi-structured interview notes were necessary in the final transcription of the data. Photos containing children's faces in the photography sessions were deleted from the tablets after the transcription to protect the children's privacy.

Name	Sex	Age
Raya	F	4
Aino	F	5
Mark	M	3
Eetu	M	3
Hiro	M	5
Hunar	M	5

Method	Context
Drawings	Individual (Raya)
Small-world Play Interview	Pair (Mark and Eetu)
Photography	Group (Hiro, Hunar, Aino)

3.10 Data Analysis

The data analysis of this phenomenological study is in line with other traditional qualitative approaches. These are the steps I followed: 1.) I analyzed the drawing and the photographs. To make meaning out of the drawing, I engaged with the child in a participatory manner by asking her to describe and explain the drawing to me right after it was completed to improve the process of analyzing and understanding the drawing. I carried out the same process with the photos and the children in the group. 2.) Then, I transcribed all the collected data, by reviewing the drawing, photos, and interviews notes, I listened to the audio recordings multiple times, in order to check if I missed any details during the conversations, and then I gradually redeveloped the collected written notes. 3.) I then organized the data to develop an overview and understanding of the

transcripts. 4.) I labelled the collected written notes, then arranged them into categories and sub-categories. 5.) I deduced the categories based on their commonalities and connected them to the literature. And the last step, 6.) I formed interpretations, and linked them to the aim of this study.

The initial plan was to include the children's view and interpretations in the analysis and writing up the data as I thought it was important that the children and I should share the same view of the analyzed data. However, due to the lack of opportunity during the collection of data, along with the almost rigid schedule in the setting, I was not able to do so. The teacher's view on the analyzed data would have also been instrumental as she has more knowledge about the children and could have provided more relevant information, but for the same reasons teacher's views were also not included.

3.11 Ethics

Ethical conduct across the study was in accordance with Finnish National Board on Research (TENK), wherein participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Children were invited to join according to their free choice. This study elicited the children's consent orally, in writing, or when their behavior suggested otherwise it was interpreted to mean that they have given consent to participate. As "children must be treated equally and as individuals and must be allowed to influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development" (TENK, 2009, p. 6). They were informed about the nature of the study, as well as its purpose. Utilization of generated data such as drawings and photos were subjected to the children's approval.

This study included a concerted effort to maintain a balance between protecting the children and encouraging them. In consideration with the children's vulnerability, it is important to avoid the misuse of adult power. Children were not forced, in fact when one of the children refused to participate in the activity session, his decision was instantly respected, and his participation was replaced with a willing participant. Information was provided to the target institution regarding nature of the study. The institution was provided with the following details: 1) the researcher's contact information, 2) the research topic, 3) the

method of collecting data and the estimated time required, 4) the purpose for which data will be collected, and 5) the voluntary nature of participation (TENK, 2009, p.7). Rest assured that in this study, the protection of the subjects' privacy was a priority. As well as making sure that the data collected will be stored for this research purposes only.

3.12 Data management plan

According to Tampere Higher Education Community's DMP Guidelines, data management plan is a document that describes how the researcher will manage data during and after the conduct of research. The plan must indicate the general description of data, ethical and legal compliance, documentation, and storage and back up during the research project, the publishing and archiving the data after the research project, and the data management responsibilities. While The Finnish National Board on Research (TENK) suggest that the data management plan must describe 1) how data identifiers will protected or removed; 2) if a pledge of confidentiality will be required during processing of personal data; and 3) the plan for archiving, reusing or destroying of personal data and after the study has been completed.

Data collected in this study was used for this bachelor's thesis purpose only. As needed, it was shared within the research group and thesis supervisor. It was stored in the researcher's personal computer and will be deleted and destroyed upon the approval of this thesis. Data containing identifiers of the participants were removed in accordance with the Finnish National Board on Research (TENK) guidelines.

4 CHILDREN'S VIEWS OF FRIENDSHIP

The aim of this study was to provide insight on the children views and experience of friendship, based on their own narrative. According to Van Manen (qtd. in Carter& Nutbrown, 2016) understanding the nature of phenomenology requires “a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience” (p.401). It was significant that I acknowledged and reflected upon my preconceptions and assumptions as they influence the interpretative process (Engdahl, 2012).

Children's deliberate expressions

The children in this study demonstrated their own concept and emotional understanding in regard to friendship. Their views and experiences of friendship involve aspects that are quite often unknown to us adults. These views and experiences are discussed here under 7 themes developed from the interpretation of data: (i) Friendship rules: Fairness, (ii) Mutual affection and homophily, (iii) Language (iv) Space, and proximity, (v) Friendship amongst siblings, (vi) Play and friendship, and (vii) Friendship as a continuous act.

4.1 Friendship rules: Fairness

I have been working with most of the children involved in this study before the implementation of the data collection. Therefore, I am familiar with most of them. To my knowledge, Raya, Elea and Lotta have all been occasionally doing the same kind of activities and spending time together, suggesting that at some

point, they may have considered each other as friends. It is important to discuss the nature of their relationship, in order to have a better understanding of what Raya has shared in *transcript 1*. Raya shared a significant event where she renounced her friendship with Lotta.

(*Transcript ,1*)

R: Raya do you have friends here in the daycare?

RA: Yes. Elea. Just Elea.

R: Was there a time when you feel like you don't have any friends? How did you feel?

RA: (Silent for a bit while working on her drawing) I feel bad.

R: Why would you feel bad?

RA: Because Elea is not my friend.

RA: Lotta cut my hair here (showing her hair), she is not my friend. I want to be my brother's friend.

R: What happened? Why did she cut your hair?

RA: Uhmm. I don't know. We were playing, Elea and me. We are here, (referring to the interview kitchen/playroom) she came here.

R: And then?

RA: I told her "ei saa tulla tänne" (you are not allowed to come here). Then she came and cut my hair. She is not my friend.

R: Oh no. but why is she not allowed to come here?

RA: Because me and Elea are playing. She is not my friend. She can't play with us.

R: Maybe she was mad because you did not let her play with you?

RA: I don't know.

In the described situation, it is not known whether there has been an altercation or not between Raya and Lotta. However, she was certain about the reason of her dismay. During the interview, Raya was most of the time straightforward about her thoughts. She was able to express relevant feelings and understanding about what friends should do or not do. Moreover, she understands that friends should not just randomly cut one's hair without

permission, and that Lotta acted unfairly. Thus, causing her to disown their friendship.

According to Papadopoulou (2016) children's friendship involves a system of rules, and the idea of 'fairness'. Arguments involving the lack of fairness may sometimes lead to threats of potentially terminating friendship or actually leading to the end of friendship. In line with Raya's understanding that friendship includes the element of fairness. She decided to renounce her friendship with Lotta. As she believes it was not fair for Lotta to cut her hair. She understands that friendship is based on rules of fairness, and that those involved in the relationship should appropriately follow this, including Lotta. Therefore, it can be claimed that children's friendship involves fairness that may function as a basis of an appropriate friendship behavior.

4.2 Mutual affection and homophily

Hiro displayed a great sense of affinity to his friends during the photography session. As he entered the interview room when the allotted time for taking pictures was over, he happily flipped through the pictures he has taken, and showed them to the researcher with a grin on his face. When asked why he took numerous pictures of his friends' faces, he claimed: "*I like to picture Mikko and Ville face, so funny (laughing)*" (transcript, 6).

The numerous pictures of his friends' faces taken by Hiro, as well as his demeanor during the interview can be interpreted as attraction to his friends. Mutual affection according to Rubin and colleagues as mentioned earlier, is a connection or relation between two partners that comes primarily from socio-emotional motives. Hiro also expressed how he liked doing the same activities with his friends, such as painting and playing. Doing the same kind of activities and playing are also in line with the statements of these children.

Hunar claimed he builds lego with his friends:

(transcript, 2)

H: I build many things with lego, like buildings, cars, house.

R: Do you build it alone or with others?

H: Alone sometimes. Sometimes I build them with my friends.

Mark despite being thousands of miles from his friends, wants to play them:

(transcript, 4)

R: What are you going to do when you are with your friends?

M: just play.

Researchers have suggested that fundamental to children's friendship is the principle of 'liking' and 'liking to spend time together', as well as the concept of homophily. Homophily is the idea that individuals are drawn to others who are similar to them, young children for instance, drawn to others who are interested in similar play behavior and prefer similar activities and materials (Rubin and colleagues, 2016). For instance, Hiro shows his affection to his friends by taking pictures of their faces, Hunar and his friends shares the same interest with lego. Mark, who despite being separated from his friends, was still looking forward to playing with them. The children in this study displayed affinity towards their friends, as well as their desire to spend time with them and engage in or imagine in doing mutually liked activities. Thus, supporting the idea that young children's friendship involves mutual affection and connection with similar others or homophily.

4.3 Language

Hunar revealed how he became friends with Bert, Alex, and Joey, and how his inability to speak Finnish might have been a hindrance for him to connect or make friends with other children.



(Image, 1) Lego

(Transcript, 2)

H: I build many things with lego, like buildings, cars, house.

R: Do you build it alone or with others?

H: Alone sometimes. Sometimes I build them with my friends.

R: Which friends?

H: Bert, Alex, and Joey.

R: How did you became friends with them.

H: I speak English with them.

R: How about the other kids?

H: They speak Finnish

R: Do you speak Finnish?

H: Uhmm. No.

It was approximately a year before this study when I first met Hunar, a week after he came to the daycare. He did not speak or understand Finnish as he and his family has only recently migrated to Finland. Back then he was reserved and often played alone by himself. He has a good command in English but usually answers only with a few words during conversations. Nowadays, he is still timid when talking to adults, but has become a bit more interactive with other children. He also gained a few friends that he constantly spends time with.

Hunar's friends, Bert, Alex, and Joey are all with migrant backgrounds, and are unable to communicate in Finnish.

Language use is required in most social interactions (Titzmann, & Silbereisen, 2009). It has proven to have a notable application in friendships, considering that friends are talking more with each other, as compared to non-friends (Durkin, & Conti-Ramsden, 2007). Initially after moving to Finland, Hunar struggled to connect with other children in the daycare, as he was unable to speak Finnish. However, he was able to get along and make friends with children who speak English. On this account, it can be claimed that language played a major role in Hunar's experience of friendship. Moreover, it seems he was seeking the friendship of those who are in similar situations, being migrants and Finnish as their non-mother-tongue language. Therefore, language is prerequisite to every social interaction, such as children's friendship and is playing a key role in making and keeping friends.

4.4 Space and proximity

In this study, Aino showed how she and her friend utilize and organize their space in order to secure their space in the daycare. She explained how she and Viivi organize the space where the table is using pillows and blankets. Aino claimed that only her, Viivi and sometimes Mikko are allowed in their shelter, since the space is tight and only three children can fit in there.



(Image, 2) The table

(Transcript, 3)

R: Lisa. Why do you have a picture of the table?

L: The table of is not yet ready, but it is maja (shelter), I play there with Viivi.

R: How is it a maja (shelter)?

L: Me and Viivi, we need to put peito (blanket) and tyyny (pillow) in there and build maja.

R: Okay. Then what do you do with it?

L: That is where we play!

R: So... you and Viivi and who else?

L: I don't know. Sometimes Mikko.

R: What about the other kids?

L: Ei. Se on piene (No. It is small). Only three can fit there.

During the interview, Aino expressed territorial feelings over the space that she creates with Viivi. She claimed it was only for her and Viivi and perhaps Mikko, as if that she did not want other children except for her friends to be there as long as they are there. According to Papadopoulou (2016), children create spaces that are often distinguished from the rest of the room or playground, including physical obstacles that create a distinct separation between the inside and outside space, a separate space between friends and non-friends. In a similar way, Aino and her friends value their space, which allows them a sense of privacy and exclusivity, and coziness for their friendship.

The temporary loss of connection with his friends is significant for Mark. He expressed his feelings about being separated from them the following way.

(Transcript, 4)

M: Wait a minute, when I was a baby, daddy, Cody (brother), mommy and baby Mark went to the dinosaurs, and then they went to the t-rex, and then baby Mark got scared.

R: What did baby Mark do when he got scared?

M: Uhhhh. The family went back home, and then Baby Mark is not scared anymore.

R: That's good to hear. But what about your friends, can you tell me who they are?

M: Kenny, Jack and John.

R: Where are they?

M: They are in Canada, waiting for Cody (brother), me and daddy.

R: When are you going back to Canada

M: Ummmh.

R: What are you going to do when you are with your friends?

M: just play.

R: Okay, but how does it feel being so far away from your friends?

M: A little sad, and angry and happy.

R: Why do you think you are sad and angry?

M: Because I cannot play with them.

R: What do you think is the best thing about having friends?

M: Playing with gummies.

R: Can you tell me how do you make friends?

M: Play with them.

It seems that Mark's perception of a friend is someone who waits for the other friend. He was assured that his friends who are living in a different country are waiting for him to come back. When asked where his friends were, Mark said: *They are in Canada, waiting for Cody (his brother), me and daddy (transcript,4)*. During the play interview, he was not only able to verbally communicate his feelings with regards to being separated from his friends, his facial expression also appeared consistent with his statements. He revealed his feelings regarding the distance between him and his friends, as claimed in his statement "*A little sad, and angry and happy*", simultaneously looking outside the window with a momentary frown on his face.

Papadopoulou (2016) believes that children's friendship involves physical proximity, sharing the same activities and communicating ideas and experiences. Being one's friend involves being together physically, doing the same tasks, talking to each other, and sharing activities and ideas. Mark shared

how he likes to spend time and share specific activities with his friends. However, he and his friends were unable to be together for a long time, and he expressed to be struggling with his feelings, maybe even concerned to be able to maintain their friendship. This indicates that migrating to another country may have been challenging for Mark, his brother, and their friends in maintaining their friendship. Hence, it supports the previous concept that space and proximity are significant elements of children's friendship.

4.5 Friendship amongst siblings

Raya demonstrated genuine affinity and closeness with her brother. The previous conversation with Mark (*transcript, 4*) also suggests that he and his brother are almost in the same social relationship, and could possibly share the same closeness as they share the same group of friends. The same friends that he was certain to be waiting for him and his brother.

Raya openly discussed about her emotional attachment with his brother and how much she desires to be his friend. Which she elaborated in her drawing.



(Image, 3) A Day with friends

“This is my brother Awan, he is eating chocolate. We are so happy! I am eating ice cream with my friends; I have red teeth and yellow hair. Here is alien, here is Elea (friend), Elea is angry to alien. Lotta cut my hair here (showing her hair), she is not my friend. I want to be my brother's friend, I love my brother”.
(Raya)

Raya appeared to have a distinct affinity with his brother. She spoke of his brother numerous times during the interview, while drawing, and after it was completed (*transcript, 1*). Previous knowledge and observation of the siblings indicates that a close and dyadic friendship is evident between them. For instance, Raya speaks about the activities that she shares with his brother outside the daycare, such as playing together at home, visiting their friends house, and sharing the same food interest. His brother Awan likes to make arts and crafts for her and their parents, he also speaks about how much he loves Raya. Moreover, they were often seen playing/interacting with each other in the playground before pick-up time. Therefore, it can be interpreted that a close relationship and possibly friendship exist between Raya and his brother Awan.

Through their personal networks, parents and other family members can provide friendship opportunities (Shih, 1998; Smith et al., 2014, cited in Bergnehr, 2020, p.538). These opportunities for friendship are usually brought about by spending a significant amount of time at home together with family members. The obvious mutual affinity between Raya and his brother Awan, as well as the relationship between Mark, his brother and their friends indicate friendship between them. This supports earlier studies that friendship can indeed occur between siblings.

4.6 *Play and friendship*

The children in this study shared how they spend time in shared activities with their friends. While some of them mentioned pleasant activities, such as coloring, watching TV and eating, most of the children pointed out play as their favored activity.

For instance, Eetu was able to share how he spends time with his friends and how he makes friends with others.

(*Transcript, 5*)

E: Look this. It's flying! It's a pterodactyl.

R: Yes, it is flying. Does the pterodactyl have any friends?

E: No.

R: How does it make friends then?

E: Play airplane and castles.

R: What about you? Do you have friends?

E: Mark, Remo, and Rey?

R: How does it feel to have friends?

E: Happy.

R: Was there a time when you feel like you don't have any friends?

E: Yes. Saturday.

R: What happened last Saturday?

E: Because I was with my mommy.

R: Ohhh. How did it make you feel then?

E: Sad.

R: Can you tell me how do you spend time with your friends?

E: We play castles and airplanes.

Eetu was very engaged during the dinosaur play-interview. Many times, he used non-verbal play invitations in order to get the attention of Mark, as well as me. It was apparent from the conversations and dinosaur-play observation that play is not only something that Eetu enjoys doing with his friends, but it also seemed like a strategy for him to connect with other children or in best cases gain friends. Most of the children in this study considered play as a favored activity to share with friends, as well as a strategy in order to gain friends.

As Rubin and colleagues argue, much of children's friendship activities involve play and that it is an integral part of children's friendship. Engdahl (2012) goes as far as arguing that studies on children's friendship are deeply connected with play, "as children play with their friends, and they develop friendship while playing" (p.86). The children in this study shared different roles and applications of play with regards to their friendship, including play signaling, play as a favored spontaneous activity that is shared between friends, an exclusive territory/space that can only be accessed by those whom they considered as friends, and a tool that can be utilized in order to gain more friends. The findings in this study support previous evidence that play is an essential aspect of children's friendship.

4.7 *Friendship as a continuous act*

The children in this study shared various distinctive aspects of their friendship. Enjoying the same things and spending time together is not just a one-time occurrence for the five-year-old Hiro and his friends of the same age. He is aware of the friendship he shares with his friends, which they established since he was four years old. Upon entering the interview room, Hiro happily flipped through his pictures and showed them to me.

(*Transcript, 6*)

S: I like to picture Mikko and Ville face, so funny (laughing).

R: Why are you friends with Ville and Mikko?

S: Because we like to paint and something else.

R: Like what? What else do you do with your friends?

S: I don't know, I paint here (interview room/playroom) and then go there painting (pointing to the bigger activity room) ...and then play.

R: When did you become friends with Ville and Mikko?

S: uhm... four (showing his four fingers).

R: When you were four (years old). Was there a time when you stopped being friends with them?

S: No.

R: Okay. But was there a time when you feel like you don't have any friends?

S: Yes! When I was in Japan. I don't have friends.

R: How did you feel then?

S: I feel sad.

Hiro demonstrated an understanding of what it feels like to have friends as opposed to not having them. He identified his friends from his peer group and talked about the activities that he shares with them. Most importantly, he was aware of the duration of their friendship, which has been going on for a year now. As he claimed it, their friendship has started since he was just four years old until now that he is five. The previous conversation with Mark, who believes that his friends are waiting for him (*transcript, 4*) shows how he understands friendship,

and the challenge that he and his friends are facing in order to maintain their friendship. The conversations with these children fittingly suggest that friendship is not just something that exist, instead it is something that they continuously do or perform.

In making and maintaining friendships, children often take initiatives, participate in and share activities, they negotiate and interact according to their understanding of what a friend is (Papadopoulou, 2016). The children in this study showed their own understanding and experiences of friendship. The result of this study suggests that children's friendship is not only limited to making friends, but they are also actively performing and are eager to maintain their friendships. Hence, friendship is not just something that occurs, rather it is a continuous act that is performed by the children themselves.

Overall, the analysis of the data revealed 7 distinct aspects on how children view and experience friendship: a.) children's friendship involves rules that must be upheld in order to maintain the relationship; b.) the children showed significant affection towards their friends, and that they are often drawn to others who shares the same interest as them, and like to do the same things together; c.) that language is essential in all forms of social interaction including children's friendship; d.) the children are strategically utilizing space for their friendship, and that proximity is necessary for the friendship to thrive; e.) there is an inherent possibility for siblings to be friends f.) play is central to the children's friendship activities; and g.) that children's friendship is a continues act, as it needs constant effort from the children.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 *Summary*

The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (2018) highlights the value of strengthening children's participation, active agency, and the children's rights to express themselves, their opinions, and thoughts, as well as the right to be understood in their different ways of communicating. Therefore, it is crucial that the children's efforts are being observed and recognized if we are determined to hear their voice and include them in the society. The objective of this study was to provide insight into the children's accounts of their friendship experiences. Previous research on this subject indicated that, children are active agents, eager learners who are constantly involved and capable of constructing their own social world and their place in it (Corsaro, 2017).

This study supports the claims of previous studies, such as that children's friendship is complex, with specific rules, routines, and practices, and involves mutual affection and homophily. The children involved in this study showed obvious affection towards their friends. Most of them reported sameness or liking the same things or liking to do the same things together, such as playing, painting, coloring etc. They are eager to make friends, strive to maintain their friendship, and enjoy spending time together. They interact with their friends most of their time in daycare and yearn for the company of those who are far away from them. And despite the presence of conflict and often temporary dismissal of friendships, having friends was found to be valuable for the children involved in this study.

The overall findings of this study revealed various aspects of how children view and experience friendship, which provide further evidence that children are

socially competent individuals participating in their own social world and create their own culture. The children in this study proved to be capable of expressing their views, experience, and emotions about friendship. They have their own understanding of friendship, which makes them experts of their own lives. The aspects mentioned in this study is consistent with adult friendship. Many researchers agree that adult friendship includes affects such as mutual affection, intimacy, and appreciation. It also mostly involves homophily as it engages shared interests, experiences as well as compatibility. However, children and their friendship are still often overlooked by the adults not just in the daycare and schools, but in society in general. Children's views and experiences are either dismissed or neglected.

As adults, we all have different images of children, which include stereotypes and dichotomies. Lahman discusses common adult expressions that illustrate how children are the 'othered' in the child/adult relationship, including 'dichotomized terms' such as 'large/tiny, developing/developed, mature/immature, majority/minority, grown/growing' (2008, p. 282). According to Lahman (2008) adult memory often causes the othering of children by the adults. She believes that while all adults have experience of being a child, our childhood memories are unreliable as they are constantly being reconstructed. Lahman cited the work Thorne (1993) who believes that as adults, we are inclined to use our memory, and the child within us in order to understand our positioning and views of children. However, the use of these childhood memories is risky, as these memories are unreliable and may be problematic. Since not all of our childhood experiences are always pleasant or innocent. Therefore, we must remember to be cautious in utilizing these childhood memories or inner child when trying to understand children, their views, and their friendship. This means that ECEC educators should constantly examine how they view children and their friendship, as these views are directly affect their daily practices in the field.

Many times, I have seen children cry when being dropped off by their parents in daycare, and instantly stop when they see their friends welcoming, smiling, and waving at them. I have always considered children as socially competent individuals, but my concept of their friendship was not close to what I have learned from this study. This bachelor's thesis made me recognize the richness of children's peer culture. I realized that friendship is not just something

that children do, rather it is something that they consider to be of great importance. As they constantly strive to make and maintain their friendship, often eager to spend their time with their friends and long for their company. Moreover, I am reminded of how and why children value their space, or the space where their friendship lives. In my relatively short time working with children, I realized how unaware I was of my practices. For instance, on more than one occasion I have asked children to let the others join their private play spaces, without knowing about their desire to protect it. On this account, I believe that knowledge, awareness, and willingness to improve our practices are the key in supporting children's friendship and overall development.

According to Carter and Nutbrown (2016) children's friendship directly influences their school life. It affects the children's socioemotional competency as well as their academic performance. Therefore, it is significant for early childhood educators to be aware of their role in supporting children's friendship. They must be familiar and mindful of children's peer culture and practices. Early childhood educators must learn how the children view and experience friendship and why it is important. This also means that educators must develop their skills and practices including their ability to make sound judgement as a means to support children and their friendship.

Drawing on this study, I suggest for Early childhood practitioners to spend time observing and listening to children. They must learn about how children do friendships, appreciate their efforts in making and maintaining their friendship, provide support and opportunities for the children's friendship to dwell, respect their agency and to further understand the value of children's friendship experience in relation to their socio-emotional and cognitive development. They must effectively support children and their friendship experience in the daycare, and their overall development in the highest attainable standard possible.

5.2 Significance and Limitations

It is hoped that the results in this study will improve our view of children and their friendship, as well as to promote the value of listening to them. That will in turn improve the support of children's friendship experience in the daycare.

This research has limitations. For instance, the setting of the data collection presented a challenge during the implementation of activities. As the children were taken out from their usual schedule in the daycare, some of them were a bit confused and reluctant. One child even withdrew from the study. Another concern involves the analysis and interpretation of the data. As I have planned to involve the children during this process in order to have a common understanding and interpretation when writing up the analysis. However, due to much unexpected circumstances, I was not able to reach the children in time for the analysis. The teacher's view of data should have been included as she has more knowledge about the children and could have provided relevant suggestions and information. I also strongly suggest involving the children and ECEC practitioners in the analysis and interpretation of data.

Moreover, this study only involved six children, which is indeed a small sample. Thus, I cannot make a claim of their perspectives as representative of all 3-5-year-old children.

REFERENCES

- Bagwell, C., & Schmidt, M. (2011). *Friendships in Childhood and Adolescence*. Guilford Publications.
- Beazidou, E., & Botsoglou, K. (2016). Peer acceptance and friendship in early childhood: the conceptual distinctions between them. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186(10), 1615–1631. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2015.1117077>
- Bergnehr, Aronson, O., & Enell, S. (2020). Friends through school and family: Refugee girls' talk about friendship formation. *Childhood (Copenhagen, Denmark)*, 27(4), 530–544. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568220923718>
- Carter, C., & Nutbrown, C. (2016). A Pedagogy of Friendship: young children's friendships and how schools can support them. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 24(4), 395–413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2016.1189813>
- Corsaro, W. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Ablex.
- Clark, & Moss, P. (2001). *Listening to young children: The mosaic approach*. National Children's Bureau u.a.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc
- Durkin, & Conti-Ramsden, G. (2007). Language, Social Behavior, and the Quality of Friendships in Adolescents With and Without a History of Specific Language Impairment. *Child Development*, 78(5), 1441–1457. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01076.x>
- Engdahl. (2012). Doing friendship during the second year of life in a Swedish preschool. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 20(1), 83–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2012.650013>
- Korkiamäki, & O'dare, C. E. (2021). Intergenerational friendship as a conduit for social inclusion? Insights from the “book-ends.” *Social Inclusion*, 9(4), 304–314. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4555>

- Leinonen, J., Brotherus, A., & Venninen T. (2014). *Children's Participation in Finnish Pre-School Education - Identifying, Describing and Documenting Children's Participation*
- Lester, S. (1999). *An introduction to phenomenological research*. Stan Lester Developments, Taunton. <http://www.sld.demon.co.uk/resmethy.pdf>
- Lahman. (2008). always Othered: ethical research with children. *Journal of Early Childhood Research : ECR*, 6(3), 281–300.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X08094451>
- Looman, W. S. (2006). A Developmental Approach to Understanding Drawings and Narratives From Children Displaced by Hurricane Katrina. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 20(3), 158–166.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedhc.2006.01.008>
- Mukherji, P., & Albon, D. (2018). *Research methods in early childhood: An introductory guide*. Sage.
- National Advisory Board on Research Ethics Helsinki (2009). *Ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioural sciences and proposals for ethical review*.
- National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2018*. (2019). Finnish National Agency for Education.
- O'Reilly, M., & Dogra, N. (2016). *Interviewing children and young people for research*. SAGE Publications.
- Öneren Şendil, E. (2014). Peer preference: a way of evaluating social competence and behavioural well-being in early childhood. *Early Child Development and Care*, 184(2), 230–246.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.778254>
- Papadopoulou. (2016). The “space” of friendship: young children's understandings and expressions of friendship in a reception class. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186(10), 1544–1558.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2015.1111879>
- Papandreou, M. (2014). Communicating and Thinking Through Drawing Activity in Early Childhood. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 28(1), 85–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2013.851131>

- Pufall, & Unsworth, R. P. (2004 Rethinking childhood).. Rutgers University Press
- Pyle, A., & Danniels, E. (2017). A Continuum of Play-Based Learning: The Role of the Teacher in Play-Based Pedagogy and the Fear of Hijacking Play. *Early Education and Development*, 28(3), 274–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2016.1220771>
- Rubin, K. H., Coplan, R., Chen, X., Buskirk, A. A., & Wojslawowicz, J. C. (2005). *Peer relationships in childhood*.
- Rubin, K. H., Wimsatt, M. A., Heverly-Fitt, S., & Barstead, M. G. (2015). *Friendship During Infancy and Early Childhood and Cultural Variations*.
- Titzmann, & Silbereisen, R. K. (2009). Friendship Homophily Among Ethnic German Immigrants: A Longitudinal Comparison Between Recent and More Experienced Immigrant Adolescents. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23(3), 301–310. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015493>

6 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions

How do you spend time with a friend?

How do you feel when you are with a friend?

When do you consider someone as your friend?

What are your favorite activities with your friends that you don't do with non-friends?

What is the best part about having friends?

Do you have any expectations towards your friends? What would be those be?

How do you make friends?

Was there a time when you stopped being friends with someone? What happened? What happens after?

Was there a time when you feel like you don't have any friends? How did you feel?