Conversations Storied: Meeting New Students Who Arrive Carrying a Suitcase of Memories and a Backpack Over-Stuffed With Emotions

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Elann Marie McChesney

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Elann Marie McChesney, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Psychology, has presented a thesis titled, *Conversations Storied: Meeting New Students Who Arrive Carrying a Suitcase of Memories and a Backpack Over-Stuffed With Emotions*, in an oral examination held on August 10, 2016. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

**External Examiner:** Dr. Robin Adeney, Analyst, Universities and Private Vocational Schools Branch, Advanced Education

**Co-Supervisor:** Dr. Paul Hart, Faculty of Education

**Co-Supervisor:** Dr. Marc Spooner, Faculty of Education

**Committee Member:** Dr. Val Mulholland, Faculty of Education

**Committee Member:** Dr. Valerie Triggs, Faculty of Education

**Chair of Defense:** Dr. Abu Bockarie, Faculty of Education
Abstract

Welcoming new students into schools and classrooms is a common occurrence in the lives of Canadian educators. The profile of the new student varies as does the reason for the school move. Some students may make many school changes; some students may only move once. Regardless of the reason or number of moves, they will all experience being the new student.

This research study seeks to inquire into the experience of being a new student and opens with my own experience of a school move in the third grade. Literature is presented about mobility and considerations for researching with children. To better understand the experience of being a new student I met with five participants ranging in ages from 8–15 and engaged in conversation with them. I asked the participants what was helpful or not helpful for them as they sought to navigate their new school environment. In addition to our conversation, two of the participants chose to illustrate their first day experience. These participants indicated that this first day was not easy and had suggestions as to how to make the first day experience better.

The purpose of this study is to help those of us who work with young people reflect on our practice, on our attitudes, and how we welcome new students into our classrooms. Suggestions from the research and children’s ideas are provided; however they are not answers, as each situation is unique.

Keywords: narrative, mobility, education
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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my family who have cared for me during my time of writing this thesis. To my parents David and Lois McChesney, whose love has been manifested in so many ways—words of encouragement, offers to help and packages of food. I am indebted. To my siblings Michelle McChesney-Kelln, and Ferlin McChesney who have also shown love and care. I also wish to express gratitude to Michelle for her support and proof-reading.

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Prologue: The Journey of a Teacher in a Masters Program With a T-Shirt Which Reads, “Not All Who Wander Are Lost.”

I didn’t enter graduate work knowing that I wanted to be a researcher or with a passion about a certain topic other than my passion to make connections with children of all ages. I enrolled because I was literally picked off the street by my former psychology professor who said to me, “We need people like you in this field.” At the time I had returned from three years of teaching primary children in South America—I was a wanderer and I was lost. The proverbial doors of the place I called home were not opening for me, so, her words led me to realize there were other openings elsewhere for me to pursue.

Initially, mine was a goal which seemed simple; get my Masters degree in Educational Psychology and move once more from the city I referred to as home. You see, I knew if I wanted to teach internationally again, I needed my masters in order to compete for jobs in the big schools. Thankfully I love studying, so while it may seem to be a flippant thought, it certainly wasn’t, as my innate curiosity presides over me. Three years before, I had enrolled and dropped out of a foreign master’s program because I discovered it demanded less than my undergraduate degree. Clearly, it was not the academic challenge that I was seeking.

The chance meeting on the street with my former psychology professor came with an invitation to join one of the classes she was teaching the upcoming Fall on the psychology of learning. When Fall arrived I took up the offer, sat in on the class and became an active participant—presenting, writing, sharing and reading the
required texts. One text I connected to was, *Educating for Wisdom and Compassion: Creating Conditions for Timeless Learning* (Miller, 2005). Its message of be mindful, slow down, make real connections with the students and live in the present moment continues to speak to me. It was in this class where I decided this new door I was peeking through, one of becoming an Educational Psychologist, would be a good one to open. I made the decision to do a practicum. Easy. Done. Or so I thought.

**Signposts Pointing in Many Directions**

About halfway into my course work, in discussion with other educators in my school division, I realized Education Psychologists in my home province primarily test children. I had encountered a much different model in Colombia, where I had taught for two years. In the school where I worked, the Education Psychologist’s role was one of a teacher, a counsellor and a mediator—no tests. I despise the idea of testing children. So, I appeased myself that I would be a teacher with a Masters in Education Psychology and that would be good. However, doors that I didn’t know existed were about to open.

As part of my studies, I was required to take an introductory research class where I was introduced to researchers and different methodologies, one of which was Narrative Inquiry and collecting data through personal stories. It was in this class where I discovered one of the things I loved the most—stories could be woven into research. I was intrigued with the work of Brené Brown (2010) who endorsed this idea with the statement, “Maybe stories are just data with a soul.” For the final piece of research in this class, I engaged in a micro-project where I invited children
to draw pictures about their weekend and then to talk to me about their drawings, choosing a narrative approach as the method. This research class and project left me wanting to hear more stories from children which resulted in a switch from the practicum to the thesis route. This switch provided a little more direction. However, I was still lost.

**The Road Straightens**

It was so difficult to choose my topic, as there were many different stories I wanted to hear and investigate. I have always been curious about how to best help students who are struggling. When I considered my research topic with this interest in mind, I realized it would be difficult to get ethics approval and research participants. I needed to narrow my topic and consider what was a potential risk factor for students who are lagging behind their peers, be it academically or socially. One of the answers was linked to mobility.

**The Lived Experience of What is it Like to be a New Student**

After much writing and reflecting, I thought about Jude, one of my first grade students whose expressionless face and wide-eyed expression hovers in my memory. This young child came to my class in October from another city and by April he was gone. His parents had wanted to keep him in my class at Community Central Elementary School (CCES), but their move had taken them out of the boundaries for our school and they were unable to drive him. Jude left for a school that was less than two kilometres away and entered into his third first grade class. It is Jude’s unspoken story of what it was like to stand in the doorway of a new
classroom which is the impetus of my research question: the lived experience of what is it like to be a new student.

**What is Helpful or not Helpful to Students When They Enter A New School**

There is another student, from the same class that Jude was in, whose presence stands on the shadowy edges of my memory. Georgia too started her year in another school, but she came near the end of the year and was with us for what seems to have been a month. A couple of years later I came across Georgia at another school. She seemingly had no memory of me, as her teacher. There could be many reasons for that: too many teachers in too short a time, perhaps when she joined us it was a difficult time or move for her, so she had blocked it from memory or maybe I failed to make any connection with her, reducing me to another nameless, uncaring face in her school-days-timeline. Again, I will never know the answers as to why Georgia didn't seem to remember me but I am left wondering, about missed opportunities for connecting with her and if I could have done something differently for her that would have been helpful.

While I have rustled up Jude and Georgia from past memories, there is a family of three who stand in clear view. When this family joined our school, the Learning Resource Teacher counted the number of schools the oldest one in grade eight attended, there were twelve. Again comes the question, what is it like for them to be new student in our school? Are we as educators, making them feel welcome or are we pushing them out?
My desire is that, by listening to the lived experiences of children who move, I may also discover what they perceive as being helpful to them when they enter a new school. I hope the children’s stories will help me, as well as other educators examine our own practice of how we welcome new children into our classrooms.

Sometimes those who wander, wander around long enough and arrive at their destination—the lived experience of what is it like to be a new student and what is helpful or not helpful to students when they enter a new school.
Chapter One: Introducing the Wanderer

I am the youngest of three children, the baby by nine years. My growing up years were characterised by pruning trees, cutting grass on the riding lawn mower, eating fresh homemade bread slathered in butter and maple syrup and reading books. It is true that not all days were wrapped in the romanticised and remembered moments of the aroma of fresh bread, meadow lark songs and the loving smiles of my family. However, my childhood was a tranquil existence. Unlike my research participants, I have never moved houses, living my entire childhood and university years on an acreage close to an urban centre in the southern part of Saskatchewan, Canada. That said, I have experienced what it was like to be a new student in a new school.

When I was in grade two, a new school was being built closer to my parents’ acreage. While there may have been excitement over a new school, there certainly was no excitement about leaving my old elementary school which was in close proximity to the high school where my siblings attended. On my last day of school, I gave a red rose to my teacher and cried. I was sad to say good bye to a place I knew, teachers that cared, the friendships I had made and to be separated from the care of my sister and brother. As the “baby,” I had the special privilege of riding in the back of the bus with my two older siblings and the other ‘big kids.’ I felt protected. That would be no more. A different bus would come for me and I would sit alone.
Fast Forward 18 Years

In the ten years after graduating from university, I made up for those years of stability and averaged one move per year. These moves I made for personal and professional reasons. As an educator, work has taken me into both rural and urban schools in Saskatchewan, a reserve in Northern Saskatchewan and three different countries: Czech Republic, Colombia and Ecuador. Another move took me across the country to a noted Canadian art gallery, in Eastern Canada, where I completed an internship in the department of Education and Public Programs. In my experience, being a new person to a different area (urban or rural) or especially to a new country has been thrilling, exhausting, overwhelming and sometimes scary. For me, the excitement of being in a new place did not last long and certainly dwindled as work started. The initial months of teaching were draining as I tried to navigate a world with different customs, traditions, ways of thinking, physical landscape and even language. I frequently experienced the tensions mentioned by Clandinin et al. (2006) which are created by “bumping up” against other stories as I tried to live out my story of a Canadian, white, middle class, female and prairie born educator teaching in unknown contexts.

Looking In

It has been suggested that before we begin our research, our inquiry should commence with an examination into our own lived experiences. Greene and Hill (2005) remind the reader of a statement William James gave in 1890; “We begin our study with our own experience since other experiences can be intelligible only in
these terms" (p.7). The authors of *Composing Lives in Transition: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Early School Leavers* (Clandinin, Steeves, & Caine, 2013) understood this as well, when they said:

> Our wonders reminded us of the importance of inquiring into our own stories of school, stories that shaped our assumptions, understandings, and experiences in and out of schools... it helped us recognize reasons to engage in this work that grew out of our experiences, in and out of schools (p. 6).

Following this statement, Clandinin et al. (2013) share autobiographical narrative inquiries about their own personal school experiences with their readers—the stories which helped them to understand why they were compelled to participate in the work. I too thought this would be helpful for me to reflect on my experience of being the *new kid*:

**Grade 3.** Newly built school. *I think all the others had been together at the school on the other side of the tracks—most of them anyway. They had formed friendships. I hadn’t. I was the only one in my class who had come from the other school. I don’t remember the teacher doing anything to introduce us to each other. Maybe she did. I do remember that I wanted to fit in. My efforts to fit in got me into trouble. I was trying to get a girl’s attention, someone my sister had baby sat, a girl who seemed smart and popular. This particular girl was the only student I had any connection to in the grade three class. I wasn’t in big trouble but I was scolded. I felt embarrassed and silly.*

*Embarrassed and Silly. A memory that has stayed with me for 32 years.*

**32 years.**

What would I be writing today if the teacher had quietly taken me aside and asked me a little of what was behind my actions?

Or What if she realized that I was just trying to make friends, and instead of scolding me in front of the others, told me quietly that wasn’t appropriate?
Or had she realized what was motivating my inappropriate behaviour, then maybe she could have been instrumental in setting up a situation so I could have had a moment of connection with someone I was hoping to befriend. I must have somehow found my way and gotten over the little sting of that moment as my memories after that are about engaging in friendships, not wishing for friendships.

When I consider my story of being the new kid the only changing variable was the school. At the end of the day spent in a new school, I returned to the unchanging scene of my family and home. Perhaps this is why my recollections of being new are few. Or is it too far past and the memories have faded? Or could it be a combination of both?

In light of my personal narrative, it may appear I am an unlikely candidate to engage in research committed to hearing the stories of those children who move. However, I have always been concerned about students on the fringes; trying to reach out, connect and build relationships with them. This concern, combined with the fact that two and a half years later Jude and his story, of which I know very little, remains stuck in my consciousness. Those haunting big eyes and unsmiling face push me to search for these narratives. Jude is not the only new child I have encountered in my teaching career. However, he is the only one whom I have known to have three different schools for his grade one year, the year characteristically marked as the time to learn to read and write. Jude entered our first grade class shy and academically behind. While he was there, he slowly opened up and there were signs of growth with potential for more. I often wondered how Jude transitioned into his third first grade class. Armed with my knowledge about
him through observations and interactions within the classroom, I cannot imagine it was advantageous for Jude to move again, to experience three different teachers, three different sets of peers, and three different schools in one year. The piece of his story which troubles me the most, is that he left for a school, in the same school division, less than two kilometres away. As his teacher, I was left wondering if Jude was welcomed warmly into his new school and if someone had extended themselves in a manner of kindness so that he would feel secure and safe. I also am left to wonder what was his experience in our classroom. Was it a positive experience for him? Did someone at our school, or in our classroom do something to make him feel welcome and secure? I will never know because I never enquired. Had I asked he may have not been able to tell me, after all, I was his teacher. I was the one who influenced and guided the class.

As educators\(^1\), we know what it is like to be us—the teachers. The ones who smile outwardly and welcome the new student; however, inwardly wonder about how this child will adapt and fit into the class—and if there are any academic gaps. In the hallways, in the staffroom, in meetings and as we mingle with our colleagues, we share our stories, and our wonderings of our new students. The stories range from: I can't get this child to talk; or, this young boy is displaying sexually inappropriate behaviour and intimidating younger children in the bathroom; or this child is sweet but so behind, how do I help them catch up? Our stories and queries

\(^1\) The word *educator* is used throughout as a synonym for *teacher.*
are listened to and heard by our colleagues as we try to acclimatise each new student to our classroom.

There are other stories too which teachers share. Some stories precede the actual arrival of a new student. These stories are also easily shared amongst colleagues, and the tone of these narratives is dependent on a supportive or non-supportive administration team, the current classroom dynamic, the time of year and the number of new students who have entered the classroom in previous months. Sometimes this story, narrated by the teacher, starts with: “Not another new student…” As I reflect on my own practice, I am keenly aware that this has been my attitude. With every new student, it is impossible not to wonder: How are they going to affect the dynamics of the class? Where are they at academically? Do they need to catch up? What is the best way for them to catch up? However, it would be much better if my “Not another new student…” sigh would be changed to “Another new student…” and then the wonderings, which accompany the child’s arrival, would be mused about in a more positive way. This, in turn, would affect the warmth of the welcome given.

**Looking Out**

But what about the voices of the new students? Typically, new children stand quietly at the classroom door carrying an invisible suitcase holding memories of a place left behind, and wearing a backpack stuffed with anxiety, fear, or maybe excitement for a new school experience. We, as educators, imagine they have questions playing ping-pong inside their minds: who to trust, what is cool, where to
sit at lunch, where to find the bathrooms and how to be visible or invisible? We presume we know their stories, but do we ask what it is like to stand in their shoes, in the doorway of a new classroom full of strange faces, clutching their suitcase of memories, and wearing a backpack over-stuffed with emotions? Is not every new student standing there shy, encompassed with fear, wishing for their old school and hoping to make friends? Are they not relieved when we send them on a walk around the school with the friends we have carefully chosen for them? Or comforted with the efforts we make to introduce them to ourselves, the class and the life of the school? Perhaps not.

Do we ask for these children’s stories? When we are told, do we listen? In my years of being a teacher, I have never asked any of my students, nor have I been told by them what it is like to be new, nor what has been helpful in making them feel welcome. The only hint I received was when I mentioned my research topic to a student in grade eight whom I knew had changed schools. My comment to her was: “Sometimes as teachers we think we are being helpful to new students and making them feel welcome but it is possible we really are not being helpful at all.” She nodded and looked at me as if to say, “You are right.” I regret that I did not get another opportunity to talk with her about her experience of what is was like to be the new student standing at the doorway of yet another new class.

**Looking Through the Telescope**

With the identification of the research question—the lived experience of what is it like to be a new student and what is helpful or not helpful to students
when they enter a new school—comes the query as to what others have researched regarding mobility and education. That question is, how have young people been involved in research over time and what is the best way to gather data for this question? Chapter Two seeks to answer these questions and opens with studies concerned with student mobility and the effects on student learning, behaviour, academics, emotional wellness and the classroom environment where mobility is a frequent occurrence. The research about mobility uncovered data which indicated not all school moves are a result of residential moves. Schools, their staff and policies are instrumental in pushing students out or creating environments which invite them to stay. A result of reading these studies led to more questions about good teachers and how they build relationships with new students in their classrooms. From the perspective of a mobile student, is there something teachers do which make them feel welcome?

Chapter Two acknowledges the shift throughout history of the researcher’s perspective with regards to including children in research. Many of the researchers I came across referenced the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as the impetus for the change and how it set the stage for adults to attend to the voices of children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified on September 2, 1990, with Canada ratifying the treaty in 1991. The original Declaration of the Rights of the Child came into existence in 1923.

Upon reading the studies and articles mentioning this historical document, I recalled downloading the child friendly version of the Declaration, for another
university class. At that time I wondered if children I worked with even knew of its existence. When I looked again at the child friendly version, this time through the lens of my research, I was particularly drawn to Article 12: “You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously” and Article 13: “You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people” (UN, ND). The influence of this document, especially the above mentioned Articles will be apparent in my own research, as this document highlighted the need for the voices of our young citizens to be heard and provided a clue to possible methods for researching with children—talk, draw and write.

With or without the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as educators, concerned for children and the quality of education we deliver, we should ask and we should listen to children’s lived experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind the reader in the preface of their book about the beliefs of the educational reformer, John Dewey, “who believed that examining experience is the key to education” (p. xiii). Chapter Two will look at studies which have voiced the experiences of young people in schools. These studies are important to investigate because the students’ narratives give the reader an opportunity to stop and reflect. If the readers are educators, these stories provide an added advantage of allowing them an opportunity to consider their role in the lived experiences of the children whom they teach.
While I was still trying to sort through my research question, I came across *Composing Lives in Transition: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Early School Leavers*. This was a serendipitous moment for someone like me, interested in experiences of students who are having difficulties in schools. While I too wanted to know about lived experiences of students through narrative, I realized, given the possible age-range, I could not solely rely on interviewing as my method. I would need to look for other tools. In my quest to learn about methods for researching with children I found studies which I will present in the upcoming pages that combined drawing, writing and telling. The combination of draw, write and tell resonated with me. Experience has taught me that while it is true the image can speak for itself, sometimes the image speaks different messages than the artist intended. I know this to be true from being an artist and from being the recipient of drawings from young people. Allowing the child an opportunity to speak about their work can help clear up misconceptions (Angell, Alexander, & Hunt, 2014; Sewell, 2011).

Is this piece I am about to embark on a narrative approach to research? From where I stand, tangled in words and drawings, it seems rather complex—not neat narratives presented solely with words. And yet, I will argue if narrative research is a way for researchers to understand experience through stories lived out and told (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and “uses or analyzes narrative materials” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p.2), then what you are about to read, indeed is, narrative research.
Chapter Three seeks to untangle my ideas, and places this study in the realm of narrative research. I endeavour to take that which is important to me as an educator—listening to hear, creating an atmosphere of comfort, treating my students with respect, encouraging stories, and using arts methods and channel these elements into my research, allowing my participants’ narratives the space to emerge.

While I may have missed opportunities in the past to speak with new students; inquiries have been made into the stories of children who have lived the experience of being a new student and are presented in Chapter Four. Five narratives belonging to students ages nine to fifteen from different backgrounds are presented. Accompanying these narratives are my reflections of each conversation. To explain my role in the crafting of these narratives I present the metaphor of a seamstress—choosing the pattern, making decisions, cutting, and sewing the pieces together. In effect, I have created a garment for the reader to look at and for me to wear. In Chapters Three and Four, I have also left the pattern—perhaps other teachers will create their own garment of welcome to wear.

If those of us, who are in the business of working with young people ask and really listen, this validates the child and the child’s lived experiences. We should want to empower these children who stand in our doorway, about to enter and become citizens of our classrooms. Chapter Five returns to the literature cited and provides an analysis, reflections, suggestions for teachers welcoming new students and recommendations for future studies. It is my hope that my research provides a
safe place for children to share their first-day-of-school stories. This in turn would help educators to reflect on their practice of how they welcome students; and, if need be, change what is done, so these new students in our classrooms will feel welcome and safe, enabling them to learn better and adding positive pieces to their storied lives.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

A Little Preamble

About the time I was struggling with the subject of this thesis, I found an article titled “Qualitative Quality: Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research” (Tracy, 2010) which outlined the importance of, worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence in qualitative research. The mini sticky notes flew from their pad as quickly as the ink left my highlighter, and I was left with a clear vision. This thesis couldn’t be pretty stories with no substance, something I know I could easily craft. Yes, the narratives could end with “rainbows and butterflies”. However, the rainbows needed pots of gold, and the butterflies needed to be Blue Morphos (Morpho amathonte), whose wings, flashing in brilliance against the jungle green, will stop a passerby in their tracks, causing them to wait, in order to see those glittering wings unfold again—a one second spectacular show, interrupting, perhaps even altering the thoughts of the privileged spectator. With this in mind, my intent is to conduct what Tracy (2010) calls a “worthy study,” one which is, “interesting and point(s) out surprises—issues that shake readers from their common-sense assumptions and practices” (p. 841).

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2 One of my favourite Teacher-Librarian lines I use when sharing non-happy ending picture books with students, “Not all stories are rainbows and butterflies, my friends.”
Children as **Social Actors**

Historically, children have been viewed as the property of their parents, having little say about the matters concerning their lives. Presently, in Western society, children and youth are not used as chimney sweeps, or work in factories. However, they are sometimes used as pawns in the event of separating parents or caught between parents and other agencies—in other words, chattel used to negotiate deals. The views of children, their rights and the importance of listening to them are slowly changing because of national and international legislation protecting their rights. September 2, 1990 marked the ratification of the *UNCRC*, which activists for children around the world advocated for many years. In conjunction with present day child welfare legislation, children are more likely to be viewed as social actors, holding a place and having voice in our present day society. Shortly after the UNCRC was ratified, children like Iqbal Masih, Craig Kielburger and Farlis Calle Guerrero, stood to advocate and fight for their rights as children and the rights of their child peers, refusing to only be seen and not heard.

**Children in Research**

Before the 1990’s, much of the research involving children had been done on children in the social sciences, where they were viewed as objects (Greene & Hill, 2005; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008), and their world understood through the lens of the adults in their lives—adults who cared for them, educated them and studied them (Christensen & James, 2008c; Scott, 2008). However, in the last 25 years, there has been a move by researchers to view the child as competent and able to
provide reliable information regarding matters concerning their lives (Angell et al., 2014; Christensen & James, 2008b). Citing the UNCRC, researchers (Greene & Hogan, 2005; Jonsson, Sarri, & Alerby, 2012; Letch & Mitchell, 2007; Mayall, 2008; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008) point to this historical document as the catalyst for research done with children, where their voices are directly solicited in issues impacting their lives. Furthermore, this recognition of children’s rights and their ability to speak for themselves has increased calls for research with children (Scott, 2008). Currently, children are more likely viewed as active participants, and research methodologies have shifted to researching with children, allowing their perspectives to guide the research so their voices can truly be heard instead of silenced or filtered through the adults in their lives (Eldén, 2012).

The change of perspective over the past few decades to seeing children as competent and insightful social actors, worthy of being full members in research studies, coupled by legislation recognizing childrens’ rights, has resulted in more studies with children (Angell et al., 2014; Mayall, 2008). However, the views of children and youth, regarding situations which impact their lives, are still underrepresented in some areas (Aman 2008; Scott, 2008). Ideas persist that children are lacking in competency and reliability (Hendrick, 2008; Mayall, 2008). Hendrick (2008), provides insight as to why this might be and what researchers need to understand when considering the child as a social actor. “Children neither present themselves, nor are they usually presented by adults, as political figures. Instead, they are seen as natural—meaning broadly of limited capabilities and
weighed down by more than a measure of irrationality” (p. 58). Keeping these thoughts in mind, one can appreciate that when children do speak the adults who should be listening, may fail to do so (Jonsson et al., 2012; Smyth 2006). If the researchers are listening, they often don’t understand everything the child is saying (Roberts, 2008).

**What about Canada?**

The province of Saskatchewan has an Advocate for Children and Youth, representing those who are in care or custody of the Government of Saskatchewan. One of the eight guiding principles is the rights of children and youth as defined by the *UNCRC* ([www.saskadvocate.ca](http://www.saskadvocate.ca)). Saskatchewan has a long history of caring for children, with the first child welfare legislation being introduced in 1908 (Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Panel, 2010). This effort to care for children, while not without controversy, has continued over 100 years to present day, when in November 2009, the Government of Saskatchewan announced its intent to conduct a comprehensive review of child welfare within the province. December, 2010 marked the presentation of the final report titled: “For the Good of Our Children and Youth” (Saskatchewan Child Welfare Review Panel, 2010). This report involved more than 1200 individuals with some of their voices highlighted in the report. Although it appeared youth were a part of this process, their personal narratives and reflections weren’t standing out boldfaced in the report as the other contributors were. Were their stories and reflections perceived as “natural” with “a
measure of irrationality” (Hendrick, 2008), or did the words of Saskatchewan’s young people cause discomfort for those completing the report?

With the Government of Saskatchewan’s child welfare laws in mind, it would be foolhardy to suggest Canadian governments, researchers and educators have forgotten about the children. Perhaps children in Canada have not been invited to speak because they will voice concerns which would cause discomfort for adults and policy-makers? Or does the idea that children should be seen and not heard still exist? Or, is it possible, that the policy makers have an attitude that Canadian children have a good standard of living, education and social programming? Therefore, government organizations and school boards must be doing everything right. If that is indeed the case, our nescience about the perspectives of Canadian children and youth is injudicious, as we will continue to create policies not aligned with their needs—wasting time, resources and money. On the other hand, is it possible that the Canadians in charge of policies, programs and education for children and youth are in fact doing some things right? How will we know the perspectives of those affected by these policies unless we ask?

Canadian teachers are struggling to keep up with the demands placed on them, such as, increased workload and class size, as well as insufficient resources to teach classrooms where students have complex and diverse needs (Froese-Germain, 2014; Martin, Dolmage, & Sharpe, 2012). With this in mind, it is easy to understand how the voice of the child could be lost among the other voices demanding the attention of the classroom teacher. Hendrick (2008) wasn’t speaking about school
boards, administrators or teachers, but his comments regarding the consequences of prevailing notions and concerns of adults could be applied to the world of education:

We need to recognize that throughout the discourse, adult opinions and interests are always dominant; they are the ones which we know off by heart. As a consequence of this dominance, children are at an inherent disadvantage when talking to us and when they try to present themselves as self-conscious actors. (p. 58)

If we are to advantage the disadvantaged, educators need to be aware of the dominate discourse and set these ideas aside in order to truly listen to the perspectives of our youngest citizens—the ones who are affected daily by current practices of schools and the classroom teacher.

Eldén (2012) reminds us that “children’s voices can challenge what is known” (p. 78). Whatever the reasons have been in the past for not inviting the voices of Canadian children to speak about matters which are consequential to them, the reasons must be set aside. It is imperative that governments, researchers and educators invite our youngest citizens to speak up, to speak out, and to give children a platform for their perspectives and ideas. When we achieve this, we will be closer to getting effective policies in place and proper programming for these social actors who are worthy of our time and our respect.

It is true that there is research being done in Canada with young people and in relation to issues affecting them (Aman, 2008; Clandinin et al., 2006; Clandinin et al., 2013; Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, Baruchel, & Jones, 2008; Gallagher, 2007; Robson, Albanese, Harrison, & Sanders, 2013; Teachman & Gibson, 2012). This will
be discussed later in this chapter. In comparing the research of Canadians and those researchers working abroad, especially in the United Kingdom, the studies done in Canada do not seem to be carried out in answer to calls for these types of studies. It is worth contemplating the present day attitudes of Canadians regarding the rights and competency of children, and how these attitudes are affecting current procedures and policies, to see why this difference exists.

**The Effects of Student Mobility on Learning**

A number of qualitative studies have been conducted concerning school mobility (making non-promotional school changes) and residential mobility of young people. In these studies, researchers have discovered that the effects of mobility are multifaceted, not only impacting the child who moves but also having repercussions for schools and classrooms which serve highly mobile populations. While I am interested in researching the stories of younger children, this part of the literature review will also include studies conducted with both elementary and high school students. The reason for including studies involving high school students was to get a bigger picture of the phenomenon of mobility at all grade levels.

Sorting through the various studies, the effects of mobility impacting academic achievement were mentioned by numerous researchers who draw our attention to ways mobility interrupts curriculum instruction, impedes student learning and can predict high school completion rates (Aman, 2008; Boon, 2011; Cutuli et al., 2013; Ingersoll, Scamman, & Eckerling 1989; Kerbow, Azcoitia, & Buell, 2003; Obradović et al., 2009; Porter & Edwards, 2014; Rumberger, 2003;
Rumberger, Larson, Ream, & Palardy, 1999; Sorin & Iloste, 2006). At a quick glance, it would appear that mobility is a cause of academic failure for highly mobile students. Researchers who controlled for socioeconomic background, status, family structure, parental education, number of moves, the reason for school changes, or academic levels before the student moved, found that mobility was not the cause of poor academic performance. These students were already disadvantaged before they moved and most likely living in poverty (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1996; Boon, 2011; Porter & Edwards 2014; Pribesh, & Downey, 1999; Rumberger, 2003). Could it be that current school practices further impoverish these mobile students by adding relational poverty to economic poverty as they seek to find entrance into a new school community?

Researchers concerned with graduation rates (Aman, 2008; Gasper, DeLuca, & Estacion, 2012; Rumberger, 2002, 2003; Rumberger et al., 1999; Sorin & Iloste, 2006) found a decrease of high school completion as a by-product of student mobility. Aman (2008), Gasper et al. (2012), Rumberger et al. (1999), examined large scale data and are in agreement; mobility during high school affects completion rates. Furthermore, as the number of school moves increase during the high school years, the odds of high school completion decrease (Aman, 2008; Gasper et al., 2012; Rumberger et al., 1999)—with two or more moves the probability of graduating is reduced to 59 percent (Rumberger et al., 1999).

It is not only the mobile students who are affected by changing schools. Repercussions exist for schools and classrooms, creating a “chaos factor”
(Rumberger, 2003; Rumberger et al., 1999) in the schools which serve highly mobile populations. In these schools, instruction is disrupted and slowed as teachers need to assess the academic levels of the new arrivals, and devote more time to review materials in order to help these students advance to a similar level as their peers. This is especially important when there are yearly test score comparisons which do not take into account high mobility rates (Kerbow et al., 2003; Porter & Edwards 2014; Rumberger, 2003; Rumberger et al., 1999). Moreover, special academic support programs and class projects are interrupted as students move in and out during the school year (Rumberger et al., 1999; Sorin & Illoste, 2006).

Existing research studies point to the broken social ties and the loss of what is a child’s world to illustrate the effects of mobility on the psychological state, social interactions and possible behavioural problems arising from frequent student mobility (Alexander et al., 1996; Aman, 2008; Boon, 2011; Obradović et al., 2009; Pribesh, & Downey, 1999; Rumberger, 2003; Rumberger et al., 1999; Sorin & Illoste, 2006; Wood, Halfon, Scarlata, Newacheck, & Nessim, 1993). Drawing on social capital theory to explain the negative impact on moving and academic achievement, Pribesh and Downey (1999) illustrate the harm which comes when social ties are damaged. Obradović et al. (2009) echoed these sentiments when they cited Rafferty, Shinn, and Weitzman (2004), “Mobile children in poverty are at high risk for broken bonds with teachers, friends, relatives, schools, and other potentially positive sources of security and opportunity” (p. 494). These broken bonds lead to
increased problems with behaviour, emotional state and social interactions which, in turn, affect the child's academic performance.

Some researchers suggest that not all moves for children are harmful. There are residential moves which are typically well planned and are made in order to improve living environments or are tied to job transfers (Alexander et al., 1996; Hango 2006; Robson et al., 2013; Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014). Also, there are strategic school moves made to access better school programming or to get away from negative influences (Rumberger 2003; Rumberger et al., 1999) which have a positive impact on student outcomes.

A few of the researchers confirmed what I had initially thought; students who change schools frequently are already disadvantaged (living in poverty, interrupted family lives) and exhibit other risk factors, including but not limited to, problematic behaviours, lower academics and higher absenteeism (Alexander et al., 1996; Cutuli et al., 2013; Gasper et al., 2012; Pribesh & Downey 1999). Aman's (2008) research also validates this idea, focusing on the correlation between mobility in high school and the high school completion rates of British Columbia’s Aboriginal students—a group of people disadvantaged and impoverished by colonialism.

Of the studies unearthed, very few incorporated qualitative methods. One of these investigations was an in-depth study of California high school students (Rumberger et al., 1999) which mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, allowing the concerns and the experiences of the players involved in high school
mobility (parents, students, administrators and teachers) to be presented in the research. Reading through the data, the narratives of the high school students who changed schools linger:

When I first moved here, I did not know anybody. I was very lonely. Nobody really helped me at school when I first came... I do not have good friends to support me here like back at the old high school... I just want to get out of here as quickly as possible and go on to something else. (p. 38)

Moving and changing schools really shattered my personality. I feel like there's all these little things I picked up from all of the different schools and I feel all disoriented all the time... Every time I moved I felt less and less important. (p. 37)

These stories give “soul” (Brown 2010) to the quantitative data, causing the reader to stop and reflect on one’s own practice of how they welcome students into the classroom. For myself, I wondered, “Is it possible that I passed over new students without trying to help them adjust or validate their importance?”

Researchers on both sides of the Atlantic, looking to fill a gap in current qualitative studies, sought to enquire of and listen to those most affected by mobility, the students themselves (Backous, 2011; Messiou & Jones, 2015; Rhodes, 2008; Vaslavsky, 2013). Similar to the high school students in Rumberger et al.’s study (1999), the participants (ages 10–17) in these studies also expressed feelings of loneliness, sadness at leaving friends behind, concerns about making new friends and academic performance. In addition, there were concerns about being bullied. In each study, students were asked for their perspectives of what could ease their transition to a new school. One of the students in Rhodes’ (2008) study proposed a welcoming committee. In fact, she suggested something very similar to what is in
place at the school where Backous (2011) conducted her study—a welcome room which was appreciated by most of the students in her study.

Other studies using qualitative methodology were found. One was conducted in Australia by Sorin and Iloste (2006). The research data were based solely on interviews and participants included parents, administrators, teachers, a school social worker and an in-school program coordinator. However, the voice of the mobile student was absent from their data. A major obstacle these researchers encountered was that the parents who were willing to participate in the study had already moved by the time the researchers went to interview them. The other study was a mixed methods inquiry in Nebraska (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2011) which saw interviews conducted with classroom teachers, specialized teachers, and administrators. Again, student perspectives and concerns were absent from the study.

The Impact of Better Teachers on Students who Change Schools

Research shows that student mobility is not always linked to residential moves. School policies, as well as academic and social climate contribute to 30%–40% of school moves (Kerbow 1996; Kerbow et al., 2003; Rumberger 2002; Rumberger 2003; Rumberger et al., 1999). Rumberger (2003) stated that schools in which the students classified their teachers as better had lower rates of mobility.

In a study of homeless and highly mobile children, (Cutuli et al., 2013) identified the trait of academic resilience in 45% of homeless and highly mobile children. They defined academic resilience as “persistent achievement in the
average or better range on the standardized tests over time” (p. 854). Two factors they identified as contributing to academic resilience were, “quality of teaching and relationships in classrooms” (p. 854). From the perspective of a mobile student, the questions arise, what does a better teacher and those relationships look like?

In an American study, Robertson (2006), conducted an ethnographic investigation over a three-year period in which she asked students (primary to postsecondary) from different areas (urban, small communities and rural) to describe a good teacher. Robertson compiled some of their responses into an audience performance text which she shares in her article, “If You Know our Names it Helps!” Because I am concerned about the perspectives of children, it is their responses about good teachers which interest me the most.

Fifth Grader: A teacher should have good people skills.

... 

Fifth Grader: I like teachers that make time for you—no matter what. 
Kindergartner: They care for you. 
Fourth Grader: Not ignore you. 
Sixth Grader: They help you with work and the conflicts you go through. 
(Robertson, 2006 p. 758)

Robertson’s research leads her to conclude that what most impacts teaching and learning are the relationships formed between student and teacher.

Robertson’s conclusion is also supported by Smyth (2006), who in speaking about school reform and student engagement, calls for relationships to be paramount in schools. His work and student narratives are referenced in Composing Diverse Identities (Clandinin et al., 2006) and Composing Lives in Transition (Clandinin et al., 2013). The authors of these two books draw the readers’ attention
to Smyth’s Australian research about early school leavers. The students’ narratives in Smyth and Hattman’s (2004) study echo some of the narratives shared, and ideas presented in both books—students who wanted to be engaged in conversation and listened to by educators. Clandinin et al. (2006) share Jodi’s narrative which is titled: They Just Don’t Listen.

So if a kid’s really stuffing up and doing some terrible things you need to get them and sit them down and say, you know, what’s going on? What’s your reason for doing it? What do you want to do? Like where do you want to go in life? (p. 168)

Further on in Jodi’s narrative, she mentioned subject areas she liked and where she excelled. She also spoke of a deputy principal who helped her get placed in a different school. Jodi didn’t mention any other educator, and the title of her narrative indicates that, as a whole, the school didn’t care about students like her. Perhaps if Jodi had developed positive relationships with more than one educator, her view of school would have been different, in turn, affecting her life path.

“Join in our conversations. Really listen to us” (Gallagher, 2007, p.17).

“Yeah, don’t just observe us for a short time. Watch us and listen to us for a long time” (Gallagher, 2007, p.11). These are the voices of two female drama students from two different Canadian high schools, also asking to be seen and heard. These girls were a part of a three year in-depth ethnographic study which used theatre as the vehicle to enter the world of teenagers, and explore how their lives are shaped and defined by current social and political ideas and events, which are in turn reflected by their schools. The voices of these girls represented those of their peers
who were tired and frustrated with not being listened to, not being understood, and not being seen as ones who could contribute in positive ways to their communities. At the end of their time together, the youth participants voiced thankfulness that they were not judged, but rather seen in a positive light. They felt empowered, not only as members of a class but also of their greater community—safe to explore their world through theatre with the researchers learning beside them.

Evidence suggests that relationships are at the heart of learning. Given the research questions: the lived experience of what is it like to be a new student and what is helpful or not helpful to students when they enter a new school—perhaps we could move a little deeper into the second part of the research question and look at what good teachers can do to build relationships with new students who enter their classrooms. I imagine if we asked those who have experienced being a new student to tell us what a good teacher does to make life better for a new student, then that may be reflected in the student responses above: listen, care and help. Adding to the questions already posed: “What does a good or better teacher and those relationships look like?” another question arises, “What does a teacher showing care look like to a mobile student?” Again, I am drawn back to the conversation shared in Chapter One between a student who had come to our school that year and me. In the conversation, I wondered if we, as educators, were doing the best job of welcoming new students. Her response indicated that in her view, we (schools and teachers) weren’t. When she walked away, I was left wondering
about the situations and teachers she encountered, and what, in her opinion, needed to be changed so new students would feel welcome.

It is not that teachers do not try to integrate and welcome new students, or any students for that matter, giving them attention and extra academic support. They do. I have witnessed teachers’ endeavours and been a party to them. If the line being repeated is, “you are not hearing us,” it may not simply be teenage angst, but rather the reality they are experiencing. Perhaps it is not a matter of doing more to reach some of these students, but rather doing things in a different way or doing the same with a little more care—taking time to be present with them in their situation. We won’t know unless we ask and are prepared to listen. Given the complexity of what is at hand, I anticipate equally complex solutions.

In a large qualitative study concerned with the effects of mobility on high school completion rates of Aboriginal students in British Columbia, Aman (2008) discovered fifty percent of Aboriginal students changed schools during their high school years and these school changes influence school completion. Citing the type of data used in the study Aman notes, that it is impossible to know what motivated these school changes; and that responsibility for this problem does not lie solely with the students or their families. Aman points to the important role schools play in contributing to student mobility when she instructs those working with mobile students to examine “personnel, programs, policies, and practices at the school level [which] may contribute significantly to the variability in Aboriginal students’ success in school” (p. 374). She closes the article with a call for more qualitative and
ethnographic work to be done “on current school practices that promote Aboriginal school completion” (p.375). To this end I would add, we need more qualitative work done with all students who experience mobility, so we can understand what it is like to be a mobile student because we know, “the best source of information about issues pertinent to children is the children themselves” (Scott, 2008, p. 96). This qualitative work could help educators examine current school practices—welcoming students in or shutting them out of the classroom.

**Stories Told with Words, Colours, Puppets and the Spaces Between**

Qualitative interviewing, considered a *powerful tool*, to gather data, has often been employed by researchers wishing to delve into the lived experiences of young people and matters concerning their lives (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver, & Ireland, 2009). This powerful tool, noted for its flexibility, is either unstructured or semi-structured and invites participants to reflect on previous experiences, enabling the researcher to draw out the story (Heath et al., 2009). It is suggested that the questions are best introduced as “how” or in the case of a former professor of mine, “tell me more about...” rather then asking “why.” “Why” questions cause participants to justify their actions rather than tell their stories (Heath et al., 2009). That said, often, not even the adults are able to know the “why” of their own situations; this is even more so for children.

The research method of *draw and write* was, pioneered in the 1970s by Noreen Wetton working in the area of health education research. Wetton discovered that drawing was an easier way for children to express their feelings
than to speak about them (Gauntlett & Horsley, as cited in Angell et al., 2014). Since then, the research method of draw and write has been used as a method for researchers working with children in the areas of social, health and education (Angell et al., 2014). Drawing, considered a child friendly activity (Sewell, 2011), is also inclusive, as it allows participation regardless of a child’s developmental level or language proficiency (Angell et al., 2014). As a research method, drawing uses materials familiar to children, allows the child to guide the process, providing an opportunity for the child to think and reflect on the task, and has the potential to produce more data or richer data (Angell et al., 2014).

Arguing that aspects of the draw and write method are problematic: inconsistent methodological approach, interpretation and analysis of drawings, Angell et al. (2014) propose a new method: draw, write and tell which they define and frame in their article. They refer to their method as a child-centred approach, one which recognizes the agency of the child, respects them as individuals and allows the child to give consent throughout the process.

Angell et al. (2014) are not the only ones to use draw, write and tell. There have been other researchers interested in the storied lives and perspectives of young people who have incorporated narrated drawings into their studies as well (Eldén, 2012; Jonsson et al., 2012; Leitch, 2008; Literat, 2013; Sewell, 2011). In each of these studies, the child created a drawing and then was given the opportunity to talk about what they created. For those familiar with working with children, we
know there is a story outside of the paper’s edge. It is that story which will support or challenge the drawn details the other person (usually the adult) observes.

When images are created for research purposes, the question of ownership and reproduction rights arises (Sewell, 2011). Leitch (2008) cautions that the researcher must be very clear with the child how the images will be used and who will see them. Furthermore, if the images are to be used for another purpose, informed consent from the child must be sought again (Leitch, 2008).

A few years ago, I had a grade one student who was brilliant at drawing the most intricate and detailed images. Naturally, I wanted a piece of his work, and I dropped fairly broad hints that his eight-year-old-self would understand. One day he presented me with a drawing. Having taught him for a number of months and seen his prized work, I was left feeling I was receiving cast offs. It was much later when I finally understood that his best work was too precious for him to part with. Had I offered to reproduce his work and left him with the original, it is highly possible he would have permitted it. For me, I wasn’t wanting an original piece, I just wanted an example of technical brilliance of an eight-year old. The work belongs to the image maker. It is up to the researcher to document it in its original condition, leaving it unaltered; an act as simple as cropping has the ability to change the meaning (Sewell, 2011).

Puppetry is also a narrative form, and it could have a place with drawing, writing and telling. Despite being a creative art medium, it appears that not many researchers are using puppets as a data collection tool. Epstein et al. (2008) noted
that while puppets have been used in the past by researchers in play therapy, and as
a therapeutic tool in clinical situations they are not often used in qualitative
interviewing. Employing this research method to understand children’s
perspectives at a camp for children with cancer, the researchers found this to be a
valuable tool that allowed for rich data collection. One of the rationales the authors
provide for using puppets is from Aldridge (1998) who explained that young
children have a greater ability to re-enact what they have experienced, rather than
express themselves verbally. Teachman and Gibson (2012) used puppets as one of
their research gathering methods when interviewing children with cerebral palsy.
Like Epstein et al. (2008) they discovered that children chose puppets which best
represented their physical selves.

Unspoken thoughts, gestures, shifts, inhalations and pauses speak. Yet, in a
study of articles found in the same journal over a 22 year period by Denham and
Onwuegbuzie (2013), they discovered only 24% of qualitative research studies
provided evidence of nonverbal communication. According to Denham and
Onwuegbuzie, if researchers do not pay attention to nonverbal cues, then they are
missing a layer of authentic data, which can confirm or uncover truths of the
research. This is vital, as children have the ability to tell the researcher what they
think the researcher wants to hear and often they have a desire to please adults
(Angell et al., 2014). However, they are not as adept as adults at covering the
nonverbal cues which reveal how they really feel. Combining the framework for
analyzing and collecting nonverbal data, as suggested by Onwuegbuzie and Byers
(2014), with the interview data may be a way of revealing if the children are giving
answers to simply please the researcher or if they feel free to respond in a way that
accurately reflects their thoughts.

**Researching with Children—Considerations**

In order to work with children we must recognize that children are subjects
possessing the ability to speak with authority about their lived experiences
(Alderson, 2008). With this understanding comes the researcher’s responsibility to
treat them with all due respect. Thankfully for those who wish to work with
children, much has been written about what researchers need to consider. In the
introduction of *Research With Children: Perspectives and Practices* (2008c), the
editors, Christensen and James, note that there is not a specific method to use with
children. Rather, like researching with adults, there are several methodologies to
employ. The methodologies chosen must best fit the question. Researchers have
Successfully included children in studies where, like adults, they gave opinions,
shared ideas, were part of focus groups, participated in interviews and completed
questionnaires. The considerations for working with children lie in tailoring the
research so the child can freely participate (Christensen & James, 2008c).

While it is true that attitudes towards engaging children in research have
changed, one still must be cognizant of the inherent power relations between
researcher and the participant (Christensen & James, 2008c; Epstein et al., 2008).
One way to circumvent this is to include children in the decision-making part of the
research and provide them with choices throughout the process. (Epstein et al.,
Angell et al. (2014) caution the reader about *adult-centred* controls, such as time limits and restricting the choice of materials, reinforcing the power imbalance and the need to be mindful of the child’s position in order to keep the process child-centred.

When interviewing children, the researcher needs to bear in mind the chosen location, as this will influence how the children respond (Heath et al., 2009; Scott, 2008; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). The participants need to feel safe in the location, safe enough to share, and safe enough to withdraw from the study. If it is possible, giving participants the choice of location will increase their feeling of safety, allowing some displacement of *researcher power* (Heath et al., 2009).

To reiterate, children are easily influenced and sometimes want to please adults or impress their peers. Thus, they may give a response based on these desires rather than what they actually think (Angell et al., 2014). Researchers need to be aware of this when planning and carrying out their studies.

Working with children and youth requires the researcher to be cognizant of the length of time of sessions, as the attention spans of children and youth are different. I would argue that the length of the session is important regardless of the age group. If one were researching adult participants around trauma or abuse, the length of time for interviewing would be shorter than if participants were recounting their lived experiences of participating in 4-H as a young person.

Scott (2008) cautions researchers that the questions should be clear and meaningful to the child, as the quality of the research data will hinge on the child’s
ability to comprehend the questions put forward by the researcher. Scott also reminds the reader that data quality is not age-specific. Rich data is essential and for researchers that is always a concern.

Recalling that relationships are at the heart of learning and that good teachers are to have “good people skills” and “make time for you—no matter what” (Robertson, 2006 p. 758), so too must researchers working with children have good people skills, and make time, or create enough space in time for their participant’s stories to be heard. Demonstrating patience and being unintimidating are key qualities for researchers working with child participants (Scott, 2008).

When involving children in research, a cautionary note of adhering to rigorous ethical practice is issued by Scott (2008). She reminds us that “children are relatively powerless… [and] have relatively little recourse to official channels of complaint” (p.102). It is imperative to ensure the research purpose is clear and that assent is obtained from the child, even though their guardian has already issued consent. By this passage in the text, I made a note, “Making a child friendly consent form. How do I do that?” Later I came across a child-friendly example, in Butler-Kisber’s (2010) book in the section Access and Consent that a graduate student used with her five year-old son. In the example, the student had her son represent her words with pictures in boxes below the words. Because consent needs to be ongoing, this statement was also included, “I know I can stop being in mommy’s study at anytime” (p.18) and then his illustration depicting his understanding of those
words. Upon seeing this, I promptly made my own form for an imagined audience of seven-year olds.

Even if I use pseudonyms to protect these powerless children, I know it is not permission to say whatever I want. Someone out there who knows me, will probably be able to put some pieces together or these children will grow up, and perhaps look for the study or possibly a family member of theirs will read what I have written about this child whom they know. Richardson, in a panel discussion said, “Whenever you do anything, you don’t quite know what the consequences might be” (Ellis et al., 2008, p. 270). With this in mind, I want to consider what the implications may be for the child if their story is read by someone who knows them. What I owe them, for sharing their story, is to keep them as safe as I can.

**Missing Pieces and Found Pieces**

Pouring over the research written about student mobility, it is evident that many researchers have been interested in this subject. A vast majority of theses studies are quantitative in nature, few are qualitative and fewer yet include perspectives of the students. The research I have done seeks to fill this gap by including the lived experience of being a new student and attempting to answer the questions of what is helpful or not when students enter a new school.

There are two texts which informed much of my research practice; *Research With Children: Perspectives and Practices* (2008a) and *Composing Lives in Transition: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Early School Leavers* (Clandinin et al., 2013). These books I read cover to cover and referred to often. In fact, I had
borrowed an earlier version from the library of Research With Children: Perspectives and Practices (Christensen & James, 2000) for so long, that it almost grieved me to remove all my sticky notes, especially the ones marked simply with a heart symbol or exclamation mark. What impressed me in both of these texts was how the researchers spoke with children and youth, recognizing them as individuals capable of offering valuable contributions to various research projects. I also admired the care they showed for their participants. I appreciated Scott’s (2008) cautionary words about the relationship between the interviewer and the child—advocating the need for being ethical, patient and nonthreatening. This way of being was something I tried to attend to in my conversations with the young people.

There was one PhD thesis which angered me. The writer, a vice-principal at a middle school imposed her judgement on the participants, by commenting on their physical appearance and clothing choices, when it had nothing to do with the study. The person writing the thesis couldn’t understand why a participant (a student presently enrolled in her school) was reluctant to speak to them about their experience in that school. According to the writer, the student had been in that same office not long before that because of poor behaviour. What was real to me in that moment, and during my research, is that we have no right to whatever piece we are hoping the young person will share. The pieces they offer us by way of data are gifts. There was one other detail which jumped out—that was the choice of interviewing location the researcher used. The interview location was the vice-principal’s office. I imagine the office held a memory of the recent negative student-
vice-principal encounter. My guess is that office then held a second negative memory, as the vulture eyed the mouse, unsure why it wouldn’t come out of its hiding space, into the open and perform.

In Chapter Three I outline in more detail the studies which provided valuable information regarding method, methodology and ethical concerns when one is working with young people.

“...there is no substitute for asking them” (Roberts, 2008, p. 268).

What started out as an interest in narrative inquiry has morphed into a desire to conduct narrative-based research by incorporating arts-based data. Since my research question is seeking to understand the lived experience of what is it like to be a new student and what is helpful or not helpful to students when they enter a new school, clearly there is a phenomenological element to this as well. Phenomenologists are interested in understanding and describing everyday lived experiences, stating that we understand our world through our experiences, rather than interpreting the data gleaned (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) succinctly wrote that narrative inquiry was, “stories lived and told” (p.20). These stories researchers are inquiring after are common, everyday occurrences and they are being investigated to raise awareness or question certain practices (Lewis & Adeney, 2014). Being a new student is a story that many have lived, making it an everyday occurrence, and the purpose of the study is to indeed raise awareness as to what it is like to be them.
Citing the work of Bowlby on attachment and loss, Pollari and Bullock (1988) state, “Moving for young children (Bowlby) argues parallels the experience of death and grief” (p. 116). If this indeed is so, it is imperative to hear the stories of those who change schools, as this will help educators have more understanding and empathy towards those new students who come and stand at the classroom door needing to be welcomed. Those of us who work with children need to ask, because if we don’t, who will?
Chapter Three: Methodology

When a person realizes he has been deeply heard, his eyes moisten. I think in some real sense he is weeping for joy. It is as though he were saying, ‘Thank God, somebody heard me. Someone knows what it’s like to be me.’ (Rogers, 1995, p. 10)

Listening With the Intent to Deeply Hear

In this chapter, I will share experiences which have stopped me and encouraged me to listen, as it were, between the lines. I will also situate myself within the work and share how I worked through the inquiry process, interacting with young people and hearing their stories. Then, I will present my rationale for choosing narrative research, being guided by the work of those who have worked with narrative in different forms, be it Angell et al. (2014) who implemented a draw, write and tell research method, Clandinin et al. (2013) working with narrative inquiry, Smyth and Hattam (2004) using voiced research methodology, and Eldén (2012), Jonsson et al. (2012), Leitch (2008) and Sewell (2011). These last four mentioned, like Angell et al. (2014) also combine drawing and narrative in a thoughtful way with children and have influenced this research. The chapter ends with an explanation as to how the data was holistically represented and analyzed and my rationale.

Researchers Becoming Listeners

How do we become listeners? How do we know if we are listening or as Rogers (1995) states, deeply hearing? Or, another query—is it indeed possible to hear, to cut through the cultural noise enveloping us? Maybe we can’t hear
completely because of who we are, our world view and the world we inhabit; but, this shouldn’t excuse us from slowing down, entering a place of stillness, seeking the ears and heart to listen. There are experiences we have which stop us and encourage us to step back from ourselves and to listen, listen not only to the words, but to the silences, the gestures, the body shifts and the eyes which narrate a story. If we listen this way, thoughts thought and unspoken, speak; words whispered and printed, speak; drawing lines with our pencil and bodies, speak. Providing we listen, we can be spoken to. A friend once asked what is easier to hear, a whisper or a yell? The answer was that depends on the distance between the listener and the speaker.

In our everyday teaching, we are listening to the big voices of the Ministry of Education, our school’s administration, our colleagues’ voices and our own ideas of what needs to be done. What about the voices of our students? In my experience, the student voices we listen to seem to be the ones who are extroverts or the ones who are throwing chairs and tantrums—not the “Judes” who arrive quietly, sit quietly for the moments they are with us and then slip out the door quietly. There are experiences I have had which have helped me pay attention and listen. Perhaps these stories I am about to share will illuminate why I have chosen the method of narrative research which unites “poetics and science” (Richardson, 1990).

**Experiences Which Stopped Me and Encouraged Me to Step Back and Listen**

I have always loved listening to the stories children tell. There is a scene which plays out in my memory—it is of my friend’s three-year old daughter, Annalise, sitting in her car seat, staring out the back window as we drive. In a quiet
voice she tells stories, to the passing prairie about Franklin and his friends —Bear, Fox, Rabbit and her addition of TJ, the horse—while I, the unacknowledged and silent audience listened in. This was a girl who loved books, loved animals and lived in the country. Annalise wove herself into the story as someone who was needed by the animals and could help them. Her imaginary world of Franklin and friends was real for her and also for me, the unintended audience. This little girl was very shy and yet the story flowed with no hesitation. Perhaps I was privileged to hear the story because Annalise was like an honorary niece and a small friend of mine, or perhaps she was completely lost in her story, unaware that someone was listening. Approximately seven years after this story-telling moment, Annalise called me one evening because she was stuck on a story she was writing. She needed a coach and then required some editing help. A story-teller turned writer, she now takes art classes and creates pictures which tell stories.

When I listened to Annalise, what did I hear? I heard about a young girl who had empathy for small creatures and saw herself as having an ability to be a helper to those who needed help. I also heard a story about someone loving to be outside with her friends. By listening, it was clear that Franklin and his friends were indeed her friends too; and, that stories had been read to her in the past by the adults in her life. Someone in her life valued reading and took the time to read to her.

One of my favourite days of the week as a former grade one and two teacher was Monday. This was the day we would tell, draw and write about our weekends. What interests me is the different details which show up about the same stories,
depending on the methods—tell, draw, and write. One year, I had a student whose mother died in a tragic accident. It was a Monday when Chase returned, the day we wrote about our weekend. I had been at his mother’s funeral and was keenly aware of his situation and loss. That day, I gave him the option to write about anything he desired, as I didn’t want him to feel like he had to write about his weekend of sadness. However, Chase wrote, “On the weekend I saw my mom. She looked very beautiful.” Nothing in his written words told of her death, although the picture did; he had depicted her in a coffin. Would he have written more, if he had had the option to support the writing with a drawing? I will never know. However, what I do know, is Chase chose to write about his mother’s beauty rather than the painful words: death, died, funeral. Perhaps “instead of representing the world, the child [Chase] … [faced] the world when drawing” (Merleau-Ponty, as cited in Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013, p. 360). Possibly by drawing his beautiful mother in the coffin he was able to look at and process a piece of his painful reality.

These incidences with Annalise and Chase remind me of the importance of listening to “deeply hear.” When undertaking my own study, I attempted to practice this with my participants.

**Stories Spoken and Stories Illustrated**

My undergraduate degree is in Arts Education with a major in Visual Art and a minor in Theatre. I love to read, to write, to paint and to sing. When I was in elementary school, I took piano lessons for a brief time and for seven years after that, I played the flute and then the oboe. As a degree, Arts Education was a natural
choice for me. However, choosing a major and a minor was difficult, because I had
to give importance to two disciplines and, as it were, leave two behind. Given my
background and experience with children of all ages, I don’t believe there is only one
way to tell a story; there are many. This belief is also supported by Richardson
when speaking of the strengths of qualitative work, “there are multiple ways, more
and more different ways by which stories can be told…” (Ellis et al., 2008, p. 279).

While my research used a narrative approach, creating pictures, talking
about drawings was also a part of the research. Depending on my participants, I
was also open to include role play with puppets. However, this method was not
needed. I think of myself as a story gatherer and detective. The purpose of this
research was to gather stories about what it is like to be a new student in whatever
way the research participants wanted to share them. I then wanted to look for clues
about what had been helpful or not helpful to them as they entered a new school. I
had no plans to arbitrarily interpret the stories or drawings, but to gather them, to
deeply hear (words, gesture and pauses) and to engage in meaningful conversation
about their lived experiences. I wanted to give educators like myself the
opportunity to hear young people’s experiences of what it is like to be a new
student. In listening to these stories, we as educators can better understand what it
is like to be a new student. This can help us be reflective of our own practice of how
we welcome newcomers, who researchers have pointed out are most likely already
disadvantaged (Alexander et al., 1996; Cutuli et al., 2013; Pribesh & Downey, 1999;
Rumberger, 2003) into our classrooms.
A question I had early on was how does one go about trying to present the narratives in a meaningful way to honour the narrator. Again, I was drawn to the student narratives in Chapter Two represented by Clandinin et al. (2013), Rumberger et al. (1999), Smyth and Hattam (2004). These narratives are presented in such a way that they speak to me personally, touch my heart and cause me to question my own practice. I am reminded of a few of the criteria for qualitative research put forward by Tracy (2010): rich rigor, sincerity, and credibility. In these studies, the rich rigor, sincerity, and credibility (showing reflexivity) are evident. Another study which also allows the voices of students to be heard with clarity, Beiningssner, (2011) in his masters dissertation, interweaves the student narratives with his own personal reflections. By doing so, the voices he presents, “shakes readers from their common-sense assumptions and practices” (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). Each of these researchers has reserved judgment on the participants, this also magnifying the student perspectives they are trying to share with the reader.

**Using the Narrative and Combining with Arts Methods**

In Chapter One, I concluded that educators should desire to empower these children who stand in our doorway about to become citizens of our classroom. I also hoped that by inviting children to share their lived experiences, educators would be encouraged to take an honest look at how they welcome new students into their classrooms. To empower, we need to invite these stories and, as Rogers (1995) states, deeply listen to their telling. In Brown’s (2010) talk she mentions the importance of telling children that they are “worthy of love and belonging.” By
taking time to listen (meaning deeply hear) to children’s lived experiences, the message they receive is that they are valued.

Often in the retelling of life events, we make sense of the situation, bringing clarity to the experience thus enabling the narrator to become stronger with each telling, giving them the courage to engage and to own pieces of their life story. Furthermore, if I wish to encourage educators to take an honest look at their own practice, they need to see themselves reflected in the lived experiences of the new student. How best to do this? Richardson’s (1990) words still resonate and eloquently point me, someone new to this idea of research, to enquire after lived experiences narratively:

If we wish to understand the deepest and most universal of human experiences, if we wish our work to be faithful to the lived experiences of people, if we wish for a union between poetics and science, or if we wish to use our privileges and skills to empower the people we study, then we should value the narrative (p. 133).

Also, if the narratives we present and represent are to be faithful to the lived experience, then we need to go back and consider the Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010).

My acting teacher told us that for stage actors, the spine is the mirror to the soul, whereas on television, the eyes are the mirror to the soul. Keeping in mind Richardson’s (1990) statement, I want to put forward that in research perhaps it is the narratives, which are told through words, actions, gestures and illustrations.
These are the mirror to the soul. Not only do they act as a mirror to the soul, they also provide an opportunity for us to reflect upon our own practice.

When I read the lived experiences of early school leavers in *Composing Lives in Transition: A Narrative Inquiry Into the Experiences of Early School Leavers* (Clandinin et al., 2013) not only was I drawn to their narratives, but I was left wondering about my impact on the lives of students. Am I the “more human teacher-librarian” who would care enough to take time to engage in conversation with all students—especially those who are exhibiting signs that their lives were in turmoil (p. 141). Or, do I simply favour those with “perfect lives, [and] the perfect parents [who ‘get the best grades’] And... rocket directly to the top” (p. 131)? Data in the form of numbers and charts doesn’t provide me with a mirror to the soul and cause me to reflect on and examine my practices as an educator. These narratives did, as did the student narratives in the studies of Rumberger et al. (1999), Smyth (2006), and Smyth and Hattam (2004).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) write that we use narrative in education research because “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (p.2). The children I have worked with over the years have fit this description and their storied lives, like those of adults, range from laughter to tears. For me, however, with the storied lives of children, the laughter is a little more giddy but the tears much more sorrowful, because one realizes someone else is writing the child’s story for them; and, these stories they didn’t ask to be written will become their lived experience. Lieblich et al. (1989) state “research methods should always
be selected to best fit the research question” (p.5). Given my research question—the lived experience of what is it like to be a new student and what is helpful or not helpful to students when they enter a new school—narrative-based research best fits my study.

In Chapter One drawing was presented as being child-friendly and an enjoyable activity for children; thus, it is a suitable tool to use when researching with children. From my perspective as a former teacher of students in the first and second grade, I would argue that drawing is not always fun for all children. Some of my students at an early age enjoyed it regardless of their ability; others would rather hurry it up, get it done, and move on to a preferred activity. For this reason, I had thought to offer the option of using puppets with those who may have been interested.

The purpose of combining narrative with visual methods was not only to allow the participants to choose what was best for them; it also gave another medium for storytelling, as we saw with the earlier example with Chase. Leitch (2008) reminds us that “Image-making provides an opportunity to represent experience, a tangible process and product within which stories are inherent, or out of which stories are (re)created” (p.39).

Creating comfort

At the time of writing my proposal, one of my professors encouraged me to go back and look at a micro-research project I had done four years earlier for an introductory research class. The focus for this project was interviewing grade one
children about their drawings of weekend adventures using a narrative approach as the methodology. I had forgotten and was also relieved to see that this idea of creating comfort was one I had mulled over then:

I wondered which would be the best method for drawing out stories? I was aware of my position as teacher in the eyes of these children. I didn’t want to further remove myself by becoming the ‘researcher.’ I wondered which would be the best way to make me approachable and safe for them? Food is a usually a good way to establish a friendly atmosphere, so I settled on popcorn, a kid favourite. I wanted to create a fun space for them to share in rather then the banal white walls and plastic chairs that are either too big for them or too small for me. I came up with the idea of offering them the opportunity to build a little fort. I hoped the little fort would provide a space where they would feel comfortable and for me to come down to their level, sitting on the floor, eating popcorn (McChesney, 2010, p. 10).

Was I successful in creating conditions of comfort? I am not sure one can measure that. What I do know is, as a researcher, I was concerned enough about the students’ comfort to offer popcorn as the fun food and a choice of where to sit and the students did indeed make choices. Four years later, I was mulling over how to better, if possible, what I had done before. When creating my proposal I noted in my reflection:

_I keep writing this statement: I want them (the children) to be comfortable during the research. Comfortable enough to tell their story and comfortable enough to withdraw. Sitting here in relative comfort on my living room floor, surrounded by books and papers, far removed from research participants, I am left with the thought, how do I go about creating this sought after ‘comfort.’ What comes with clarity is this concept of ‘creating comfort’ is not a one-size fits all. It is dependent on whom I work with, their age and if I have had some connection to them in the past outside the research. Even if they are comfortable with me as a teacher, or honorary aunt, they might not be comfortable with Elann, the researcher_ (E. McChesney, personal communication, October 18, 2014 & November 11, 2014).
From my literature review, I understood that to create conditions of comfort I needed to remove adult-centred controls and give some control to the participants. (Angell et al., 2014; Heath et al., 2009; Scott, 2008; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). Giving the participants a choice of how to tell their story (draw or collage), and where to tell their story (location) was my way of removing adult-centred control. Furthermore, each participant was given the choice of the size and shape (rectangle, square) of paper. I did this because for some students the size of paper can be overwhelming or limiting. Also, 8 1/2x11 is the standard size and by giving them a choice, I was hoping it would silently state that if I have choice over which paper I can use, she (Ms. McChesney) must be serious about my choice to withdraw.

During the data gathering process, I was aware that I was the researcher, the relative and one of the teachers. Despite my very best efforts to create a comfortable space for the participants, it was possible that the very essence of who I am and what I was doing would overshadow, causing the participants to be uncomfortable. Pre-existing relationships can both benefit and disadvantage the researcher-participant relationship. The benefit is that a level of comfort and understanding could already be present, allowing for conversation to flow with relative ease. On the other hand, the pre-existing relationship may cause the possible participant to feel like they have to participate. The researcher may not even be putting any pressure on; however, some may feel obligated to participate anyway. Also, in the context of the research, the relationship will be different. It is possible the participant won’t feel comfortable with or even like the person they
know who is now the researcher. There can be a shift in dynamics as the participant holds something the researcher wants.

The Participants

Changing schools is not limited to age, gender nor demographics. While it is true there may be some groups of people who move more frequently then others, such as those whose parents are in the military, RCMP, those renting low-income housing, and experiencing family instability, changing schools is a lived experience for each child every time the change occurs. For this reason, I decided on an age range from seven to fifteen. Initially, I considered limiting the age of the participants to seven years old as I am a former grade one and two teacher and this is an age I particularly like to work with. However, I have also taught grade seven, have worked as a substitute teacher for both elementary and high school, and presently am a Teacher-Librarian in a K–8 school and appreciate each age of students.

For a fleeting moment I flirted with an idea presented by Dillabough, McLeod and Oliver (2014) to include adults’ reflective narratives combined with young people’s present narratives on the lived experiences of changing schools—using one narrative (past or present) juxtaposed to illuminate the other. It seemed that whenever an adult asked about my research they, or the person standing beside them, had a personal story which they were eager to share. Undeniably, conversations with adult participants would have been easier to conduct in terms of
ethics and generating interesting and rich data. However, my primary interest is learning how children experience their world.

As presented in Chapter Two, in this country, adults speak all the time, and in doing so, drown out the thoughts and concerns of our young citizens. From my perspective as an educator, while adult stories of past experiences as a new student would be interesting, I do not believe they would move my colleagues or me in the same way to change our practice, like the lived experiences of a school-aged individual. When an adult speaks, my colleagues and I may be tempted to say, “Oh, that was then. Things are different now.” Likely it is really not that different. On the other hand, when a young person speaks, their past is closer to being present, I can look back and say, “Was that me in your story?” A child speaking, touches my soul in a different way. Moreover, I am given time to change my thinking and ways of doing things so the next child that stands in my doorway has a better experience. This research is my work and my work is children; and, I believe it is time to invite the children to speak about their experience of being a new student.

You may wonder why I didn’t put more qualifiers on the participants—the lived experience of what is it like to be a new student from the perspective of a highly mobile student, or a student who has transferred into an area because of their parent’s new job, or a student who left a previous school because they felt unsafe, or their parents have made an upward move into a better neighbourhood. I am a teacher, and I hope that this thesis will be read by other teachers. Our reality is that we encounter students who have moved for all of these reasons. We need to be
aware of what is helpful or not, because this knowledge could inform and challenge our current practice of how we welcome new students into our class. Perhaps these narratives will help us be a little more empathetic and thoughtful in our approach with new students.

Can I privilege one type of mobile student over another? A child who frequently moves will most likely have a different experience from the child whose parents have moved for a job promotion. Do I assume it is more difficult for one to adapt than the other? I believe the story of each is influenced by variables we may or may not know about or understand, and, perhaps those variables are too numerous to flesh out.

**Gathering the Data**

Once I received ethics approval, I began to talk to others about my research in hopes of finding participants. Eventually, there were five participants in this study. Four of the participants were known to me, so no introductory meetings were needed, and one was a friend of one of the other participants. I planned for two meetings. One meeting to gather the data and a follow up meeting in which I would go over their narratives with them, allowing them the opportunity to add or take away as they felt necessary. With the exception of two participants, there were two meetings. For four of the participants, the first meetings varied in length depending on the participant, lasting between 40–60 minutes. The second meetings were about thirty minutes. I will speak more about these meetings in Chapter Four.
Since I was working with children whose busy lives are connected to their parents’ busy lives, I had to quickly jump into openings in their schedules. Allow me to illustrate with two examples. I had spoken with my friend about my research and asked if she thought her child would be interested in being a participant. My friend indicated that she would be. However, no plan was made other than I would do it sometime after school. Two weeks later, at 8:30 in the morning, she asked me if four o’clock that afternoon would work. In another instance with another set of participants I was given a two hour window of notice. I would have liked to have the schedule a little more structured with more breathing space, but this was not possible.

It was hard for me to know how many meetings I would need and for this reason I appreciated Tracy’s (2010) words about rich rigor, “There is no magic amount of time in the field. The most important issue to consider is whether the data will provide for and substantiate meaningful and significant claims” (p. 841). As mentioned, the second meeting gave the participants an opportunity to add or change their story. It also allowed me time to reflect on the data from our first meeting and pose other questions to clarify what they had shared and/or ask another question which came to the surface during my reflections.

I wondered how I would know when data collection was done. My advisor helpfully pointed out that this idea of done or not would depend on the participants and if they felt satisfied if their narratives. His comment brought me to this thought: I am researching with children, their attention span is short, it may not be about
being satisfied with their completed story, they might just be done. Period. Because there is new blue Lego, or something of equal delight which they need to get to immediately. My goal was to remain flexible to the process of data collection and needs of my participants while I looked for the gold and the Blue Morphos.

From the readings, it was clear to me that I could not rely on one method of data gathering, simply drawing or writing. Angell et al. (2014), Eldén (2012), Jonsson et al. (2012), Leitch (2008), and Sewell (2011) provide examples of research where children have been included as ‘co-interpreters’ (Leitch, 2008) and in one case define a methodology; draw, write and tell (Angell et al., 2014). Using these studies as guidelines, I tried to create something similar with the children I worked with, paying close attention to the analysis of their narratives so my voice and thinking didn’t silence the child’s thoughts.

In trying to be sensitive to the diverse needs of each unique young person, I felt like I was floating. However, I was reminded of Eldén, (2012) and the title of her article Inviting the messy... in which she used a mixed method approach of two drawing techniques and interviewing. In her rational for this approach she argues that she is not trying, “to uncover ‘authentic’ voices of the participating children, but rather, [allow] the complexities of children’s narratives... to emerge” (p.67). Many times I felt like I too was “inviting the messy” I learned to breathe and be okay with that, as long as I did not invite disaster.

I was permitted to audio record three of the sessions, the other two participants did not wish to be recorded but allowed me to take notes instead. I
wrote fast and tried to document their words verbatim. One child I chose not to record as they elected to write their narrative. As a result, I have three very different sets of data. Audio recording the sessions, allowed me to pick up details I missed. The recording gave me a sense of who did the talking and it also gave me a picture of myself as a researcher. Did this picture change me for the next meeting? Not really, as the next participant was on their own and the way the conversation flowed was completely different.

The narratives of the two students I could not record were pulled together from what I had written while we were conversing. I attempted to write some of their statements verbatim. The data from the audio recordings emerged from the transcriptions. I transcribed the text verbatim and then removed repeated words and phrases to make it smoother to read. My purpose for doing this was to give me visual data of their words. Reading text helped me focus on each word, thus slowing me down. This enabled me to identify repeated phrases and key statements. From the transcribed data I pulled most of the words and statements to create a longer narrative and arranged the text. For the participant who chose to write, I drew their narrative from some of their written words. I will speak about bringing together their words to write their narrative in greater detail in the upcoming chapter.

During the course of this research I also kept a journal in addition to the notes I made regarding my conversations with the participants. The journal was a place for me to document my process, ask questions, be reflective and write down items I wanted to remember. The notes were simply quick notations I scribbled in
the notebook I took with me to the meetings with the participants. In this research paper I draw from my journal and my notebook as sources of information.

**What to do With the Data**

Gallagher (2011) calls for the research story, which for me, is more than narrative words, “as a place to begin inquiry, not a place on which to settle meanings” (p. 59). The data, then becomes a place to look and wonder.

In Chapter Two, I mentioned earlier, that I was drawn into the student narratives presented by Clandinin et al. (2013), Rumberger et al. (1999), and Smyth and Hattam (2004). Theses student narratives spoke to me and encouraged me to consider my own practice as an educator. While Clandinin et al. (2013) and Smyth and Hattam (2004) utilize different research methodologies, they gather their data into longer narratives. Huber, Pearce and Steeves (Clandinin et al., 2013) employed a poetic style when presenting their narratives. In Chapter Five, Scott’s voice is all that we read—his entire narrative account is laid out as poetry, with no interruptions from Pearce, the researcher. I endeavoured to create something similar with my participants’ stories—poetic representation of longer narratives.

Smyth and Hattam (2004) work with a methodology called *voiced research* which seeks to include the common perspectives of those who are silenced and at a distance from those in power. The data are gathered and then worked into long uninterrupted stories which they refer to as *portraits*. I wish to borrow this term used by Smyth and Hattam (2004). We don’t live in Harry Potter’s world where the portraits come alive and wave to the viewer (J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the*
Our portraits are fixed, as are the participants words in this document. Nevertheless, we understand that no one person is limited to one portraiture in their life time. Another day, with a different photographer will produce a unique portrait. I like the word portrait because it indicates that a part of the subject is revealed while another part is obscured. As an educator typically I see the child for the first time standing framed by the classroom door—a portrait, as it were. The participant’s data in this research is portrayed as portraits.

**analyze**

: to study (something) closely and carefully : to learn the nature and relationship of the parts of (something) by a close and careful examination

(Merriam-Webster)

How will I analyze the data? Maybe I can illustrate my thought process to help clarify. I sew; sometimes it is the pattern that helps me choose the fabric and sometimes it is the fabric and its texture that chooses the pattern. For this question of how to analyze, the fabric (the data) chose the pattern. This task of analysis is hard, as I do not like taking things apart and then putting them back together. To me that is like the theory of music or the analysis of literature or the deconstructing of a jacket in order to make a new one. My sense is, when we pick apart these things for the elements, as it were, the soul touching magic is lost. In saying all of this I did look for commonalities which emerged from the narratives. I did not run these narratives through any type of machine, which would code words, count the seconds of a pause and pick them apart. I never even employed a highlighter to the text. I simply sat with the participants words and my memory of our conversations. I spent
time reading, re-reading, and reflecting on the participants’ stories—if there was a word or idea which was moving, or repeated, or was emphasized by the participant, then I looked for it in the other narratives.

Reading Wells’ book *Narrative Inquiry* (2011) and Lieblich et al. (1998) and being made aware of the different ways to analyze narratives reminded me of who I am and why I did not want to tear apart and reduce the stories of my participants. I am an Arts Educator and if you read Chapter One you will already know that. So what is this reminder doing here? The reality is, I can't hide who I am. Being an artist and an Arts Educator shapes and informs the way I think and see the world and this research. My artistic sense influences the researcher in me. Riessman (2008) writes that art can be narratives. This leads me to think that narratives can be art. When it comes to analyzing the narratives I am torn because to me they are like pieces of art. I have studied art analysis and engaged in spirited debates about what a certain piece may mean; however, I prefer to observe the piece and let it touch or move me—like a Blue Morpho, if you will. The narrative is similar to a piece of art—be it a picture, a ceramic vase or a garment. When the narrative is accompanied by a drawing it becomes a collage or like a garment adorned.

I am recalling the furore over the Fire, that is the *Voice of Fire*, which was purchased by the National Gallery of Canada in 1990 for 1.76 million dollars. At that time I was in high school with an interest in art but a limited understanding as to the painting’s significance or value. I too thought it was a huge waste of money and questioned how three strips of paint on a canvas could be art. Nine years later, with
a degree in Arts Education completed, I inhabited the National Gallery of Canada for
a few months as an intern. It wasn’t until I stood before Newman’s painting that I
began to see it differently. The painting had a life of its own and pulsed before my
eyes. Could I have had this experience through reading the art historians and critics
narratives and analysis of the work or from a shrunk down reproduction in a text?
The answer is no to both of those queries. So with this in mind, I’ll present the
narratives as art, employing a little of the poetic representation which Richardson
(2003) claims, “lets us hear, see, and feel the world in new dimensions” (p.517). My
hope is that you as a reader, can stand in front and be moved. If you require the
audio tour you will find that in Chapter Five.3

In addition to binding this data and putting it on my book shelf, I hope the
information generated binds me to the practice of being sensitive to the needs of
new children—the “Judes” who stand quietly at my classroom door in need of a safe
and welcoming place to learn.

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3 Art galleries offer audio tours as a way to give more information about the artist’s work to the
viewer. The audio tour I am referring to is the analysis in Chapter Five.
Chapter Four: New Students—Suitcase of Memories, Backpack of Feelings

In the first chapter, on page 12, I mentioned that I sew and with this research study I am creating a garment for me to wear, when welcoming new students to my classroom. This garment will affect the way I move. Wearing it will help me to be present with new students, thoughtful to their needs and enable me to care for them.

When arranging the data for this chapter, I had a very clear image related to sewing come to mind. This chapter provides a description of sewing as a metaphor for this stage of the research process. From there I will explain how I have arranged the data in order to present it in this chapter. I will use my role as Teacher-Librarian, storyteller and story reader to illustrate my purpose for presenting the narrative data as I have. After I share the participants’ narratives, there is a section titled, Being Together where I will attempt to give you an idea of the relationship and space that existed between me and my participants. From there, I will talk about me as the researcher and end with a reflection of the process. Searching for the pattern, like the analysis of the data, is important and can take awhile.

The stages of sewing have been a recurring metaphor while working on this chapter. At different times during this process I felt like I was quilting. Gathering pieces, trimming them to fit and stitching them up. So, before this chapter unfolds, let’s be clear; I am the seamstress. I am doing the cutting. I am doing the sewing. I have chosen the fabric and the pattern. Although, I will argue that one, either the fabric or the pattern, will influence the other. How so, you might ask? If I were to
walk into a store and be captivated by a piece of silk hanging in gentle folds, I would have to choose a pattern which accommodates the characteristics of such a fabric.

This sewing metaphor, be it one of quilting, cutting out the pattern or sewing a garment, is to give you primarily an illustration of my role as an editor. Please don’t think I have reduced the children simply to fabric for me to manipulate and craft. I am not a factory seamstress. The work I have done with these children is relational. There has been care, thought and time put into my work in order to have conversations with them. I will speak about the relational process later on in this chapter and in Chapter Five.

When I was reviewing the transcripts of two participants and piecing the sentences together to create their narratives, I had a sudden clear image of setting a sleeve in a bodice. Accompanying this image were the words, “you better get this right.” If you have sewn, you may have had a similar experience where you have put the sleeve in backwards, or sewn the right side of fabric to wrong side of fabric. These errors typically arose because I wasn’t paying attention, or was in a hurry and didn’t bother putting on the pattern markings. When I have been in a hurry and not attended to my sewing project, I have had to rip it out and do it again. For me, “getting it right” in terms of working with these narratives meant that I didn’t want to misrepresent the words and meaning of the participants. The participants were given the opportunity to read their narratives and to make changes they deemed necessary, before I placed their narratives in this thesis. I wanted the reader to hear the voices of the participants, and by voice I mean, the inflection, the rhythm of their
speech, and from that to gain a sense of their personality. I have also included text to give a sense of the space we inhabited together.

The data, to me, is like the fabric cut into the shape of the pattern and pinned together. Remember that, based on the fabric, I have chosen the pattern and I am doing the cutting. As for alterations to the data, there have been few and the alterations are noted, as my intent was to present longer narratives, rich in detail. The cutting was done with the intent to remove words, which in my mind didn’t contribute to the overall narrative. You are about to read the words of five children who were asked to share with me their first day experience at a new school. These children range in ages from 8–15 and their backgrounds are varied. One is a new immigrant to Canada (Jaden); one is a child in foster care (Elena) who has made multiple school moves; one has moved from a large city school to a rural location (Quinn); one is a student I teach (Sage); and the other (Jennifer) started in a new school at the beginning of the school year, only to find herself in another new class two weeks later, due to an enrolment increase which resulted in a new class being added.

Data gathering methods were dependent on the participant’s preference. Two of the participants, Jennifer and Jaden, are friends and wanted to converse together with me. They allowed me to audio record our conversation. I have transcribed the audio exchange and pulled their narratives from there. Sage was willing to be audio recorded but chose writing as the mode to tell her story. I did not audio record my interactions with Sage and will address the reasons for this
later. The other two, Quinn and Elena, wished not to be recorded, but were fine with me taking notes. As much as possible, I tried to write their words verbatim and jot down fragments of speech and some other notes related to observation. Quinn and Elena's narratives are drawn from their verbatim words and some of my notes to help fill the empty spaces. With the exception of Jaden and Sage, the narratives are comprised of the participants' words from our first meeting. With their key statements I wrote quickly—inventing my own short-hand. In most cases, I was able to capture almost every word. These statements have made up their narratives.

Allow me to explain further why I wish to present the narratives as I do, as pieces of art. As a librarian, I read a lot of stories to children. There are times I invite the children to talk during the reading of the story. There are times that I purposely do not invite them to share because if we stopped, the flow or the idea of the story would be disrupted and lost. On occasions, despite my best efforts, the flow of the story is interrupted by a child sitting there bursting to share. I didn't want this for my participants' stories. Richardson (2003) reminds us that “Qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading” (p. 501). You will recall me saying earlier that historically the voices of adults have drowned the voice of the child. It's true. I have a lot of thoughts about what has arisen out of these conversations. Those thoughts will be expressed further on in the chapter. I didn't want to be the eager kid, sitting on the floor, hand up, bursting to share, and in doing
so shattering your moment with the text which is illustrating my participants’ lived experiences. For this reason I purposely left myself out of the exchange of dialogue.

My questions to the participants are left out, unless needed to make sense of the narrative. When this was the case, the questions are presented italicised and in square brackets or they are boldface in italics, to set apart or frame a piece of the narrative. Words which are italicised in round brackets indicate when I have added a word or background information to help clarify the narrative. I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible because I want you, as the reader, to “stand in front and be moved.” These narratives are my attempt to pin things together—the sleeve into the bodice, as it were.

**Portrait of Quinn, Age 8**

*Can you draw a picture for me of what it was like on the first day?*

*(Looking in the crayon box)*

Is there a black?

*(I help him find it. Uses colour for eyes and mouth—mouth drawn in a smile.)*

That’s my box because I was sorting out my stuff.

Scissors... ruler...
And I had a glue stick....
And I had white glue....
Oh, I forgot... backpack...

   Sorting out my stuff.

*(I asked him what he did that first day. After he got his supplies sorted out.)*

We, uhmm, we learned a little bit.*
And then we had lunch.
Then we learned a little more and then gym at the end of the day.
And then home.
Bus ride home.  
Went past Joshua and Rachel's place. **

**Did anyone do anything that was helpful which made you feel safe and welcome?**

Showed me where the bathroom was and snack shack and gym.

Boys showed me boys bathroom.  
Everyone showed me where the bathroom, the snack shack and the gym was.

My teacher helped me.  
(The teacher had told him about the coloured coded basket system for books—to keep things organized.)

(I asked him if he remembered how he felt.)
Felt a little shy in the morning but then got used to it a little before lunch.

(Is there anything you wish that was different on the first day?)
Yeah, that I had friends.

*Didn’t remember what he learned—I asked*

**Neighbours who have become friends.**

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Figure 1. Quinn’s Drawing

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4 I realize the quality of this drawing is poor, however I wanted to be loyal to Quinn’s illustration and not alter his work by cropping and enlarging the drawing.
A Reminder...

The fabric doesn’t cut itself, nor does the data just show up. There is a process that exists. When I am sewing this process is where the fabric is laid out, the pattern pieces are placed, the cutting is happening. If you were to come into the room, you would see me bent over, studying, arranging—lost in the work I am doing.

Being Together

I wanted Quinn to be comfortable. He had a few spots in the house to choose from. His bedroom was the most private of the locations. Upstairs, away from what was going on downstairs. This is where Quinn chose to be—in his space. I sat with him crossed legged on the carpeted area in his bedroom. He sat across from me but positioned his body so his paper was placed on the floor. The first task he had was filling out the assent form. He took his time with the form, putting thought into what it was at school that he was learning. Quinn was given a choice of paper size, 8x8, 8 1/2 x11, 8 1/2 x14 or 11x14 and he chose 8 1/2 x14. I had brought crayons with me, which he chose to use. Quinn started by drawing himself wearing a blue shirt at a table. I watched as Quinn drew. The words between us were few and quiet. Quinn verbalised each object before he drew it. There was no resistance or hesitation when he was drawing. Quinn’s posture, willingness to draw and his focus on drawing suggested that he was at ease with the process. When he was drawing himself and his things, he seemed pretty happy—more up beat than when we were
conversing. Quinn wanted to keep his picture; however, he gave me permission to take his picture, scan it and return it to him at a later date.

Near the end of our conversation, I decided to share with Quinn my story of being a new student in a new school. I had not planned to do this; however, there was this quiet moment that was extending into space, so I told him my story. After I shared my experience about being a new student, that is when I asked, “Is there anything you wish that was different on the first day?” Quinn responded softly, “Yeah, that I had friends.” I noted in my journal;

I felt sad for him. There seemed to be a sadness hanging there. I would love to go back and talk to him some more. But really I don’t want to. I felt like I was digging up a sad memory of a hard day.

At the end of our time together (approximately 50 minutes), we agreed on a place for me to leave his drawing and the crayons, in case he wanted to come back and add to his picture. Quinn left his room and went downstairs. I remained sitting on the floor, writing—adding to my notes and observations. I left two hours later but not before playing a game of Pirate Memory Match with Quinn and his sister.

Before leaving for home, I went over to the couch where Quinn was sitting and asked him if he wanted to add anything to his picture. He didn’t. Was there anything else he wanted to tell me? No. I asked another question. I cannot remember what it was; however, his answer, downcast eyes and intonation of his voice left me feeling that this was not an easy day. I feel as though I had stirred up a lonely memory.
Three weeks after our meeting, it was possible for me to have a conversation with Quinn on the phone. I was initially on speaker phone and his little sister was on too. Our call got disconnected and Quinn phoned back. This time I asked to be taken off speaker phone, so that it could be just us conversing. During our time on the phone, I went over what I had recorded about his drawing and his first day experience. I asked him if these statements were correct. He indicated that they were. After our first conversation, I was left feeling that was a hard day for him but when I asked him what kind of day it was, he replied “kind of easy.” I approached this question later in our conversation and it was the same answer. My conversation with Elena about her first day was after I met with Quinn. I heard Elena speak about the first day with mixed emotions, I was curious about the smile Quinn had drawn on his face. I realized I hadn’t asked him at all about that in our first meeting. When I asked about the smile he drew on himself, Quinn replied that he was, “Excited for the first day of school.” I asked him what he was thinking about when he was drawing. He replied, “thinking of my mom.” The last question I had for him was what would have made his first day better. He replied, “Just a friend.” During this conversation it was established that I would mail his drawing back to him.
Sometimes when you go to a new school you are confused, because you wonder if you have learned this before.

I've been to lots of different schools.

You've got to be careful who you trust.

When you are in a new school, usually you are shy.

On the first day, it is hard.

My first day I was really nervous. I would try and go talk to Jewel*.

It wasn't that fun on the first day.

New kids feel sick—they want to go home because they are nervous about how their day is going to go.

This was me.

When people are new and people are nice, that makes them feel welcome.

This helps new kids—when the teacher says, "Can anybody at recess show Brittany 5 around and play with her at recess and make her feel welcome?"

Sometimes new kids have a smile but inside they are nervous, anxious and worried.

Uncomfortable.
Sad.
Shy.

*This is a friend she knew from a previous school experience.

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5 There is no mistake. Elena speaks in third person
Can I do words?

(Talking about letter “o”) I am drawing a face like this because I wouldn’t be like laughing, like with my friends.

Green and blue—like happy and sad. Blue like sad to leave friends behind. Happy to start fresh.

Sometimes when people have new experiences they are happy to try it but also nervous. (The word Nervous) Wiggly letters. Shivering and nervous.

Being Together

Elena is presently attending her fourth school. She is a foster child in my friend’s care. We have known each other for about a year and I see her weekly. I asked her if she would be interested in sharing her story with me. A week later, when I saw her, she wondered when we would get together to have this conversation.

We met one day after school, in the school library where we had permission to be. This was her choice of location as was the table where we sat. She indicated to me that I was to sit across from her. Our conversation lasted about an hour. When I asked her if she wanted to draw something about her first day, she was keen
to do this. I gave Elena the same paper options as I had done for Quinn. She told me she wanted to use “normal paper” (8 1/2 x 11). When I set the paper down, Elena asked, “Can I do words?” I replied, “Of course.” She proceeded to draw the word “confused,” followed by “nervous” and then the bubble, “I don’t understand, I am so nervous.” Elena drew and talked at the same time. I noted that she was “very into (creating) her letters.” She spoke about the reasons she used certain colours and why she stylized her letters in a specific way. Conversation, or in this case chatter, came easily. Sometimes Elena was speaking to me directly, other times she was musing away as she drew. I was aware when she was speaking that Elena used the term “new kids” and the second person “you” more often than, “me” or “I.” In fact, I purposely asked questions like, “was this you?” or “was this your experience?” She indicated it was.

Early in our conversation, she leapt off her chair, went to her classroom and returned with a piece of paper and a book titled, *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: Middle School*. I wondered aloud why she grabbed this book. She replied, “Well, it gives you tips on how to survive the first day.” Elena flipped to a chapter which spoke about first day survival and proceeded to read survival tips to me. The piece of paper was a response sheet she had completed in relation to the book *Wilma Jean the Worry Machine* (J. Cook). The sheet was titled, “How do you Feel?” They were to write about a time they felt anxious or worried and illustrate a *Super Tummy X-Ray*. Her response was not school related but was connected to a move. She linked it to our conversation, talking about how new students feel similar
when they change schools. At one point we were fairly off topic, so I excused myself and returned about five minutes later. My hope was this time alone would help her focus on her drawing and refocus our conversation. It worked.

Part way through our conversation, Elena was drawing and talking. Then her head snapped up and she looked at me, pointed and said emphatically, “This helps new kids—when the teacher says, ‘Can anybody at recess show Brittany around and play with her at recess and make her feel welcome?’” Duly noted. Thanks Elena.

We returned to the library for a second meeting about a week later. I read back her statements to her. After each statement, I asked if it was “true” (“true” as in “true or false answers”—school language she would understand). Elena gave affirmation with words and a nod of her head that her statements were “true.” She did ask me to remove two of the statements, and I have. In our second meeting, she also added the word “what?” to her picture—indicating some of the confusion felt by new students. I shared her narrative with her foster mom, to ensure that she was okay with what I would be putting in my thesis. Because this child is in foster care, the ethics surrounding confidentiality were paramount for me. It is important for her foster mother as well.
Portrait of Sage, Age 12

The worst part is just being alone.

Like when you walk in, you don’t know anyone.
   You don’t know who could be a bully,
   or
   just rub someone the wrong way on the first day.

You have to watch everyone socialize.
   They know exactly what they should be doing—while you just stand there,
   not sure where to go.

You also have no clue any of the teachers names, or where anything is.
   You rely on the person who just got pulled way from their friends to help
   —the awkward new girl.

On my first day, I just sat out and away from other people. However, this one girl, I
didn’t remember from a club I was once in, recognized me. So she sat beside me and
generally was somewhat close to me the entire day.
   Not that I minded.
The start was awkward though. Everyone was pretty nice as well.
   Not even, “I’m going out of my way nice,” but just friendly nice.

(The) others—you can feel their eyes on you, just judging you up and down.

One person being close to you for the first day is nice
   —just one because two people is too much.
   I would feel like a charity case.

The teacher was really nice. Friendly, cheerful attitude.
   So it felt welcoming in the room.

The class had a welcoming attitude.

I think to welcome new students, the teacher should show them around.
When a student does, you can feel like a bother.

Being Together

   Sage is a student in one of the schools where I teach and is part of a class of
students whom I work with on a weekly basis. Given the nature of the class, and the
agreement with her teacher, I have very little influence on her grades; however, I am still a teacher in her school who is part of her schooling. Sage’s teacher knew about my research and thought that I should talk with Sage about her experience of being a new student. Considering my position as one of her teachers, I did not want to pressure Sage. With this in mind, I told my colleague, if Sage was interested, she should come and see me at recess. I believe it is easier to say “no” to someone else other than the person making the request. It was important to me for Sage to have this space to say “no”—be it a definite “no” or a “maybe” with a shrug of the shoulders and slip out the door at recess with an “oops, I forgot to see Ms. M. at recess…” I really was not expecting Sage to come at recess, but she did come to find me.

In the ideal world, the researcher and the participant would sit down in quietness and discuss the nature of the research. For me, on that day, the ideal research world did not exist. At the particular moment, when Sage showed up at my desk, telling me she would be willing to be the “guinea pig,” I became the three ring circus, working on a task for a colleague, answering the questions of my keen library helpers and conversing with Sage. In our quick conversation, I told her in spite of her willingness to be involved, I needed permission from her parents. I also asked her which would be the best way for her to tell her story: draw, talk, write—be it a few adjectives to explain or a paragraph, or a piece of prose or poetry. Sage informed me that she had no drawing skills, and her preference would be to write. She also went on to explain that she had more confidence in her ability to write than
talk about her experience. Furthermore, Sage indicated that if she wrote about her experience then she could go back and add to what she had written. This comment made my researcher heart leap with delight—I had found a participant who was reflective in her own practice. You might wonder why I didn’t wait until a calmer moment to have this initial conversation with Sage. I am in three different schools and my window of opportunity to see Sage was diminishing as the moments went by. “Later” would have turned into “much later” or possibly “never.”

The next day during lunch, Sage’s teacher told me that her signed consent form had been returned to school. Later that day, when I was with Sage’s class, she informed me that she had her signed consent form. We agreed that we would meet at the fifteen minute recess. For this meeting we decided to meet in the quietness of my office. Since Sage indicated that she articulates her thoughts better through writing than speaking, I decided not to audio record our conversation. I was surprised that Sage had already completed a page of writing about what it was like to be a new student. Sage gave me her work to read. We conversed about what she had written. I wrote down a few questions I had for her, and attached them to her writing so she could respond to them later. One question was, if anyone was helpful or not helpful on her first day. I also asked if she had any suggestions of things that she wished had been done differently.

I wondered aloud to Sage if she would even feel free to write about what she thought could have been done differently, as she would be writing about my colleagues. I recalled for Sage one time I had been asked to share my story with my
supervisor, since my story involved my colleague, I didn’t really feel safe, even though in my heart I knew it was fine. I also talked to her about myself being the researcher and not the teacher and promised her that she was safe to talk about her story. Even though I said all of those words in efforts to assure her, I kept thinking how is it possible to separate my two identities of teacher and researcher? For Sage, I do not believe these two identities can be separated. Nor do I believe the researcher-teacher conversing with participant-student is a weakness for this study. Perhaps had there been no student-teacher relationship prior to this research piece, Sage’s story would remain with her, or it would have emerged in a different way. As individuals, we reveal certain things to specific people based on our level of comfort with the individual or our relationships with them.

Since I am in three schools, and both the lives of teachers and students are busy, it was difficult to arrange a third conversation. We finally met again about one month later. This meeting also occurred in my office. Together, we went over the answers Sage had written to the questions I had asked in our second meeting. I asked Sage to look over what she had written and identify what were the most important details out of all she had written. In her own words, “The teacher should show students around and be cheerful and friendly.” Sage had experienced a teacher who was, “really nice—friendly, with a cheerful attitude so it felt welcoming.” She appreciated the welcome her teacher and students provided. Sage was in no hurry to leave after we had concluded our conversation about her first day
experience. Rather she lingered and we moved on to other topics around literacy, as she is a reader and I am a librarian.

A few weeks later I met with Sage again to go over the pieces of her written narrative which I had *pieced together* and *sewn* to create the narrative that lives here in this thesis. Again, we were going to meet in my office; however, Sage wanted to sit on the couch just outside the door. We considered dragging the couch into my office but concluded that was too much work, so we left it were it was and sat on it—in the quietness of the library.

This child is a writer. I was nervous and curious as to what she would think of how I had arranged her words. I told Sage that I wanted the narrative to reflect her, and to sound like her. If it didn’t, we would make the needed changes. Sage read over her words, arranged by myself, and proclaimed that she really liked it because it was what she was trying to, “put down the entire time.” Regardless of her statement, I needed one more confirmation, so I asked in a different way. “I didn’t muddy it?” I enquired. “No,” Sage replied. “You polished it.”6 Upon hearing those words, I took a deep breath, and blinked away that fullness of emotion, which is sometimes accompanied by tears. Sage, the writer, who had trusted me with her story, paid me the ultimate compliment, I could relax.

In the previous meeting, Sage had picked the pseudonym Mursup out of the air. Each time I wrote Mursup all I could think of was marsupial. I was reminded of

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6 Polishing did not involve altering Sage’s words—rather choosing data rich text and arranging the narrative so her story flowed.
a previous study, where the pseudonyms chosen by a couple of participants didn’t seem to fit with their story and it influenced how I read their narrative and the researcher’s reflection. I knew I had to respect Sage’s wishes no matter the misgivings I had with her chosen name. Nevertheless, I wanted to share with her what repeatedly came to mind when I read her name. Initially, when I mentioned her choice of pseudonym, Sage stated firmly that she makes decisions and doesn’t regret her choices. I shared with her what came to mind for me each time I wrote out her chosen name. I told her that I hoped other teachers would read this work and I wanted them to hear her words and not be hindered by possible thoughts of marsupials; however, it was her choice, not mine. Sage looked away from me, briefly pondered what I said and suggested Sage as the alternative. Even now as I write about this, I wonder if I made the right decision to speak with her about her choice of name. As the teacher did I use my power to influence the student? Perhaps with other students, this would have been the situation. Given Sage’s firm proclamation of making choices and not regretting them, combined with how quickly she chose another name, I don’t believe the name change happened due to a coercion.

I had a draft of my thesis with me and I asked if she wanted to look at the other stories, I flipped through the other narratives. Interestingly enough, Sage chose to read Jaden’s because, in her words, she was drawn to his narrative on account of his name. I wondered if she thought back to her own recent name change from Mursup to Sage and the impact of names. Reading over Jaden’s narrative, she
too identified with his feelings of getting lost and not knowing where things were in
the school. Again, once we had finished conversing about her narrative, Sage
lingered and our conversation shifted to other topics.

**Portrait of Jaden, Age 14**

Well luckily for me I came in the middle of grade four.

May.

So I didn’t have to experience the whole assembly thing.

The assembly? Awkward.

Because I would be sitting in the gym alone, when everyone else is there with their
friends.

I was shy.

Luckily, I had a friend that spoke the same language as me.

My parents and his parents knew each other

So the first day of grade four, for me—

Weird. Interesting.

I was nervous and shy.

Well, I didn't know much English.

If I had to ask a question, I would ask my friend first to ask the question for me.

’Cause I didn’t know.

My only friend at the time, was helpful.

No one ever did introduce me to the school *(give a school tour).*

I got lost because it is a pretty big school. Three storeys, I believe.

**Grade Six—Another New School**

*(Started at the beginning of the school year)*

It was a little bit better because I was older and less shy.

I was able to make friends faster, which was a good thing.

Also, I spoke English better.

I don’t think I got a school tour.

*Did anybody do anything that was helpful for you?*
No, I didn’t really know anyone.

[Did any of the teachers do anything that helped you transition better?]  
No, I don’t think so.

I wish the teacher would have...  
Asked a student that had been at the school awhile to take me on a school tour.  
The teacher should have introduced everyone in the class.

A Reminder...  

Jaden and Jennifer are friends. They chose to be together for their  
conversation with me. For this reason there is no “Being Together” section following  
Jaden’s narrative. This section will follow Jennifer’s narrative and I will include  
them together. Since they are individuals with different experiences, I separated  
their narratives. I thought it would be confusing to have them interspersed.

Portrait of Jennifer, Age 15

The First Day

Grade five—New school. First day of the School Year. Everyone meets in the gym  
before going to their classroom.

Pretty nerve wracking.  
The school was pretty big compared to my first school that I went to.

Going into the gym was nerve wracking as well, ’cause then everyone is in the gym  
—you see everyone.

The teachers were like, “Hi I am so and so and all this.”  
They didn’t really introduce me to the school.

I kinda had to figure out some stuff on my own.

Different schools do different things—like a Code White

Like sometimes there would be a Code White, I would just kinda have to like guess  
where to go.
They didn’t really explain a lot of stuff to me when I first went.

I just remember being very shy and very, kinda like isolated.
   Just like to myself,
Going to a new school—I am very quiet or very shy.

I just kinda isolated myself from everyone
   until a couple days after and I got to know everyone in the school

I didn’t get no school tour.

I think that would have been helpful if someone took me around and just showed me the ropes of the new school.

Our teacher would send us somewhere,
   —to go drop off papers *(to another classroom).*
   I wouldn’t know where to go.
So I would just kinda walk around the school for five minutes or whatever,
   looking for the classroom, yeah.

I had to get used to the whole new environment.

*(Did the teacher suggest to you that somebody hang out with you at recess or …)*
   I didn’t get that.

The kids weren’t helpful

‘Cause they just kinda like isolated themselves with their groups.
So when a new person came,
They were kinda like,
   “Ooo, who’s that?”
but they’re like,
   “Maybe I won’t like ‘em, maybe I will like ‘em”
but they never really stepped out to help me, if I was kinda confused or lost in the school.

I wish…
*(Teachers would take time to)* Get to know them.

*(The teachers)* would have said, “We’re very nice, you’re going to be fine,” and just kinda like reassured me because I thought I had to look out for people because that is what I kinda did at my old school.
When kids come to a new school, obviously they are going to be overwhelmed and they’re not gonna know the layout of the school and what to do in certain situations. Or find their way around the school.

So I think it would have been better for (the) teacher (to) just give the kid a buddy. Instead of just like meeting someone on your own.

My friend Felicia, I had to meet her on my own. She was in my class but I still had to meet her—on my own. And talk to her which was kind of overwhelming.

I think what would have helped with me was to have a buddy on the first day because I didn’t know anything.

I think that would have like benefited me a lot. Instead of just kind figuring out stuff on my own.

**Being New Again**

Because there was just so many grade fives, they had to get a new teacher.

So I had to switch class like a week into, (the) school (year). I kinda already knew people in my (other) class.

So then I moved again—like I moved classes to a different teacher. That was overwhelming.

I had just got used to all the people in my class but then I moved classes again. It was kinda like I had to start back over again.

**Being Together**

As mentioned earlier, Jaden and Jennifer are two good buddies. Jennifer is an extended family member of mine. When I approached her mom about possibly including her in my study, her mom told me about Jennifer’s friend Jaden, who had recently moved to Canada, she was sure he would be willing to participate too. It
was agreed that I would come to Jennifer’s house for our meeting. The week before our meeting I dropped off consent forms for their parents to read and sign. As previously noted, anytime children are involved there are ethics that need to be considered. Jennifer is a family member, she could have felt pressure to participate because of being family. If this were the situation, Jennifer would not have shown the interest she did, nor would she have phoned her friend Jaden, with me standing there, to invite him to participate.

When I arrived on the Sunday afternoon, Jennifer and Jaden were both downstairs, so that is where we stayed to converse. Our time together started by me telling them the purpose of my research and the ethics involved. Even though I had spoken to their parents and had consent from them, as individuals, they needed to give their permission by signing the assent form. I asked them what would be easier for them—to talk, draw or write about their first day experience. They both indicated that talking would be best and they wanted to be together for the conversation. Jennifer did most of the talking. I was aware of this, so tried to bring Jaden into the conversation as much as possible. Near the end of our conversation, there was some commotion upstairs which we were all distracted by, so I turned off the recording for a few minutes. Our recorded conversation lasted about sixteen minutes.

This was a harder conversation for me. I felt like the awkward child, inviting myself to play in one of their games. Maybe it was because there were two of them. Or, maybe it was because I had never met Jaden before. Maybe it was because I had
recorded the conversation. I am not sure. My academic advisor asked me if I had
hid the recording device. I told him I hadn’t because I used my iPhone, something
they both have and see sitting around all the time. There was no hesitation from
either of them when I asked if I could record our dialogue. Certainly Jennifer
seemed at ease with the conversation, as she sat with her body facing me making
eye contact—expressive with words and gestures. She also provided a lot of
information. Jaden was more reserved, less eye contact, with his body angled to the
side. His body position was perhaps affected by how we were sitting. We sat in an
L-shape. They were on a sofa and I sat on a chair. In total we spent about forty-five
minutes together. When I left, we made a tentative plan to meet the following
Sunday.

One week later, I had not heard from either Jennifer or her parents about our
meeting. People are busy; they are doing me a favour, so I didn't want to be too
pushy; however, it was two p.m. and Sunday was slipping away. I called her home,
and her dad said to text her which I did. She was with Jaden downtown and
suggested we meet in an hour. Remembering this is an extended family member, I
offered to pick them up to save them the bus trip.

We returned to Jennifer’s home. I was not sure where Jennifer went but
Jaden was alone upstairs so I took the opportunity and started with him—he
appeared comfortable with this arrangement. Since Jennifer had spoken twice as
much, as he, as evidenced by their narratives, I wanted them separated for this
meeting. We sat in the living room and I presented Jaden with two separate
documents. The first one was the text of all of the words he had spoken in our conversation from the week before, and four questions I had for him. The second piece was the narrative, which you see here, that I assembled from the first document. My instruction to him was to read over both pieces, to change anything that needed changing, and if he wished, to respond to the questions I had posed. Shortly after, Jennifer showed up. Since I had already started with Jaden it seemed natural to continue with him and then speak with her. Besides I had wanted to speak with them separately and they appeared to be at ease with being separated to go over their pieces. I left Jaden in the living room and went and found Jennifer in the office. I presented to Jennifer the same two pieces I had given to Jaden and gave her the same instruction—read over both pieces and change anything that needed changing. I had not written any questions on hers. Because there is a level of comfort between us, I lingered with her, just to give Jaden time alone. At one point I stuck my head out to see if Jaden was finished. I was unprepared for what I saw. He was sitting on the couch, hunched over the coffee table, engaged in writing.

I asked Jaden and Jennifer to read over their narratives, bearing in mind that I wanted their narratives to sound like them, not like me. They were both informed that these were the excerpts which would go directly into my thesis. I showed Jaden where his new pieces would fit in the text. Near the end of our meeting, Jennifer asked if she could read my thesis when I am finished. I was surprised by this request. Knowing she will read this thesis places an extra responsibility on me as a
researcher, *to get it right* and to present the lived experiences of all the participants with integrity.

**The Researcher and The Process**

I have known Quinn for 7 years and his family has bestowed on me the honorary title of auntie. I never asked if I could speak with Quinn. His mother suggested I talk with him. This family lives two and a half hours away from me so I had her check with Quinn first before I went. I arrived late on a Friday evening. There was no discussion that evening about what I was there to do. Rather, it was “Auntie Elann has arrived, and is here for a sleepover.” The next morning, we sat down to a breakfast feast. When Quinn finished, I sensed he wanted to get this done before he went off to play. When I realized, we were having this conversation now and I was not going to get to have another cup of coffee and more relaxed chatter with his mom, I suddenly felt nervous. I was surprised by this feeling. Where was this nervousness coming from? I think the nervousness was because I realized that something important was going to happen and I didn’t want to mess it up. The child was ready, so I needed to be ready too, without my second cup of coffee.

I was grateful Quinn allowed me to take notes during our time together. I felt a little tension in trying to balance my researcher self with my auntie role. We have a playful relationship and I invited him into a different place—a serious conversation. The best way to help you understand my relationship with Quinn is to give you two small images. At age two, this child was my travel companion, as I sat on the plane nodding off, more than once, I awakened to a little tickle in the ribs and
Quinn’s grinning face. In a crowd of people, I have seen Quinn say to his mom, “There is Auntie Elann,” and he will come and greet me. When he was small, I would pick him up, to say “hello” now I just ruffle his hair instead. I hope for Quinn that he didn’t feel the tension, rather that he felt my care for him and his story. On my ethics application I noted that I would look for signs of discomfort and offer the child a way out. The tension I mentioned earlier didn’t lead to discomfort as Quinn took his time drawing and answered my questions without resistance. One way I tried to reestablish my previous relationship of “Auntie Elann” was to stay a little longer and play a game with him. I realize my research question would have added to the tension I was feeling. It wasn’t an emotionally difficult question, but had my question been about building Lego™ structures, there would have been more ease and excitement on Quinn’s behalf. One of the reasons I shared my own story about being a new student with Quinn, was to silently say, “you are not alone in your experience,” and to try and bring me in alignment with him.

In both instances of Quinn and Elena, note taking was difficult. Difficult because it screams observer and observed. Difficult because you are looking down at your book, writing when you are wanting to be engaged in listening or observing. I was mindful of this and tried to find a balance between, listening, observing and note-taking. In the case of Elena, it meant that I wrote her speech, be it answers or musings, and eliminated or abbreviated my questions to the point of skeleton bones which I filled in later. Quinn didn’t talk a lot, so it was easier to be present with him and hone my note-taking skills. Had I met with Elena first I imagine I would have
missed a lot of her dialogue. I believe the note-taking also added to the tension I experienced with Quinn.

Audio-recorded data versus non-recorded data offers not only a greater quantity of data but also a different experience for the researcher when it comes to reading, reflecting and analyzing. Clearly, with audio recording there is more data, and some would argue richer data; if indeed, more equates with richer. I am not convinced that more data generated by an audio recording means richer data. I think of both Quinn and Elena and the rich data generated from our conversations. As previously illustrated Elena was eager to tell her story, and had a lot to tell. Quinn is a different child from Elena, and while he might not appear to be as eager, he drew about his experience and shared some rich data about his first day. Had I insisted on recording these children, I believe one of two things would have occurred; they would have been uncomfortable and not communicated all that they did, or they would have not participated. They may have also been torn—wanting to share but not wanting to be recorded. So, the adult researcher would have silenced the voice of a young participant and lost valuable data simply because of privileging audio data.

Perhaps you now have an answer as to why two children created visual pieces and two didn’t. While the visual image adds an extra piece of data to consider, another layer or piece of story, my research wasn’t about visual data. My primary concern was what was the best way for my participants to tell me their story—the way that came most readily for them. I also thought it might help the
participants to think about their stories and also give us a place to begin our
conversation, if we needed a place to begin. Had I insisted on an image, Jennifer and
Jaden might have created something meaningless, just to get it done. I could see
them doing this—get it done, just to please me, because as you recall, Jennifer is an
extended family member and she would perhaps feel that pressure to please. So,
had I urged them to produce and they complied, the research would have become
about me, my agenda and my ego.

There is another participant you didn’t meet. This is the younger sister of
one of the participants who had her mother’s consent to be in the study. I was
present to collect her story but she wanted to go play. Her mom thought she should
tell her story first. I disagreed, thinking she should play and get that play out, so she
could be better focused to share her story. I gave the child the option. She chose
play. My notes from this meeting are:

*Chooses her spot. It is in the play room at a little table. Starts her resistance at
the assent form. In order to get her to draw a picture of her saying ‘stop’ I
offer to draw a picture of me saying ‘stop.’ We draw alongside together.
When it comes to the, “Do you want to share your story, draw a picture of
your first day?” She says, “No.” The chatter bug is silent. This is the one that
wanted to participate!*

This was a very unexpected moment for me. The one who, according to mom, has
had a harder start to the new school, speaks. The younger sister, who likes new
adventures and has adapted well, is silent, squirming, uncomfortable, and doesn’t
want to share her first day story. In fact, when the younger sister overheard her
mom telling her sibling about my research, she asked if she also could tell her story. The quiet one speaks, and for reasons unknown to me, the chatterbox is silent.

**My Reflection on the Data**

When I read over these portraits and reflect on the time I spent with each individual, the words relating to *friends* is something that stands out and is woven into the story of each participant. We hear Quinn, expressing that his day would have been made better if he would have had a friend. In turn, Elena told me how she sought out Jewel, a friend she had known before. In Jaden’s narrative he conveys, how his “only friend” was his source of help at his first school. He also states that with improved English he could make friends faster in his new school. Finally Jennifer, speaks about her friend Felicia and being overwhelmed by the experience of initiating gestures to establish a friendship.

Talking with Jaden and Jennifer I asked if anyone was not helpful. Jennifer replied, that the students were not helpful. I was surprised by this but she described grade five students who seemingly were a tight group. I wondered aloud if a teacher had done anything to initiate friendships. By that, I was thinking of a *thoughtful pairing*, but what I suggested was a person like a recess buddy. Jennifer indicated that wasn’t her experience. Both Jaden and Jennifer pointed out that their teachers could have done more to integrate them with their peers. It might be easy to attribute this as teenage attitude, the “no one ever does anything for us” song and

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7 Thoughtful Pairing - when the teacher pairs new children with someone whom they think may be a good friend for them.
brush off their words. Typical teenage whining or not, these are their feelings and their experiences in their words. Within the transcripts, you will read Jennifer’s words, speaking about her grade six teacher, who would ask them to tour their new classmates around and spend time with them on that first day. This young person can articulate both the positive and the negative experiences of new students. I wonder what Jennifer’s story would have been, if her grade six teacher, who practiced giving new students a buddy, had been her grade five teacher instead?

So much of what we do in schools involves relationships. Recess—you don’t have friends? Then you stand alone. The teacher says, “pick your partner...” and you have no partner? Then your options are to be paired with someone else who is partner-less, and let’s be honest, if you were friends, you would have already picked each other or you are now the third wheel in someone else’s friend party. You are sick and you need a friend to sit with you? You are on your own. If there is someone making fun of you? Again, you are on your own; there is no one to stand up and stand with you.

From my own experience as a new student, the memory which stands out for me, is the desire to make a friend. Even now, my friends are like anchors. When I am in group of people, my instinct is to find my friend. If I have no friends there, I will put out my friend feelers and attempt to find someone I can connect with. For me to walk into a room of people, knowing my friend is there is a feeling of comfort and safety.
When I was thinking about the experience of being a new student, the *first day school tour* came to mind. I wondered if the opportunity to tour the school with classmates would be welcomed. I speculated that the tour might leave a new student feeling awkward; however, I discovered that was not the case and was interested by what each participant mentioned regarding the first day tour in their narrative. Quinn spoke about this as his experience. When speaking about it, Quinn looked me in the eye and spoke with expression in his voice which left me with the impression that this was a good part of his day. Elena made sure I knew this first day tour was helpful to new kids by punctuating her words with her finger pointed at me and her eyes widening with expression when she told me about it. Jennifer and Jaden both mentioned the school tour—both spoke about getting lost in their schools and both indicated a tour would have been helpful to them. Jennifer’s words still linger, “I had to get used to a whole new environment.” Getting used to a whole new environment included, where she should go in the event of an emergency (Code White). It is interesting to me that Jennifer mentioned this piece of not knowing where to go in an emergency. It makes me wonder if she had the experience or if it was a little piece of anxiety sitting in her thoughts. I never had this experience when I moved to my new school. The school was a newly built so we all were all experiencing the space for the first time.

I was surprised to hear from Jaden that he thought his first school was “pretty big.” I have spent many hours in that same school and would not classify it as big. It is a bit of a rat maze due to the basement and additions and I can see how
it would be possible to get lost. Reflecting on the space we inhabit and how it looks to children compared to adults, I am recalling the first elementary school I attended from kindergarten through to grade two and how big it seemed. Years later, as a high school student, I returned to do some volunteering and was struck by how small it was. Until now, I never considered how a new school would appear to new students. When welcoming a new student, I want to be mindful of how the school may appear to them and let them take a friend as a guide, if needed.

I spent some time thinking about the experiences I’ve had in occupying a new environment, to make a connection with desiring to have that sense of space which Jaden and Jennifer spoke of. I could not pull anything from my memory of being lost and wishing to have had a guide. I have a very good sense of direction which helps immensely and gives me confidence when I am in a new environment. When I am in a new location, be it as a resident or a traveller, I like to walk around to get to know the area. That desire has to do with curiosity more than anything. Jennifer and Jaden indicated that as new students being familiar with the layout of the school would have given them a sense of safety, confidence and comfort because things were familiar.

A few days after my initial conversation with Jennifer and Jaden, I was in the staffroom at school and I overheard a conversation between two of my colleagues. One teacher talked about a recent year of immense turnover in her classroom. It was a classroom with numbers close to 30 and about 20 students entered and 20 left in one school year. Her comment was, “By the end of the year, it was a whole
Imagine arriving in that classroom in May, perhaps being new student number 20. If that were the case and I were the teacher, living that year of major turnover, I would have been spent. The mariachi welcome-to-our-school band would have played its last dying note four students before. And the Welcome Wagon Lady? She would have been out of baskets long before that.

All of the participants mentioned feeling shy on that first day. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines shy as “feeling nervous and uncomfortable about meeting and talking to people.” In addition to the word “shy,” Elena and Jaden specifically mentioned feeling nervous and Jennifer intensified the word “nervous” to “nerve wracking.” Elena even spoke about being nervous to the point of feeling sick.

Elena and Quinn presented us with mixed emotions that may accompany the new school experience for some. In addition to feeling, shy, alone and nervous, they mentioned being excited for the first day and “happy to start fresh.” These feelings of being excited and happy about a new school experience, are not what I remember from my own experience. Even after hearing them both speak, it hasn’t stirred any memory for me. You may recall Jude—who I introduced in the prologue—his haunting eyes did not give any flicker of excitement nor happiness for the first day. Even though I have not witnessed these feelings of excitement and happiness, I wondered if mixed emotions would be a part of a first day experience and these two participants confirmed my questions.


**Obtaining the Data**

Finding participants was a little tricky. Because I am dealing with children and couldn’t ask them directly, I needed to ask their parents first. I also didn’t want the young people to feel pressured to say “yes,” so, with the exception of Elena, someone else asked them. With Elena, I asked her foster mom and she gave permission to ask her directly. I had intended to ask permission of the school board I work for to send home a note with the children who had recently moved to the school; however, I didn’t realize the school board only looks at these requests three times a year, and I had missed the deadline. I was able to put up a poster at my massage therapist’s office but no enquiries resulted from that effort. The reason I didn’t put up more posters was because I had interviewed four participants already. I felt I only needed one or two more. I chose my massage therapist’s office because I was running out of time, and it felt like a safe place to post something of this nature.

I struggled with the number of children needed for this piece of research. I was torn and I wanted to speak to a few more children but time was a factor. I also was reminded in one of the committee meetings that this research is not my life work—it is a master’s level thesis. I will share the questions I asked myself in order to satisfy the struggle I had, questioning whether or not I had enough research participants. Do I have a better understanding of the lived experience of new students? Yes. Am I able to make changes to my own practice because of this research? Yes. Am I able to make recommendations to those who work with young people about what new students may need, or how to ask for and listen to stories of
young people? Yes. I will speak more to the answers for these questions in the upcoming paragraph and in the following chapter.

Recalling the sewing metaphor which opened this chapter, I am the seamstress. I fashioned the children’s portraits from their narratives. While I have included almost every word from their narratives, the words I left out were for reasons of smoothing and/or, from my perspective, the extra words didn’t add to the narrative. “Writing is never innocent. Writing always inscribes” (Richardson, 2002, p. 879). While I have tried to write with integrity, honouring the narratives of my participants, you are reading their stories tailored by me.

What Have I Learned?

As I ponder this question, I am aware that my learning extends beyond my research question: the lived experience of what is it like to be a new student and what is helpful or not helpful to students when they enter a new school. I have developed a new and enriched understanding of research with children, and a new awareness about me as a researcher and also as an individual. I will share with you my discoveries.

What it is like to be a new student? Reading the narratives, the reader can see that the first day is met with many emotions, sometimes conflicting. Elena probably best explained this when she spoke about feeling “happy to start fresh,” and yet feeling sadness to leave old friends, and a nervousness which left her feeling sick. Confusion was also added to the mix of adjectives used to describe this first
day—confusion in navigating a new environment, and confusion regarding whether some academic learning had been covered in the previous school or not.

After conversing with these students and spending time with their narratives, I believe they have whispered that the first day desire of their heart is to have a friend. Quinn's words linger in my mind when he responded to my question regarding what would have made his first day better. “Just a friend,” was his quiet reply. As I mentioned earlier, the topic of friendship was featured in each narrative. Providing opportunities for new students to interact with their classmates would help them integrate with their peers and give occasion to form friendships.

The first day tour, of which I was silently critical before I undertook this study, is important. I wondered if the tour made them feel awkward and even more new. I was mistaken. This tour gives a new student a sense of their new environment, helping them to become familiar with the layout of the school. Depending on who is conducting the tour, it either allows them an opportunity to connect with their peers, or some one-on-one time with their teacher.

From the data gathering process, I have learned how to take information gleaned from past conversations with the young participants and integrate my discoveries into questions for the next participant. I was curious if my participants had similarities or differences in feelings or experiences—these silent musings became audible questions in our next meetings or with other participants. New questions have the potential to lead the conversations into another direction—allowing for more detail or other stories to arise.
In my journal, I wrote that I wanted to talk about “the gift of two meetings.” I am thankful that I did have more than one meeting with the participants, as it allowed me to ponder over what they spoke, and formulate questions for our next meeting. Furthermore, with the exception of Jennifer, the participants added more information to their stories, enabling me to see another facet of their lived experience. If you are thinking I have stumbled upon the perfect number of meetings, please read on. Looking over Jaden’s portrait and seeing the words he had written; “weird” and “interesting,” I couldn’t believe that I had missed asking him to explain a little more about those words. When looking back in the notes from our conversations, I was reminded that in our second meeting, those were the words he wrote in answer to how he felt on his first day. In that meeting, I didn’t have the time needed to thoughtfully reflect on the words he wrote. With him and the others too, I find myself wishing for third meetings; however, I know if I had the opportunity of a third meeting, I would be sitting here with other questions, and wishing for a fourth conversation. There is no perfect number. Questions will always arise.

Earlier in the chapter, when I provided a rationale as to why I chose to represent the narratives as portraits, I stated that a different photographer, under different conditions will produce a different portrait. One of my participants made me aware of a different portrait that was hanging in their house. It was a portrait showing their mother that the first day went alright—not hard. I asked if they wanted to share their narrative with their mother. They answered, “no,” as they did
not want their mother to know that the first day was hard. Of course, had their mother, the consenting guardian, wished to have seen their narrative, I would have had to share it.  

I have been made aware again that if an effort is made to be present with children, and to give them choices, they will talk. Age is irrelevant. Had I chosen the location and had I chosen the method, some would have not participated, or not engaged in the research at the same level. We may have walked together but our steps would have been fewer. In Chapter Five I delve into how it is possible to be present with young people—it means laying aside the researcher’s ego.

What do I now understand about myself as a researcher and as an individual? This is a personal piece, which I don’t wish to dwell on, at risk of being self-indulgent. I will speak a little more about it in Chapter Five. For now, I am simply going to say, I can do this: the reading, the thinking, the connecting, the writing and the listening. As for me, as an individual, one of my former professors gave me a little insight well when she said, “you just always needed a little more time.”

Ellis and Bochner (2003), are speaking about personal narratives and that stories are used to understand “how to live our lives meaningfully” (p. 244). Perhaps these children’s portraits will help educators understand how to welcome new students meaningfully—encouraging teachers to be more mindful and caring in our interactions when these children arrive at our classroom door.

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8 I am purposely using third person plural pronouns to obscure their identity.
Chapter 5: Reflection

We End With the Beginning

Let’s revisit the ‘Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria,’ (Tracy, 2010) which was instrumental in framing my understanding about what my research needed to include. Tracy called for qualitative work to be comprised of: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence in qualitative research. As I come to a close with this research, it is humbling to take a look at this list again. Have I given due diligence to all eight categories in order to qualify for “excellent qualitative research”?

In this chapter I will come back to the research question—the lived experience of what is it like to be a new student and what is helpful or not helpful to students when they enter a new school—and discuss my findings. I will go back into research previously cited in the thesis, link this to my data to discuss mobility and schools and give recommendations for educators and those wishing to research with children. I will briefly discuss the importance to keep asking for children’s stories, provide recommendations for further study and in the closing paragraphs, speak about what I will take from this experience.

The Lived Experience of What it is Like to be a New Student

Reflecting on the stories the participants shared, the first day was not easy for any of them. Sage spoke of being alone and feeling awkward. Quinn’s desire of wanting a friend still lingers. While his words regarding desire for a friend on that first day were spoken three times in two different conversations, weeks apart, what
resonates is not just the spoken words, it is how the words were spoken, softly, tinged with sadness, the position of the body, combined with his gaze. Denham and Onwuegbuzie (2013) urged researchers to pay attention to the nonverbal cues, in order to access another layer of data. It is true, Quinn said it was a “kind of easy” day. Taking into account his words and how they were spoken, I am left with the feeling that this first day was on the hard side of easy. Jennifer used the words “nerve wracking” three times in her narrative. Because of the way her words were spoken, at one point even bracketed with a little laughter, they don’t carry the same emotional meaning as Quinn’s. This doesn’t mean her words are discredited due to their non verbal cues, rather it suggests a closer look into Jennifer’s situation. It has been four years since that first day experience for her. Maybe, had I met with Jennifer four months after the first day at her new school, her words would haunt in the same manner as Quinn’s words. She is four years removed from that event and those first-day-desired-friendships have been formed.

In Chapter One I mused about the new child who comes to the classroom door and presented an image of a child standing quietly, “carrying an invisible suitcase holding memories of a place left behind, and wearing a backpack stuffed with anxiety, fear, or maybe excitement for a new school experience.” What I discovered, upon listening to the stories and reviewing the data is that this is true. This first day experience can be met with conflicting feelings and one child can experience a range of emotions. I have never seen excitement on the face of a newcomer, nor was it something I felt when I was a new student. However, it is
evident that positive feelings for the first day are tucked inside the backpack along with fears and timidity. It is important to note that in the studies by Rumberger et al. (1999), Rhodes (2008), Backous (2011), Vaslavsky (2013) Messiou and Jones (2015) my participants’ feelings affirmed the feelings of their participants—loneliness, sadness at leaving friends behind, concerns about making new friends.

**What is Helpful to Students When They Enter A New School**

Each participant noted the role the teacher played or could play on the first day. Going back to Chapter Two, I wondered if we asked those who had experienced being new student to tell us what a “good teacher” does to make that first day better, the students would say they “listen, care and help.” Sage specifically mentioned the importance of the teacher’s demeanour and that her new teacher met her criteria of how to be with new students—“cheerful and friendly.” She also spoke of the school tour being given by the teacher for reasons of not wanting to bother other students but also to have one-on-one time with the teacher. This desire suggests to me that she was looking for a teacher who would, “listen, care and help.” While the other participants didn’t indicate their teachers were bad, there was a sense that the teachers could have done more in terms of caring and helping. Two ways the teachers showed helpfulness were by spending time with the child and organizing a school tour. These efforts familiarized the new students with their new surroundings and gave them confidence to navigate their school.
...or not Helpful

Jennifer was the only participant that spoke directly to this piece. She told me about her classmates, who I described in Chapter Four, as a “tight knit” group. Jennifer attended an elementary school which received an influx of students from a new housing development. She was not from their neighbourhood. Jennifer came from a new area, with big houses, from the other side of the road. Did this play into how her classmates welcomed her? Were they jealous of these children because of a perceived social class difference or did they have preconceived ideas about what kind of children would be coming to their school from this new development? Without talking to other children in her class, it is impossible to say for sure. The reason I pose these questions is this was a phenomenon my elementary school experienced. New students who lived in big new houses came to our school. We had ideas about who these people would be. They had money and would be a little snobby, or that is what we thought. I believe schools and teachers have a role in changing or shifting some of these attitudes, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Mobility and Schools

In Chapter Two, literature which spoke about the effects of mobility on the mobile student and the classrooms these mobile students attend was presented. It is reasonable to expect that highly mobile students are going to experience similar conditions that participants spoke of—“tight knit groups” or cliques, or they could be new student number 20 in a classroom of high turnover. Perhaps their teacher
will not ask for classmates to volunteer to take them around, introducing them to
their new environment and possible new friends, or their teacher may not practice
thoughtful pairings nor take the time to get to know them. In addition to the
external factors, like other children who move, highly mobile students may present
mixed emotions about another new school—feeling shy, nervous, “sad to leave
friends behind and happy to start fresh.” They may also be like Quinn, possessing a
deep desire to have a friend to help the first day be better.

The literature I examined concluded that mobility was not the reason for
poor academics —students who moved were already disadvantaged in some way
and probably living in poverty (Alexander et al., 1996; Boon, 2011; Porter &
Edwards, 2014; Pribesh, & Downey, 1999; Rumberger, 2003). I posed a question;
“Could current school practices further impoverish by adding relational poverty to
economic poverty to these mobile students as they seek to find entrance into a new
school community?”—the answer seems to be “yes.” Looking at the data, Jaden and
Jennifer’s stories represent two different schools and three different classroom
teachers. Jennifer expressed a desire that the teachers “would (have) take(n) time
to get to know them” and Jaden wished the teacher would have, “asked a student
that had been to the school a while to take me on a school tour. The teacher should
of introduced everyone in the class.” Neither of these children received a school
tour which would have familiarized them to their new school. Imagine a highly
mobile student, suffering broken social ties (Alexander et al., 1996; Aman, 2008;
Boon, 2011; Obradović et al., 2009; Pribesh, & Downey, 1999; Rumberger, 2003;
Rumberger et al., 1999; Sorin & Iloste, 2006; Wood et al., 1993) due to frequent moves speaking the words Jaden and Jennifer spoke.

Another school practice which can affect mobile students as they try to enter a new school community is being from a different socio-economic group or not being from the right neighbourhood. This is something that Jennifer may have experienced when she spoke about grade five students who “isolated themselves” and didn’t “really step out to help” her. It cannot be for certain that this was what she experienced but what I can determine with certainty is, this does happen. While Aman (2008) speaks of this regarding Aboriginal students and their school success in British Columbia, I am very aware these attitudes are extended to other groups of students as well.

**Recommendations for Educators**

We can connect Miller’s (2005) text, which encourages the educators to slow down and be fully present, to some of the desires spoken by the participants in this study. Jennifer wished that the teacher would have taken the time to get to know her and speak words of reassurance. Jaden’s words suggested that his teachers didn’t realize that as a new student he would be lost in a new space. Sage specifically expressed that she wanted the teacher to give the school tour. Also, Elena stated, “When people are new and people are nice, that makes them feel welcome.” It is possible Elena could have been referring to students being nice, but it is fair to say that when teachers are nice, students feel welcome. This is what Sage
indicated in her narrative. Each of these students is asking their teachers to spend some time with them.

Why should we care about this particular piece of research? How can we not care when children, our nation’s future, are involved? Recalling the statement that “children’s voices can challenge what is known,” (Eldén, 2012, p. 78), the voices of these participants will perhaps point out to educators, including myself, that we could do and be more in our practice with them. I am not talking about bringing in the aforementioned mariachi band and Welcome Wagon, rather the small gestures that connect us to people—checking in on them, perhaps writing a little note home a week after arrival indicating a positive attribute of the child which is making a difference in the class, a class sharing circle where the current students tell the new student what is special about the class or everyone shares one thing about themselves as an introduction. I recommend having a “how will we welcome new students into our class” conversation at the beginning of the school year, perhaps even signing students up for the role of tour guide. This would avoid the unexpected guest syndrome.

**Recommendations for Researching With Children**

I think there was an audible guffaw when, in my proposal, I stated, "my participants will lead and I will follow." “How is that possible?” came the incredulous question. This is how it’s possible. You don’t want to be recorded? Fine. Is it okay if I take notes instead? Thank you. You want to sit on the floor to do this interview? Fine. You want me to come in two hours to have this conversation?
(“I wasn’t planning this for today,” unspoken thoughts.) Okay, I’ll come. You and your friend want to be together to converse about being a new student? Sure. You want me to forego my second cup of coffee because you’re ready? Okay. You want to leave in the middle of our conversation and get a book to share. Okay. You want to go outside and play first? Fine.

I may have also sensed some skepticism about the quality of data one could get from young children, especially those as young as seven. And yet when I close my eyes and let the voices of the participants come to me, it is eight year old Quinn’s quiet voice, longing for a friend, that calls forth the loudest. These children were generous with me. Perhaps some of this generosity is due to knowing most of them in some way, with the exception of Jaden, outside of this research study. In spite of a previous relationship, had I not given them as much choice as I did, observed suggestions others had given about researching with children, been mindful of adult-centered controls, power imbalances and considered the impact of the location, (Angell et., 2014; Heath et al., 2009; Scott, 2008; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008) the data would not be as rich.

**There is Always Another Story**

I am grateful I was able to speak with five children and obtain their stories—“data with a soul” (Brown, 2010). We who teach children can continue to be curious and ask for stories about what would be helpful to them when they come to a new school, and for stories which will enable us to understand their perspectives. Why should this be done? Because there is always another story—a different person or a
different day brings a different story and a different story will give more data to consider.

These narratives were presented like pieces of art—portraits. There are other stories that live on outside the framed edges of any work. Some of these participants I will see again. It is possible I will hear another story of what their first day experience was like.

I too have a story which will live outside this piece of art—this thesis. My story is a result of standing in front of the students and their narratives. I have been moved. As a result I have created this garment of care which will affect how I welcome new students.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Recalling John Dewey’s belief that, “examining experience is the key to education,” any research question which stops to thoughtfully enquire and listen to the opinions, experiences, thoughts and ideas voiced by young people is a recommended study, especially when the research is investigating programs or services which aim to meet the needs of children. Regarding researching mobility, there are many different directions for possible research; including looking at a teacher’s personal journey in a class with high turnover. That said, the recommendations I am going to make are focused on children’s stories that fashion a garment of welcome and care for teachers to wear.

When thinking of how Quinn’s words, spoken four months after his move, compared to Jennifer’s words, spoken four years after her move, I suggest that it
might be worthwhile to interview participants within the first year of their move when the experience is still close at hand, or a specific time period after a move. It may be advantageous to converse with girls who move into a new school when they are in grades six to nine. Those of us who teach these grades know this is a difficult time period.

Another valuable study could focus on a school with a highly mobile population. This investigation could be all encompassing, including narratives of administrators, teachers, support staff, parents and students (new and current). An additional study could inquire into teachers’ narratives regarding welcoming and integrating new students into their classroom, alongside student narratives about being welcomed into their new school. Or a researcher may gather student narratives about new classmates—how to welcome new students, what it is like to have new students in the class, and what thoughts go through their mind when the teacher tells the class a new student will be joining the classroom.

**What Can I Take From This Experience**

When thinking about new children, there is a question I pondered in Chapter Two, “Is it possible that I passed over new students without trying to help them adjust or validate their importance?” I am ashamed to say this, but the answer is, “yes.” Students coming mid-year means integrating them into the classroom and can completely change the class dynamics. Also, time must be spent finding out where the new student is academically. If there are any gaps, especially in literacy and math, the teacher must find extra time to help them acquire missing knowledge.
You may recall, this isn’t the only challenge teachers have. My Canadian teaching colleagues are stressed, as demands increase, and we are being asked to do more with less (Froese-Germain, 2014; Martin et al., 2012). Will I pass over new students in the future because I am tired and overwhelmed? I truly hope not, as the research I have done here has already begun to inform my practice as in how I interact with new students in the building—taking time to be present with them.

**Conclusion**

This research may have come under the guise of wanting to learn about the lived experience of new children. The heart of the study, is my care and interest in the children I work with. Reflecting on the beginning of this research, it was hard for me to select a topic. I wanted it to be a “worthy topic,” like Tracy (2010) mentioned. I also wanted my research to involve talking with children. I could have picked any topic that involved understanding children, with the intent to make recommendations to those who work with children about ways to make things better for them. Conversing with children is my gift. By talking, I mean more than spoken word, it is about connecting and being present with the young person.

When I was working with these young people and writing about them, I wanted to behold them in the light of being my niece or nephew. Every effort to keep these young people safe, whether during our conversations or after this work has been published, has been made. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to spend time with these young people and to hear stories of their lived experiences. My hope is that I have cared for them and their stories in a way that honors their
experience. I also hope this research study can help those of us who work with children to slow down and fashion a garment to wear—one where care, welcome, time for listening and sensitivity have been stitched in, with a map of the school in the pocket.

My desire is that this research meets Tracy’s (2010) definition of a “worthy study,” one which is “interesting and point(s) out surprises—issues that shake readers from their common-sense assumptions and practices” (p. 841). Perhaps some of the participants’ words have been like the Blue Morphos against the leafy green backdrop of the jungle, interrupting your thoughts, as they have mine and altering how we move from this place, where reader and researcher have walked together.
Epilogue: “Tell me your story.”

During the writing of this thesis I was invited to tell my story—it was an unexpected invitation. I had a story to tell but I didn’t know it was going to be asked for. What propels me to document this here? My work is about stories. In telling my story I make sense of it—maybe. I like to ponder, muse and reflect back on experiences. What are my questions after the story telling? Did I convey the right message? Certainly the listener lent a caring and listening ear, but did they hear my story in the way it was for me? Did I give them enough detail? Too much? I was aware that a caring heart was listening to me. However, there were details I couldn’t tell because I didn’t know if it was safe.

We are led to believe that in telling our stories we can make sense of our experiences. Maybe. Or, perhaps we just get more tangled in it. Or, it is possible we need to tell our story to several different people before we make sense of it. This story, I was invited to share, had been shared with more than one person before the invitation of, “Tell me your story” was given. Was my last telling the best? The clearest? I don’t believe so. For one, I wasn’t prepared to give my story, while the listener was sympathetic, I wasn’t sure what was safe to tell.

What helped me tell my story—the invitation, the “caring and listening ear.” Definitely there’s a sense of relief around telling a story you want to and need to tell. But for me with this story, I am left with relief coupled with questions.
References


Dillabough, McLeod, & Oliver. (2014). Distant cities, travelling tales and segmented young lives: Making and remaking youth exclusion across time and place.


McChesney, E. (2010). Drawing out stories: First graders draw about their weekends and have their stories drawn out into words. Unpublished paper


Appendix A: Ethics Approval

University of Regina
Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

Investigator(s): Elaine Mair McChesney
Department: Educational Psychology
Funder: Unfunded
Supervisor: Dr. Paul Hart
Title: The Used Experience of Changing School

APPROVED ON: January 8, 2016
RENEWAL DATE: January 8, 2017

APPROVAL OF:
Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review

Recruitment Letter
1. Letter to Mike Walter, Deputy Director, School Services, Regina, Public School
2. Instagram Post
3. Public Post

Participant Consent Form
Consent (Assent) Form for Younger Students
Consent (Assent) Form for Older Students
Questionnaire-Possible Conversation Starters

FULL BOARD MEETING

DELEGATED REVIEW _X_

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: http://www.uregina.ca/research/forms/forms/forms/human/forms.html.

[Signature]

Dr. Larono Hooper, Chair
University of Regina Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:
Research Office
University of Regina
Research and Innovation Centre 100
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Telephone: 306-337-5077
Fax: 306-337-5078
research.ethics@uregina.ca
Appendix B: Recruitment Letters

202-99 Mischener Dr.
Regina, SK, S4V 0L1
(306) 565-2836
elann.mc@gmail.com

November 22, 2015

Mike Walter
Deputy Director, School Services,
Regina Public Schools
1689 - 4th Avenue
Regina, SK, S4R 8C8

Dear Mr. Walter,

I am a teacher for Regina Public Schools, currently teaching at three schools in the city: Marion McVeety, Ethel Millicen and Douglas Park.

Presently, I am working toward attaining my masters degree in Educational Psychology at the University of Regina. At this time I am working on my thesis and my research topic is, The Lived Experiences of Children Who Have Changed Schools.

I am writing to request permission to send home with the students of Marion McVeety, Ethel Millicen and Douglas Park Schools a note that would invite parents of possible participants to get in touch with me.

The note would read:

I am working toward attaining my masters degree in Educational Psychology at the University of Regina. My research topic is, The Lived Experiences of Children Who Have Changed Schools. For my research, I am looking to meet, converse and gather stories from young people (ages 7-16) about what it is like to be a new student in a new school. In efforts to better understand the lived experience of being a new student, participants will be asked to draw, write, or create an image to illustrate a piece of their experience. If your child is interested in participating, please contact me at elann.mcchesney@sk.ca. Please note, this work is in no way affiliated with Regina Public Schools.

If there is any other information you require, I would be happy to provide it.

Thanks for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Elann McChesney
Has your child experienced being a new student in a new school?

I am looking to meet, converse and gather stories from young people (ages 7-16) about what it is like to be a new student in a new school. In efforts to better understand the lived experience of being a new student, participants will be asked to draw, write, or create an image to illustrate a piece if their experience. If you know of anyone who may be interested in having their child voluntarily participate (1-2 hour time commitment), please have them contact me.

Elann McChesney
mcchesne@uregina.ca

This research is being conducted to fulfil the requirements of in order to complete a masters degree in Educational Psychology at the University of Regina and has received ethics approval from the University of Regina.
Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: The Lived Experience of Being a New Student

Researchers: Elain McCashney, Graduate Student, University of Regina, 306 550 8607, emccashney@uregina.ca

Supervisor: Paul Hart, PhD, Faculty of Education, 306 585 4626, paul.hart@uregina.ca

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:
- This purpose of this project is to investigate the lived experiences of children who have changed schools and inquire as to what was helpful or not helpful to them when they entered their new school.

Procedures: (See consent guidelines section 4)
- My plan is to meet twice for a half hour to forty-five minutes and engage in dialogue with the child. In the first meeting the child will choose the best way to tell their story and will be given a choice of drawing, creating a collage, word art or retelling through the use of puppets. The purpose of the second meeting is to go over their story and ask if they want to add or remove anything. The meetings will take place in a mutually agreed upon location (school, home or public library). The conversations will be audio recorded.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Funded by: Not funded

Potential Risks: (see guidelines section 6)
- There are no known or anticipated risks to your child by participating in this research.
- Risk(s) will be addressed by: Paying close attention to the spoken and body language of your child. I will check in with your child to ensure they are still comfortable and wanting to continue. Also, I will provide books off to the side, which would provide a way out of the conversation for your child.
- If your child is displaying any signs of emotional distress, we will stop and I will inform you of what I have observed. Should counseling and other services be necessary, I will suggest options or other services to help your child.
- If your child is displaying signs indicating they are uncomfortable and not wanting to continue or participate then we would terminate their involvement in the study.

Potential Benefits: (see consent guidelines section 7)
- The potential significance is to help educators examine their own practice as to what they do in welcoming and transitioning new students to the classroom.
- Furthermore, my hope is the student ‘narratives’ will speak to us as educators, so
we welcome them in a way that affirms them as individuals, setting them up for
social and academic success in the classroom.

Confidentiality: (see consent guidelines section 9)
- Your child will choose a pseudonym to protect their identity
- Being this is a small sample size, it is possible, if someone knows your child was
  involved, they could identify your child when they read the study.
- Myself and my supervisor will have access to the data which will be stored as a
  password protected computer file in a locked filing cabinet.

Right to Withdraw: (see consent guidelines section 10)
- Your child’s participation is voluntary and they can answer only those questions
  that they are comfortable with. You may withdraw your child at any time.
- Your child may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time
  and without explanation (or penalty of any sort - i.e. a student’s RPS).
- Should you wish to withdraw the data will be deleted and not included in the study.
- Your right to withdraw or modify your child’s data from the study will apply until
  results have been disseminated (one week after our final meeting). After this date,
  it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred
  and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow up: (see section 11)
- To obtain results from the study, please email me.

Questions or Concerns: (see section 12)
- Contact the researcher using the information at the top of page 1.
- This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the UBC Research Ethics
  Board on January 8, 2016. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may
  be addressed to the committee at (585-4775 or research.ethics@ubc.ca). Out of
town participants may call collect.

Consent

SIGN CONSENT
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description
provided. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have
been answered. I consent to having my child participate in the research project. A copy of this
Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Researcher’s Signature Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Visual Data: Participant or parent/guardian to provide initials:
- Any visual data (drawing/collage/word art) created by my child may be copied and
  reproduced for:

Analysis ______ Dissemination* ______
Appendix D: Consent (Assent) Form for Younger Students

Consent (Assent) Form for Younger Students

Ms. McChesney goes to school, just like me. Her school is called the University of Regina.

She has to do her work for her teachers, just like me.

This is me at school.

At school I learn about ____________________________________________
__________________________________________
At Ms. McChesney’s school she learns about children and how to be a better teacher.

Ms. McChesney wants me to tell her about what it is like to be a new student in a new school. The only people who will listen to our stories or see the all the work we do together are her teachers and herself. Later, my story and my work may go into a big book she is writing, so we will choose a new name for me, to help keep me safe.

I know I can stop sharing my story at any time by using my words or by using this picture.

I say YES / NO to sharing my story about being a new student with Ms. McChesney.

I say YES / NO to having my story recorded.

Participant signature ____________________________

Researcher signature ____________________________

Date ____________________________

Adapted from Kelly Howarth at McGill (pg 18) Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives Lynn Butler-Kisber Mar 1 2010
Appendix E: Consent (Assent) Form for Older Students

Consent (Assent) Form for Older Students

Ms. McChesney goes to the University of Regina, where she is working on her Master’s Thesis.

Ms. McChesney wants me to tell her about what it is like to be a new student in a new school. The only people who will listen to our stories or see all the work we do together are her teachers and herself.

I understand that my story and the work we do together (drawings, written words, collage, artifacts created to tell my story) may become a part of her thesis. In order to protect my identity, I will choose a new name for myself.

I know I can stop sharing my story at any time and that no harm will come to me by stopping.

I say _____ to sharing my story (artifacts included) about being a new student with Ms. McChesney.

I say _____ to having my story recorded.

Participant signature _____________________________

Researcher signature _____________________________

Date _____________
Appendix F: Possible Questions

Possible Conversation Starters

1. Do you remember your first day at your new school?
2. Can you tell me about your first day at your new school?
3. Do you remember if anyone did something that was helpful for you? Did something to make you feel welcome or good or safe about being there?
4. Do you remember if anyone did something that was not helpful for you? Did something to make you feel not welcome or uncomfortable about being there?
5. Can you illustrate for me something you remember from your first day? (Illustrate through drawing, words and puppets)

This is not an interview with set questions, rather it will be a conversation. I will open the conversation with either question 1 or 2. I will use whatever the child gives me in course of our conversation to extend and keep the conversation going. During our conversation I will use phrases like, "Can you tell me more...", "I am curious about what you mentioned..." We may or may not get to talking about what was helpful or not helpful, as with children you have to be flexible to their needs.

For Reference:


Appendix G: Quinn’s Drawing
Appendix H: Elena’s Drawing