CHILDREN AGED NINE TO TWELVE YEARS IN OUTSIDE

SCHOOL HOURS CARE IN AUSTRALIA

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B. Ed. (Victoria College)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of
Master of Education Major Thesis

January 2013

Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne

Produced on archival quality paper

ABSTRACT

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) Services provide care, leisure and education for children aged five to twelve years in the hours before and after school and during vacation times. The number of children using OSHC in Australia has grown significantly over the last ten years. This thesis is a qualitative research project into the experiences of nine older children aged nine to twelve years attending OSHC at one of three research sites in Melbourne, Australia. In OSHC, older children are a minority group that practitioners have long regarded as more challenging than those aged 5 to 8 years. How practitioners currently understand older children appears to be greatly influenced by developmental theory.

This study investigated the experiences of the nine participants using poststructural theories of knowledge, power, discourse and binary oppositions in order to provide new knowledge of how older children participate in and experience OSHC. The analysis provided evidence of how developmental discourses operate in OSHC and how older children and practitioners use them differently. Older children use the discourse to advantage themselves and position themselves as superior to younger children. Practitioners, in enacting the discourse, sometimes privilege younger children at the expense of the minority older child. The analysis showed that what is considered 'true' about older children can vary depending on the perspective of who is creating the truth, and that these truths can have power effects. The study also documents how binaries are used to create knowledge about older children and younger children and that the knowledge these binaries create differs depending on whose perspective is adopted.

This project also chose to adopt postmodern views of children by positioning the participants as co-researchers rather than research subjects, with the power to influence research method and implementation. The participants embraced this level of involvement in the project and demonstrated themselves to be capable decision makers and researchers. Their involvement in this way contributed to data

that more closely represented their own opinions, experiences and understandings of OSHC.

In applying poststructural theories to the question of older children in OSHC, this study has provided new knowledge about a question that has concerned practitioners for many years. It provides knowledge that will add to that already afforded by developmental theory and represents an opportunity for practitioners to develop new approaches to working more equitably with older children.

DECLARATION

This is to certify that

- The thesis comprises only my original work towards the Masters,
- Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- The thesis is 24,111 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed: _____

          BRUCE HURST

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I commenced post-graduate study two years ago, I did not expect it to end like this, with a Masters thesis on OSHC. I had contemplated further study for many years but when your field of expertise is OSHC, is there even a place for you in academia? The common wisdom leads you to think that OSHC is simply a job and nothing greater. OSHC practitioners do not write theses or conduct research, they acquire skills that are assessed 'on the job' to be deemed 'competent' or 'not yet competent'.

I want to thank my supervisor, Dr Kylie Smith, who honoured my professional history, made me feel that it was okay to write about OSHC, and encouraged me to make the jump to the research program. She has been extraordinarily generous with her time, patience and encouragement. Most importantly, she has challenged me to seek and engage more deeply with new theoretical understandings, and has changed forever how I think about working with children.

I would also like to acknowledge the following people:

- The OSHC practitioners from my three research sites, for being welcoming and brave enough to participate in the project,
- My co-researchers for giving up their leisure time and providing insightful and honest accounts of life in their OSHC services,
- The Community Child Care Association for their encouragement, letting me loose in their library and their invaluable support in recruiting participants,
- Jennifer Cartmel, Jonathan Silin and Nancy Lesko for their time, ideas and expertise,
- The members of my University of Melbourne post-graduate group for lively discussion, frequent inspiration, a sense of belonging and free potato chips,
- My parents, Pauline and Ian for their love and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Maria. She has taken fierce interest in my research, and has become something of an expert on Foucault and poststructural

theory, and can now identify a regime of surveillance with great speed and accuracy. She has been my greatest advocate and supporter, and frequently reminded me that this was important work worth doing.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

I have worked in and with OSHC services for over 20 years. The focus of this research project, children aged nine to twelve years, has concerned practitioners for as long as I have worked with OSHC. I still recall my first day of work in an OSHC service. My manager briefed me on my new role and some of the major challenges that I would face. Included in this list of challenges was that of the older child. I was told that they would be bored and much harder to please than the younger children. In the years that followed, I have heard many times how challenging older children are to work with. The difficult older child in OSHC now seems to be accepted as a truth. When I spoke with other practitioners about older children, it was almost always in the context of developmental stages. We could expect older children to be more like adolescents and less like other school-age children. In OSHC, developmental theory is a dominant voice.

When I commenced post-graduate study, I discovered that there were other theories that provided different ways to understand children. Poststructural theory and its capacity to better represent diversity and multiplicity resonated with my experiences of older children. I never found all older children to be difficult. Most of them were perfectly wonderful to work with. What I did know is that they were all different. This research seeks to reassess the question of the older child. It opens the possibility to investigate the experiences of older children from a different theoretical perspective and to try and understand them in new ways that could add to developmental understandings. I hope that many practitioners will use this research to help them find new ways of understanding and working with older children that will improve OSHC, not just for children, but also for practitioners.

Aims

This study aims to provide new knowledge of older children in OSHC. It investigates the responses of nine children aged nine to twelve years from three Victorian OSHC services about what is important to them in OSHC.

It seeks to address the following questions:

- How do children aged nine to twelve years experience Outside School Hours Care in Australia?
- What social and cultural influences inform those experiences?

This investigation applies poststructural ideas of knowledge and truth, that much of what we claim to know about children is not objective, but politically and socially produced (Cannella, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005). It also applies poststructural ideas of discourse and binaries, that the language used in relation to older children has power effects, privileging some groups whilst silencing others (Davies, 1994; MacNaughton, 2005). This study aims to trouble the notion that there is a single, knowable older child upon which all OSHC practitioners can found their pedagogies, instead contending that there is greater complexity and multiple understandings of older children (Cannella, 2008).

Poststructural theories of childhood also informed the methodology for this project. This research challenges the idea that children are incomplete, or inferior to adults (Cannella, 2008; Walkerdine, 1984). Instead it seeks to recognise children as capable and skilful by positioning the research participants as co-researchers, and experts in OSHC for older children.

This thesis provides an in-depth investigation of the experiences of these nine children. It provides an insight into how governmental and societal discourses inform those experiences, and reveals the complexities of life in OSHC for older children.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a summary of Australian and international literature relating to the older child in OSHC. There has been very little research conducted in OSHC, and even less on the older child in OSHC. Existing literature comes mostly in the form of government reports and practical strategies for practitioners relating to activities and play environments (Cartmel, 2007). Consequently, this literature review relies on a variety of sources in addition to those that relate specifically to OSHC. It draws also upon unpublished data and literature relating more closely to other educational and leisure settings.

OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE IN AUSTRALIA

OSHC services provide care, leisure and education for Australian children aged mostly between five and twelve years. OSHC takes a variety of forms, including after school care (ASC), before school care (BSC), vacation care (VC) and curriculum day programs (DEEWR, 2011b; Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2004). ASC and BSC operate for short sessions either side of the school day, with vacation care and curriculum days operating for a full day. The Australian Government currently states the purpose of OSHC as providing:

> "stimulating developmental, social and recreational activities for children, while meeting the care requirements of families" (DEEWR, 2011a, p. 13).

OSHC is a major formal site of care and education with 288,090 children attending per day in June 2011. Only Long Day Care had more daily attendances with 585,000 children per day. OSHC attendances were significantly higher than those for Family Day Care and In Home Care (112,720) and Occasional Care (7,850) (DEEWR, 2012a). In 2008, 11.7% of all primary aged children attended OSHC (ABS, 2009).

Participation in OSHC has increased steadily since the mid 1990's (Figure 2.1). In 1993, 4.8% of children aged 6-11 years used OSHC (ABS, 1994). In 2008, 15% of 5 year olds, 16% of 6-8 year olds and 8% of 9-12 year olds used OSHC (ABS, 2009). Whilst the percentage of children using OSHC appears to decline slightly in 2008, the

data set includes 12 year old children who were not previously included and are less likely to attend OSHC (ABS, 2007). These percentages represent significant numbers of primary school aged children and establish OSHC as a major site of formal education and care.
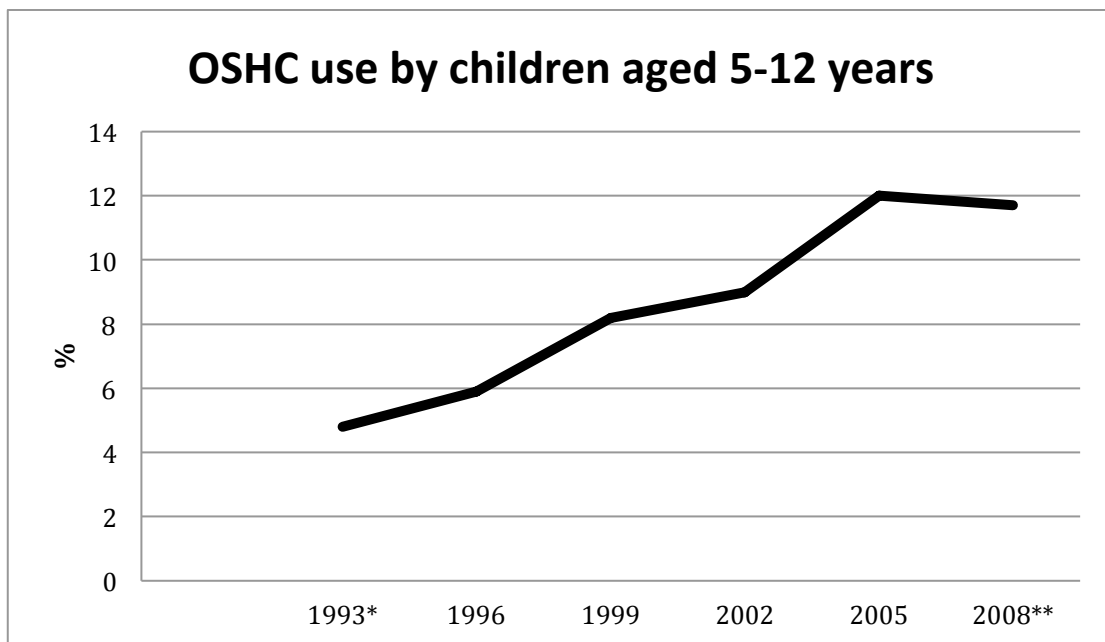
Figure 2.1: OSHC use by children aged 5-12 years, 1993 - 2008

(Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 1994, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2009). * Only includes children aged 6-11 years. **Includes children aged 6-12 years.

RESEARCH AND OSHC

Despite the significant role that OSHC plays in the lives of many children, it is an area that is rarely researched and has not received the level of attention afforded to early childhood education services like Long Day Care and kindergartens (Vered, 2001). Whilst OSHC has received some attention in the United Kingdom, Europe and the U.S.A., far less research has been conducted in Australia (Cartmel, 2007; Winefield et al., 2011).

Much of the Australian research has been undertaken by Commonwealth and State Governments and consequently, often focuses on governmental concerns such as quality processes and economic impacts of government policy (Cartmel, 2007). Cartmel's (2007) PhD exploring the relationship between OSHC and schools is one of the first theses to provide a significant insight into OSHC, particularly with respect to the poor esteem in which OSHC services are often regarded. Howie (1996) published a paper on the effects of OSHC for Australian children in years 3 and 4. Vered (2001) published a paper on children's media play in OSHC, which provides valuable insights into the way some OSHC services operate. More recently, Winefield et al (2011) published a study of parents' needs and expectations of OSHC. Simoncini, Caltabiano and Lasen (2012) published a paper that sought to investigate links between problem behaviours and children's after school care arrangements. Their research suggests higher incidences of problem behaviour in children age 8 to 9 years, but they did not include older children in the sample. There was one significant project researching older children in OSHC by Gifford (1991) which is explored in the next section.

THE OLDER CHILD IN OSHC

Before investigating this question, it is important to define what is an 'older child'. Tarrant and Jones (2000) and Kennedy and Stonehouse (2004) both identify children aged nine to twelve years as a group worthy of special attention. Gifford identifies older children as those in school years five to seven. A British publication by Musson (1994) extends the age range to 13 years but in Australia 13 year olds are uncommon in OSHC. This paper adopts the definition provided by Kennedy and Stonehouse and defines 'older children' as those between nine and twelve years of age.

The suitability of OSHC for older children is not a new question. Gifford (1991) was commissioned by the Australian Capital Territory Government to report on the "underutilization of OSHC programs by children in the age group 10 – 12 years" (p. 1). The study employed a mixed method of surveys and observations to gain the perspectives of older children and parents. Although not peer reviewed, the study surveyed a significant sample of 403 children between the ages of 10 and 13 years and 86 parents.

Many children reported extremely negative attitudes towards OSHC. Reactions were such that many children "refused to answer the specific questions posed" (p. 29), instead writing unsolicited, negative comments. This stands in contrast to the rest of the survey where children had completed the answers "thoughtfully" and in the requested manner. These stand as remarkably emotional responses, and betray much about what some of the sample thought about OSHC. Only 8% of older boys and 11% of older girls indicated that they would like to attend BSC and ASC. The children were more positive about vacation care with approval for boys and girls at 34% and 41% respectively. The children cited "boredom", "lack of control over content of program" and younger children as common things they did not like about OSHC (p. 32).

The underutilisation of OSHC by older children is interesting when considered in the context of the views of parents. Gifford found that most parents felt comfortable leaving older children unsupervised for only short periods of up to one hour, and not

on a regular basis. This demonstrates a need, at the time of the survey, for some form of outside school hours service for older children. However, the low utilisation rates raise questions about whether parents consider OSHC a suitable form of care for older children.

One intriguing aspect of Gifford's research is that in 1991, older children were considered an issue of such importance that the ACT Government commissioned the report. In the 20 years since that report, the findings have not been acted on, and yet, OSHC for older children has persisted as an issue (Abel, 2011; Community Child Care Association (CCC), 2009, 2010; Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2004) .

Gifford's research provides a clear indication that some OSHC practitioners find older children to be problematic, and that many parents and children consider OSHC unsuitable for older children. The data indicates that this has been an unresolved issue for some years, making this a subject worthy of research.

As Gifford's paper is the only research to date into the older child in OSHC, it is necessary to refer to other literature to further support the idea that older children primary aged children represent a special case.

The Community Child Care Association (CCC) is the peak body for OSHC in Victoria, and conducts an annual professional support needs analysis of Victorian OSHC practitioners. The 2010 analysis identifies working with older children as a concern for some practitioners (CCC, 2010). The notion of older children as problematic is also corroborated by some OSHC texts. Kennedy and Stonehouse (2004) devote a special "Fact Sheet" to older children, something that was not deemed necessary for younger children. Similarly, Stonehouse (2008), Tarrant and Jones (2000) and Musson (1994) also include specific information on working with older children. These texts typically refer to the older child as being different to other children in the OSHC service, and sometimes more difficult to work with. Workshops on working with older children also often feature in professional development programs for OSHC practitioners (Abel, 2011; CCC, 2009; Ellem, 2011; Network of Community Activities, 2011).

Shellharbour City Council (2010) identifies tensions between older children and OSHC. It suggests that practitioners struggle to cater for older children, can't provide a challenging enough environment and find older children's activities too expensive. They also found that older children are tired of OSHC and that parents are less happy to pay for care once children reach ten years of age.

Elliott (1998) sought the opinions of children and parents with respect to their level of satisfaction with OSHC, and differentiated between the opinions of younger children and those aged nine to twelve years. Elliott suggested that older children prefer outdoor play and had a preference for play with non-OSHC friends.

The 1995/96 OSHC Research Program Summary Report (Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, 1997) shows a significantly lower participation rates of older children in OSHC compared to younger children. The reasons for the discrepancy are unclear. Parents may deem older children better able to care for themselves or OSHC unsuitable for older children (Elliott, 1998; Gifford, 1991; Shellharbour City Council, et al., 2010). The report supports the latter notion, finding lower levels of satisfaction with program content amongst parents of older children. Another telling finding was that 56% of all parents indicated that separate services for five to eight year olds and nine to twelve year olds would improve OSHC.

Barker et al (2003) found that in British OSHC services, children aged over 8 years were a minority and that services fail to adequately meet their needs. They found that older children often lacked peers, which impacted upon their capacity to enjoy OSHC. The researchers found that OSHC was more successful when practitioners had experience working with youth. Less experienced workers often lacked confidence with older children. The researchers reported similarly to Australian researchers, that parents questioned the suitability of OSHC for older children. Many parents felt that older children had 'outgrown' OSHC and that a different service type would be more suitable. Although conducted in Britain, this study is relevant to the Australian context with OSHC services in both countries being similar (Cartmel, 2007).

SOCIAL INFLUENCES IN OSHC

Government, and the regulatory instruments that act on its behalf, are a significant social factor that impact upon OSHC provision. Government has intervened increasingly in OSHC since the early 1990's.

The changing purpose of OSHC

Over the last 30 years, government intervention has changed the accepted purpose of OSHC services significantly. Originally, OSHC took the form of recreational programs conducted after school or during vacations that aimed to provide entertainment for school aged children. However, the focus gradually shifted from recreation to care to support the increasing participation of women in the workforce during the 1970's and 1980's (Brennan, 1994; Cartmel, 2007). As the focus of OSHC shifted to the provision of care and the number of services increased, so too did government investment via fee subsidies and grants. Government involvement has also manifested itself through the development of a succession of operational guidelines, such as the National Standards for OSHC (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995), OSHC Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003), children's services regulations and most recently, the Framework for School Age Care (FSAC) (DEEWR, 2011b) and National Quality Framework (Early Childhood Development Steering Committee, 2009). These have shifted the focus of OSHC from recreation and care, to recreation, care and education.

This shift is reflected in the language of successive government policy and framework documents. The National Standards for OSHC (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995), the first government guidelines for OSHC, assign practitioners the comparatively simple task of offering

> "a caring and safe environment for the provision of a child care service for children between 5—12 years of age" (p. 1).

The next major shift occurred in 2003 with the introduction of OSHCQA, which helped introduce the idea of OSHC as a site of education. The accompanying Quality Practices Guide stated that OSHC provides

> "high quality care that promotes learning and development" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003, p. 2).

The recently released FSAC marks the most recent change, identifying the purpose of OSHC as services that

> "extend and enrich children's wellbeing and development in school age care settings" (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 3).

It further strengthens the positioning of OSHC as a site of education through the introduction of a learning framework and by referring to practitioners as "educators". These successive policy changes represent a significant repositioning for OSHC.

Leisure or education?

The FSAC identifies OSHC as a site of leisure, play and education, but what do these terms mean in the context of OSHC? Weiss (1965, p.1) defines leisure as time "not used for meeting the exigencies of existence". Kelly (2009) however, argues that defining leisure is more complex than simply defining it as time away from work. Activities like sleep, personal maintenance and eating can all be understood as time away from work but may not be considered leisure. For Australian children, leisure needs to be considered in the context of non-school time rather than non-work, since school is an enforced activity intended to prepare children for their future working lives (Alderson, 2008b).

Kelly (2009, p. 55) argues that two dimensions define a contemporary view of leisure. The "freedom-discretion" dimension is where the activity is either chosen independently by the individual or is regarded as compulsory. The "work-related" dimension is where the activity is either independent of work or is work-related. Kelly and Stebbins (2005) both argue that the extent to which the activity is freely chosen and independent of work determines the "purity" of the leisure experience.

Rojek (2010) argues that reducing leisure to freely chosen activities and time away from work is overly simplistic. He suggests that leisure is intrinsically interwoven with a range of other factors including income, class, gender, ethnicity, health, government and environmental effects. The implication of this is that there is no such thing as pure leisure, as our choices are always influenced by social, economic and political contexts. Rojek challenges the work–leisure binary arguing that the two are closely intertwined and that leisure is a form of emotional work.

This thesis will apply Kelly's contemporary definition of leisure, being non-school activities that are freely chosen and/or independent of schooling/work. However, it also recognises the complexities raised by Rojek.

Using Kelly's model that OSHC is non-school time, it is possible to define OSHC as leisure, however it is unlikely that it could be defined as pure leisure (Kelly, 2009). As suggested by Rojek, there are many social, economic and political variables that may

affect the quality of leisure offered by OSHC. Do children choose to attend OSHC or are they compelled to attend by family circumstances? What range and quality of choices are available to the child at OSHC? To what extent do practitioners control the choices offered?

The FSAC is unclear in the way it defines leisure, although the definition it applies isn't synchronous with Kelly's notion of pure leisure. The FSAC states its emphasis as being on

> "planned or intentional aspects of the program which includes supporting spontaneous play and leisure experiences initiated by children"(DEEWR, 2011b, p.6).

This identifies that practitioners are expected to play a central role in controlling the leisure experienced by children in OSHC.

Whilst the FSAC nominates OSHC as a site of education, it distinguishes the education occurring in OSHC as different to that occurring in more formal settings such as schools. It identifies OSHC as a setting where learning occurs primarily through play. Learning outcomes in the FSAC are focused mainly on the development of social skills as opposed to a strong focus on academic skills in school settings (VCAA, 2009). Despite nominating play as the vehicle for learning, the FSAC expects a degree of "intentionality" (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 14) from practitioners in planning the learning experiences in OSHC, and that learning is not something that occurs by accident (DEEWR, 2011b). So, whilst OSHC is positioned as a formal site of education, the education it offers is seen as softer than that being offered by schools. Whilst they are required to evaluate each child's learning and development, practitioners are not required to report on academic progress or participate in academic testing like schoolteachers. Whilst government is clear in its requirement that learning occurs in OSHC, it appears to be less interested in the outcomes.

There is a fundamental tension between OSHC being a site of both leisure and education. In order to satisfy community and regulatory expectations of safety and education, practitioners are required to exercise control over the service

environment. This limits the amount of true freedom available to children in determining their leisure activities. Every leisure decision made by a child must be evaluated and controlled by a practitioner. For the older child, it places their leisure choices and their satisfaction with OSHC in the control of practitioners. This positions OSHC as a form of institutionalised leisure and potentially different to the leisure experienced by children in non-institutionalised settings.

Care or education?

There is also a debate as to whether OSHC provides care or education. Prior to the introduction of OSHCQA in 2003, OSHC was widely considered a site of care rather than education (Cartmel, 2007; Commonwealth of Australia, 1995; Kennedy & Stonehouse, 1997). In the FSAC, the word 'care' is rarely used. The purpose of OSHC is stated as providing

> "play and leisure opportunities that are meaningful to children and support their wellbeing, learning and development" (DEEWR, 2011b, p.5).

This FSAC positions OSHC as providing more than the health, protection and maintenance implied by the use of the term 'care'.

Although now positioned as an educational service, it is debatable whether OSHC is regarded as such by practitioners or stakeholders. Cartmel (2007) argues that school principals may not see OSHC as a central concern and have a limited appreciation of the complexity of the role played by practitioners. It is likely that many principals have yet to accept the positioning of OSHC as an educational service. In the relationship between school and OSHC, it is the principal who exercises the greater power (Cartmel, 2007). This affords the principal the power to control how OSHC is constructed in institutional discourse and defines for practitioners their place in the school hierarchy. The views of the principal will likely influence how practitioners and others perceive OSHC.

For practitioners, this represents an identity crisis. On one hand, they are burdened with increasing expectations relating to meeting quality and educational outcomes, yet on the other, they are often working in professional relationships that define them as care providers only. The debate over whether OSHC is an educational service is not settled. Whilst government positions OSHC as an educational service, it is likely not all practitioners and stakeholders share this view. It is a possible source of tension for older children whose experiences of OSHC may differ from their perceptions of it.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN OSHC

The vulnerable child

In Western cultures, children are often considered vulnerable, weak and in need of protection (Cannella, 2008; Hendrick, 1997). This notion of children as vulnerable subjects is discursively reinforced by government literature that controls the operation of OSHC. OSHC is currently subject to two regulatory frameworks; The FSAC (DEEWR, 2011b) and the National Quality Standard (NQS) (Early Childhood Development Steering Committee, 2009). The frameworks are supported by an assessment and compliance regime that applies penalties for non-compliance. Whilst both frameworks make reference to learning environments, it is the protection of children that carries the greater weight. The greatest penalties, including cancellation of license, are reserved for health and safety breaches, reinforcing the perceived vulnerability of children (Early Childhood Development Steering Committee, 2009). Children are constructed as 'at risk' and in need of protection from even those adults charged with their care (Furedi, 2006; Parliament of Victoria, 2010). Fenech (2008) argues that Western discourses of risk and litigation are used to justify increasing government intervention in children's services, which includes OSHC. Little and Wyver (2008) and Fenech (2008) suggest that discourses of risk and litigation also have the effect of constraining the pedagogies of educators.

The question is whether all children are considered equally vulnerable. The perceived vulnerability of children stems from their supposed immaturity or incompleteness (Cannella, 2008). It is a logical extension to consider older children more mature and closer to the perceived completeness of an adult than younger children. This is evidenced by the NQS which enforces greater protections for the youngest children (Early Childhood Development Steering Committee, 2009). If we apply this sliding scale of vulnerability to OSHC, it is the five and six year olds who would be deemed the least complete and most vulnerable, whilst nine to twelve

year olds would be considered least vulnerable and least in need of the protection of practitioners.

Vulnerable child or agent?

The concept of children's agency is a prominent discourse in the FSAC. Children are positioned powerfully as autonomous agents with the capacity to "construct their own identity" (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 19). However, James, Curtis and Birch (2008) point to a fundamental tension between discourses of vulnerability and agency, arguing that casting children as vulnerable restricts their agency. Consequently, although the FSAC positions children as agents, discourses of risk and safety present in both the FSAC and NQS act to control children and restrict agency.

Constructions of the older child

In conversations I have had with practitioners, they often describe older children as 'bored', 'difficult' or 'too old for OSHC'. They will sometimes also suggest that the service is unable to meet the needs of older children (Shellharbour City Council, et al., 2010). It is a view shared by professional support providers and other stakeholders who are involved with OSHC. In Shared Visions for Outside School Hours Care, one of the few Australian texts dedicated to OSHC, Kennedy and Stonehouse (2004) suggest that older children may "be closer to teenagers than younger children", "resent having to be in OSHC" or "wanting to challenge adults in authority" (Fact Sheet 15). Although Kennedy and Stonehouse (2004) provide a balanced portrait of older children, it is clearly suggested that they present additional challenges. Longobardi (2001) in an article about older children suggests that they are greatly influenced by peers, increasingly independent, approaching sexual maturity and seek to test limits. Longobardi argues that the difficulties posed by older children can often "be attributed to normal development" (p. 2). Such representations paint a negative picture of older children, yet they appear to be universally accepted 'truths' (MacNaughton, 2005) about older children.

These depictions of older children are also consistent with how developmental theory depicts adolescents (Berk, 2012; Erikson, 1964, 1968). Summarising the work

of developmental theorists, Berk (2012) suggests that we can expect adolescents to be "argumentative, idealistic and critical"(p. 640), or moody and likely to engage in parent-child conflict. Erikson (1964, 1968) constructs adolescents as incomplete compared to adults and still in search of their identity. He suggests they are likely to "artificially appoint perfectly well-meaning people to play the role of adversaries" (Erikson, 1964, p. 261) positioning the adolescent as adversarial. Positivist, developmental theories have played a prominent role in the development of early childhood and OSHC practitioners in Western societies (Cannella, 2008). As such, the negative depictions they provide of adolescents have significant currency amongst practitioners who appear to identify older children as being pre-adolescent (Adler & Adler, 1998) and ascribe to them adolescent behavioural traits.

Some contemporary scholars have questioned this universal acceptance of developmental theory. MacNaughton (2005) refers to the knowledge it produces as "Minority World truths of the child" (p. 18) developed by Western scholars which ignore the perspective of poorer countries that form the majority of the world's population. Cannella (2008) and Walkerdine (1984) suggest that such truths are a social construction unique to Western cultures and this time in history, and are not truths at all. As such, they ignore cultural, societal, family and other complexities that contribute to the whole child, and that it is not possible to reduce all children to a single, knowable child (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Walkerdine, 1984).

Categorising all children according to predetermined developmental stages risks normalising children (Cannella, 2008; Dahlberg, et al., 2007; MacNaughton, 2005; Walkerdine, 1984). These stages offer practitioners the possibility of 'understanding' older children on the basis of predicted developmental norms. Before even meeting an older child, practitioners can already ascribe labels typically associated with adolescents, such as, critical, rebellious, delinquent or disinterested. This creates barriers that prevent practitioners from genuinely understanding individual children. Lesko (2001) argues that

> "Piaget's cognitive stages can be consumed at a glance and utilized by privileged viewers of children and youth" (p. 49).

For OSHC practitioners struggling to engage older children, developmental constructions provide easily digestible explanations for children's behaviours and promise universal solutions even though the reality may be more complex. They provide the possibility to 'know' older children, and through the power it provides, produce children that are controllable and compliant.

The older child versus the younger child

Mostly younger children attend OSHC. In 2008, 162,000 children aged five to eight years attended OSHC per day compared with only 89,000 children aged nine to twelve (ABS, 2009). One likely reason for this imbalance is that parents may regard the younger child as being more vulnerable. However, it is also possible that OSHC is seen as most suited to younger children.

It is interesting to examine the two groups via the common, developmental constructions of the older and younger child. Table 2.1 is drawn from a range of sources and presents a summary of how middle childhood and early adolescence are typically constructed by developmental theory.

Older child	Younger child
Physically strong	Less strong
Challenge authority	Respect for authority
Bored and disinterested	Compliant and easy to please
Risk taker	Vulnerable
Sexualised and worldly	Innocent

Table 2.1: Developmental constructions of children in OSHC

(Berk, 2012; Cannella, 2008; Erikson, 1968; Hendrick, 1997; James & Prout, 1997; Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2004; Lesko, 1996; Longobardi, 2001; Walkerdine, 1984)

Table 2.1 presents two starkly different children. Younger children are constructed more positively as subjects with respect for adult authority and compliant behaviour. Older children are seen as more independent, rebellious and less interested in OSHC. In this construction, the physically stronger, risk-taking older child poses a physical risk to the weaker, more vulnerable and impressionable younger child. Older children present a moral and social risk, being seen to be more worldly and interested in media and activities inappropriate for younger children. Walkerdine (1984) and Lesko (2001) raise the prospect that adolescents may be seen as a sexual threat:

> "While the developing child is sanitized as innocent, the knowledge of sexuality relentlessly stalks adolescent development (Lesko, 2001, p. 39).

Most older children are pre-adolescent, and would be viewed as more sexualised than younger children in the same way that they are attributed other adolescent characteristics. These developmental constructions position older children as a threat to younger children in a social environment where there is frequently hysteria around children and sexuality (Grieshaber, 2010). Erikson (1964, 1968) identifies adolescents as social threat, describing them as "clannish and cruel" (Erikson, 1964, p. 262) in the way they exclude others. This contrasts starkly with younger children who he describes as eager, absorbed and perseverant.

These contrasting constructions position younger children as more desirable. Older children, as a minority, more challenging, risky and presumed more capable of self care may not be considered 'core business' by practitioners. In this way, older children are positioned outside the mainstream or 'Other' (Cannella, 2008; Dahlberg, et al., 2007; MacNaughton, 2005). In an OSHC service, the younger child possesses more power. From the practitioner's perspective, younger children more closely fit the dominant, Western construction of middle childhood than does the pre-adolescent, older child. As such,

> "these children acquire more power because they 'fit' our individualistic constructions" (Cannella, 2008, p. 39).

It raises the possibility that practitioners preference the needs of younger children by selecting activities, materials and routines that more closely match the needs of the compliant, respectful, younger majority. The older child, in contrast, would be expected to 'fit in' with the majority.

The older child is neither child nor adolescent and defies easy classification. James, Curtis and Birch (2008) would refer to the older child as a "boundary sitter" (p. 86), a subject that inhabits the socially constructed boundaries between childhood and adolescence, and between primary and secondary school. This renders the older child as a subject who does not fit in either group and is fundamentally problematic.

The older child in the Framework for School Age Care

The older child is not referred to directly in the FSAC. It constructs all children as a single group with common needs. It could be argued that Outcome 2, 'Children are connected with and contribute to their world', which promotes the need for children to respect diversity, encompass age-related diversity. However, the outcome has a clear racial and cultural focus with specific attention paid to "linguistic diversity", "culture, heritage, backgrounds and traditions" (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 26). The FSAC arguably addresses the needs of older children by requiring practitioners to support experiences that provide "appropriate levels of challenge" (p. 34) and "reflect the breadth of age groups and interests and capabilities" (p. 15). However, by representing all children as a homogeneous group it is unlikely that practitioners would identify the older child as a case in need of special attention.

However, the Educators' Guide to the FSAC (DEEWR, 2012b) does refer to specifically to older children in three case studies. In each instance, it draws upon developmental theories, constructing older children as more mature, more capable and requiring special pedagogical approaches. It is more consistent with other OSHC literature that identifies older children as a special case.

SUMMARY

This literature review has shown that although there is little peer-reviewed research available on OSHC, there is a body of literature supporting the position that practitioners find older children challenging. This literature often draws upon developmental theory and constructs older children negatively. However, the literature also shows that there are alternative theoretical perspectives that question developmental theory and hence, the universal 'truth' of the difficult older child. These postmodern theories resonate with my own lived experience, that not all older children are difficult, and that they are actually quite diverse. The other significant feature of this review is that most research into OSHC is from an adult perspective. Consequently, this thesis will seek new perspectives of OSHC and older children. It will investigate the question of older children using postmodern theories and from a non-adult perspective, that of the older child.

CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research project that applies a poststructural methodological approach. Poststructural analysis seeks to reveal the socially created regimes of truth and discourses that govern our actions, for in revealing them, we can begin to understand how they operate and the effects they produce. It seeks to identify the inequities, allocation of power and other social effects of regimes of truth and discourse (MacNaughton, 2005). These ideas will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four – Conceptual Framework.

The methodology is also informed by a children's rights framework which recognises the rights and agency of children by involving them more as co-researchers and less as objects of research (Alderson, 2008a; Christensen & James, 2008; Clark, 2007; Kellett, 2010; Lundy & McEvoy, 2011; Lundy, McEvoy, & Byrne, 2011; Pascal & Bertram, 2009). It draws upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1995) and acknowledges that children are competent, possess the most knowledge of their own lives (Clark, 2007) and have the right to speak freely and be heard about matters that affect them (Lundy, et al., 2011). It acknowledges that children have the capacity to form their own views through the research process as well as to express pre-existing views (Lundy & McEvoy, 2011).

METHOD

The method for this study consisted of semi-structured interviews and a poststructural analysis. For the interviews, nine older children currently attending OSHC were given digital cameras to record images of things that they did or didn't like in their OSHC service. The photographs they identified as 'most important' served as a framework for the interview that followed (Lundy, et al., 2011; Stephenson, 2009). This study positioned children as 'co-researchers' and aimed to conduct research 'with' children, rather than 'on' children (Kellett, 2010). The use of photographs to frame the interview was considered appropriate as it used technology I expected the children to be familiar with. It also allowed the children to determine the key discussion points in the interview.

Data collection

Data was collected from semi-structured interviews conducted individually with each of the nine participants.

Prior to data collection and the interviews, the participants met with me to be briefed on the research project and negotiate the data collection process. The participants were provided with a description of the project including the research question, the proposed method, the rationale for the project and how the finished research will be used. This sought to equip them to make better informed contributions to discussions and decisions about whether or not to participate in the project (Lundy, et al., 2011). In order to honour the child rights framework adopted for this project, it was important that the participants were able to speak critically about the proposed method of data collection and suggest changes or alternatives. The final method was a result of negotiation between the participants and me. This process was critical in ensuring the participants had their views heard and genuinely considered, and could share the power for decision making (Lundy, et al., 2011).

The participants validated the decision to involve them in research design on many occasions, by demonstrating their understanding of the project and ability to provide critical feedback. A number of participants were concerned by confidentiality. The

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participants from all services wanted to know whom the other participants from their service were so that they could discuss the project. Some participants were very strategic in their choice of pseudonyms, selecting names commonly associated with children of the opposite sex. To honour their desire to conceal their identities, this thesis will not used gendered pronouns when discussing the participants' data. One ethical requirement for the project was that participants were not able to use photographs of other people. Contingency plans for such photographs were also negotiated with the participants.

During the initial meeting, each participant was issued with a digital camera. I had intended to instruct them in the use of the equipment. However, this proved unnecessary as all participants quickly demonstrated that they could easily use the camera.

The participants were then asked to take photographs of things that they 'liked', or 'did not like' about OSHC. They had at least one session of OSHC to take photographs, but the total amount of time they had was negotiated individually with each participant (Lundy, et al., 2011). This phase of data collection was drawn from the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2007) and recent research by Stephenson (2009) and Lundy et al. (2011) which employed photographs taken by children as a component of data collection. Allowing the participants to determine which photographs to use as the basis for the subsequent interview helped to address my own biases and the power differential that may exist between participant and me (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Stephenson, 2009). When they had completed taking photographs, each participant, with my support, selected the ten photographs that they felt were the most important.

It must be acknowledged that participants' selection of photographs was not without influence. A practitioner at one service sought to control what one participant could photograph by preventing them from photographing a half-eaten plate of fruit that they felt reflected poorly on their service. This necessitated my intervening on behalf of the participant to reassure the practitioner and enable the photograph to be taken. This reminded me of the power imbalance between

practitioner and child, and although only one practitioner intervened in the project in my presence, it is likely that some participants considered the views of practitioners in their photograph selection.

Each participant participated in one semi-structured interview of approximately 30-45 minutes (Patton, 2002) framed by their ten photographs. Interviews were conducted individually to ensure that the ideas presented belonged the participants and were not influenced by peers (Patton, 2002). The interviews were conducted as soon as possible after the photographs were taken so that the experience and the rationale behind the choice of photographs were still fresh in the participant's memory. Two participants were concerned that they would not remember why they had selected their photographs at the interview. We had agreed I would take notes as a reminder for them, but after they selected their photographs, they no longer felt it was necessary. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to ensure that the questioning respected and was guided by the participant's photographs, whilst allowing sufficient flexibility to follow up on the participant's answers and any new topics they reveal (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview's purpose was to understand what motivated the participant's choice of photographs and its relation to what the participant does and doesn't enjoy about OSHC (Lundy, et al., 2011). Interviews were recorded digitally. After the completion of the thesis, hard copies of photographs will be returned to the participants. Digital copies of photographs and interview data will be provided to the University of Melbourne for secure storage.

The interview settings were not always ideal, but typical of the settings that OSHC usually operates in. A number of interruptions from schoolteachers, peers or cleaners occurred and sometimes disrupted the flow of the interview. It should also be acknowledged that my interview skills improved during the project and I became more rigorous in using open-ended questions and following the participants' leads with questioning.

Sampling approaches

The research participants were a group of nine children aged nine to twelve years from three OSHC services. I selected a small number of participants on the basis that I sought to provide in-depth data and a rich insight into a small population rather than shallower data over a broader population (Patton, 2002). Also, the length of this Masters thesis placed limitations on the sample size. This study is more interested in providing a rich account of the participants' experiences. As such, it does not seek to make generalisable claims, and does not require a larger sample size.

Participants were recruited with the assistance of CCC, which is the peak body for Victorian OSHC services. CCC's assistance in recruiting participants lent credibility to the research for OSHC practitioners. OSHC service representatives were approached via CCC's professional support networks. This provided an opportunity to explain and discuss the study with practitioners, so that they could make informed decisions about whether to participate. This was a form of typical case sampling in that the aim was to select 'typical' OSHC services that were representative of the greater population (Patton, 2002). Whilst not essential in describing the lived experiences of the participants, it helped to strengthen any claims of representativeness made in this study. I attended three network meetings. One meeting was inner metropolitan Melbourne, another outer metropolitan and a third rural. Only the inner metropolitan meeting generated interest, and provided two research sites. As discussed in the literature review, research in OSHC is rare. So whilst network participants appeared interested in the research, their reluctance to participate is unsurprising. I approached the third research site directly. The decision to approach the third site directly was done reluctantly, but given time constraints, was necessary, and did not influence the research outcomes. For future research, I would make allowance to be able to attend more networks to ensure consistent recruitment.

To assist with recruitment, participating OSHC services were provided with separate Plain Language Statements (Appendix D) and Consent Forms (Appendix E) for

children, parents/guardians and OSHC service. Children in the target age range were invited to participate in the research by the service representatives. All three services communicated that they wanted to distribute the Plain Language Statements and Consent Forms without my assistance. All three felt sufficiently confident to communicate the details of the project to families. They suggested that their existing relationships with families would achieve better outcomes than an outside researcher with no history in the service. Only children who agreed to participate and had parental permission were selected for the research.

I had endeavoured to have approximately equal numbers of male and female participants, but very few females expressed an interest in the project. Consequently, most of the participants were male. Each service and I negotiated a closing date for applications, and on that date, the participants were chosen via a random process. I aimed to have three participants from each service; however, Moonahvale yielded only two participants, so a fourth participant was chosen from Metropolitan. A summary of the research sites and the participants' chosen pseudonyms is provided in Table 3.1.

RESEARCH SITE	PARTICIPANT PSEUDONYM
Metropolitan OSHC	• Sebastian • Oscar • Captain • Cavli
Moonahvale OSHC	• Jim • Emily
Poppyhill OSHC	• Brett Lee • Dane Swan • Happy Hippo

Table 3.1 Summary of research sites and participant pseudonym

I learnt that it was important to keep reinforcing the project methodology for the participating services. Some practitioners spoke in the initial meeting of their desire to find 'interesting' children for the research so that I would get useful data. This necessitated having to remind the practitioner of my chosen method of inviting all older children at their OSHC to participate.

The insistence of practitioners on finding 'interesting' children is worth noting. Despite communicating my desire for random recruitment and that I wasn't necessarily seeking 'naughty' children, some practitioners still sought to recruit children who they deemed clinically significant. This could be interpreted post-colonially with practitioners constructing the researcher as knowledgeable and superior to the research participants. It presupposes a contemporary, Western view of children as developing and incomplete, with the researcher assuming an emancipatory role (Cannella & Viruru, 2004). It may also indicate that the practitioners have a narrow interpretation of what is considered research.

Service Profiles

The three research sites were very different, which made for some interesting data comparisons. The data comparisons are explained fully in Chapter 5 – Data Analysis.

METROPOLITAN OSHC

Metropolitan is licensed for up to 100 children and offers BSC, ASC & VC. The service is located in an affluent area at a government school. The service is extremely well resourced with more than ample equipment. Much of the equipment would be considered well in excess of 'standard' OSHC equipment. The program is conducted in a single space, requiring all children, regardless of age, to share the space and resources.

MOONAHVALE OSHC

Moonahvale is licensed for up to 30 children and offers BSC and ASC. Although licensed for 30 children, the service averages 11 children per afternoon. Moonahvale is located in an affluent area at a government primary school. Compared to Metropolitan and Poppyhill, it is more modestly equipped. The indoor space is confined, does not offer the possibility for active play, and requires all children, regardless of age, to share the space and resources.

POPPYHILL OSHC

Poppyhill is licensed for up to 84 children and offers BSC, ASC and VC. Poppyhill is located in the middle-outer eastern suburbs at a government primary school. The service was very well resourced and was most notable for the fact that it has a separate program space for children in Years 5 and 6. The older children are programmed for separately, but are still considered part of the same service.

Gaining access to sites and participants

Prior to commencing research, consent was obtained from a number of parties. Initial approval was sought from the University of Melbourne's Human Ethics Committee and the Victorian Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Consent was then obtained from the school principals, OSHC services, parents of participants and participants. Details of the research and its implications were provided in plain language statements (Appendix D) and in a manner that was understood clearly by the recipient (Kellett, 2010; NHMRC, 2007).

Separate consent forms (Appendix E) were also completed by the OSHC service, parents of participants and each participant (NHMRC, 2007). School principals also provided consent. Access to participants was negotiated individually with each service taking into account their individual requirements, however each service chose to negotiate access with families and participants without my assistance.

Data analysis approaches

Data analysis consisted of two stages. Interview data was first subject to a thematic analysis and then a subsequent poststructural analysis.

All interviews were fully transcribed by me, and although time consuming, it was reasonable given the small size of the sample (King & Horrocks, 2010). It also facilitated great familiarity with the data. During thematic analysis, the data was grouped into themes to identify any consistencies across data sources (Woodside-Jiron, 2004). The research took an emergent approach to data coding, preferring to allow themes to emerge rather than predetermining them. This allowed for flexibility in the analysis and partly addressed any of my personal biases.

The data pertaining to the most dominant themes was then subjected to a poststructural analysis. This aimed to identify patterns, themes and silences that construct truths, rules and systems of knowledge about the discursive object, being the older child (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Ortlipp, Arthur, & Woodrow, 2011; Rogers, 2004). This included counting the frequency of words and statements

that were used to describe or constitute older children (Ortlipp, et al., 2011). It also sought to identify changes in discourses of the older child from different perspectives. Analysis of interview data sought to capture the lived experiences of the children. These were the experiences of individuals who are situated within the discourse (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008) and it was hoped that they would provide a different perspective to those provided by the more traditional adult perspective.

Rigor And Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness and rigor were addressed from a number of perspectives. The research was extensively grounded in current literature relating to the research topic and methodology (Dowling & Brown, 2010; Moss et al., 2009; Rocco, 2010). This ensured that the knowledge claims were founded on previous research, which lends credibility.

The interviews were based on photographs taken by the participants. This ensured that questioning reflected the experiences of the participants rather than my own theoretical biases (Kellett, 2010).

The following also contributed to the trustworthiness of the research:

- The method was consistent with the theoretical positioning of the research.
- Interviews were well planned and consistently implemented across participants.
- Interviews were conducted individually, and the participants' identities protected to facilitate open and honest responses.
- Questions were clearly understood by all participants and clarification was provided when required.
- Questions aimed to be open ended and not leading.
- Clarity was sought for answers that were unclear or that required expansion.
- Interviews were recorded accurately and clearly.

- All interviews were transcribed consistently and systematically, including pauses and intonations, which added further meaning to the participants' responses.

(Dowling & Brown, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Coding and analysis of data was consistent for all interviews to ensure consistent results. They were also systematic and detailed in order to represent the richness of the interview data (Patton, 2002), and took an emergent approach to limit my personal biases. The raw data and working analysis documents will be archived and made available for audit.

The research has acknowledged contradictory data, limitations and biases (Patton, 2002; Rocco, 2010). Any claims to generalizability and transferability made in this thesis are reasonable, realistic and acknowledge any limitations of the research, in particular the small sample size (Dowling & Brown, 2010; Patton, 2002; Rocco, 2010).

In addition, I met with each participant near the completion of data analysis. The purpose was to inform the participants which statements I would like to use in the research, to confirm that their statements were correct, and to reconfirm their consent to use the data. I felt a certain amount of anxiety in reconfirming their approval to use the data, I was concerned that they may revoke consent to use what I felt was sometimes significant data and that this may compromise my results. The outcome of this process was unexpected. Some participants strengthened their responses to some questions and all participants displayed significant consistency in being able to recall their original responses. No participant withdrew any data. Seeking this confirmation from the participants has contributed significantly to the trustworthiness of the data (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006). It also respects my positioning of the participants as co-researchers.

Summary

The method chosen for this project was successful. The services that agreed to host the research were helpful and responsive to deal with. Likewise, the participants were engaged in the research process and participated enthusiastically in the project. I was pleased with the decision to relinquish some of my power as researcher and engage the participants as co-researchers. Whilst at times I felt anxious about the potential outcomes of this decision, the participants consistently showed themselves to be capable and reasonable researchers. As a consequence, they displayed great understanding of the project and commitment. I was sometimes discomforted when my co-researchers requested breaks from the research that threatened my timelines. However, respecting their reasons for such decisions meant that after their breaks, they were more committed to the project. It also honoured their positions as co-researchers.

CHAPTER FOUR - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is informed by poststructural social theory. It provides the epistemological and methodological foundations for this study. This study draws upon poststructural theories of power and knowledge, discourse and binary oppositions.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Before returning to study and commencing this research project, much of what I understood about older children was founded upon the principles of developmental psychology and the work of theorists like Piaget and Erikson. Their works and those of other developmental theorists have significantly influenced educational practice in Australia and other Western cultures over many decades (Cannella, 2008; MacNaughton, 2005; Penn, 2008). MacNaughton (2005) suggests that developmental theory is considered essential knowledge for people who work with young children. This is corroborated by my own experience, with many academic and professional texts underpinned by the principles of developmental theory. Developmental psychology is one of many social sciences that emerged following the Enlightenment (Cannella, 2008; Ray, 2010) and applies scientific method to the study of children. It seeks to uncover universal laws or truths that explain how children develop and learn, which can be used by pedagogues to guide their practices (MacNaughton, 2005).

Erikson posited that all people go through a series of developmental stages on the way to full development. Each stage is characterised by a "battle" (Erikson, 1964, p. 261) to be fought by the individual. Each battle is considered essential in the development of the individual and their formation of identity (Cowie, 2012; Erikson, 1964, 1968). The existence of fundamental laws is pivotal to Erikson's work. He refers to the "inner laws of development" (Erikson, 1968, p. 93) which we all must obey and that there are prescribed stages which we must all go through at the proper pace and the proper sequence in order to develop correctly.

Similarly, Piaget proposed the existence of a staged approach to development, arguing that human development comprised of four sequential stages which were

determined by an individual's capacity for logical thought (Berk, 2012; Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006; Penn, 2008). Like Erikson, Piaget argued that his four stages were universal and that an individual's development was not complete until they had achieved the final stage.

A central feature of developmental theory is its predictive nature. It suggests that children of certain age groups share commonalities in how they think and behave, and that practitioners can use these expectations in developing pedagogical practices. This approach has been widely utilised in OSHC texts relating to older children (Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2004; Musson, 1994; Tarrant & Jones, 2000).

ARE THERE OTHER THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES?

For most of the time I have worked in OSHC, developmental psychology has been a dominant voice, underpinning what is considered 'good practice'. However, it presents a singular, static view of children. Whilst development theory provides an approximation of a 'typical' older child, these expectations don't always match the diversity that I have experienced in practice. Consequently, I have sought other theories that can provide different ways of understanding older children that add to those afforded by developmental theory.

Poststructural theory offers the possibility to investigate the question of the older child in OSHC in different ways.

> "It enables us to see the diversity and richness of our experience of being a person as we find ourselves positioned now one way and now another, inside one set of power relations or another, constituted through one discourse or another, in one context or another." (Davies, 1994, p. 3).

It allows for the possibility that all older children, and the settings in which they find themselves are not always alike, and that context can change how we understand older children. In addition, it opens the possibility that older children can construct knowledge about themselves. It frees us to explore the possibility that there may be more than one, knowable, older child, and that the older child may be multiple and diverse.

Poststructural theory is an invitation to identify the discourses in operation with respect to older children and to question their claims to universality. In doing so, it makes it possible to identify and address inequities relating to older children (MacNaughton, 2005) and make more visible the ways in which some children may be marginalised and excluded by discursive structures. It allows us to identify if and how the minority older child is being disadvantaged, and to question the truths on which those inequities are founded.

This study doesn't seek to replace one truth with another. Through the application of poststructural theory it seeks new truths that provide more flexible, multiple and shifting understandings of older children in OSHC that can add to those provided by developmental theory. It is hoped that this knowledge can inspire OSHC practitioners to think more critically about how they construct older children and work with them.

POSTSTRUCTURAL THEORY AND KNOWLEDGE

Unlike developmental theory, poststructural theory troubles the application of scientific method to social settings, including the study of children (MacNaughton, 2005). It questions whether it is possible to have universal laws that apply to all children. Poststructuralist critique questions the objectivity of developmental theory and the knowledge or truths it produces. Poststructuralists argue that rather than being objective and rational, such truths are produced politically.

French philosopher Michel Foucault argued that each society has its "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1980, p. 131) and that these regimes have cultural structures and practices that determine what is considered true and what is considered false. A "regime of truth" both creates and reinforces "truths" (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). One implication of this is that knowledge is neither absolute nor fixed, and that truth and knowledge can vary between cultures, political settings and epistemes (Danaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000; MacNaughton, 2005). In minority Western cultures (MacNaughton, 2005) like Australia, there operates a "regime of truth" that privileges knowledge produced via scientific method. It privileges developmental theory and informs much of what we understand to be true about children. (Burman, 2008; Cannella, 2008; Dahlberg, et al., 2007; MacNaughton, 2005; Walkerdine, 1993). This thesis approaches the question from a poststructural perspective, that there is no single truth of older children in OSHC, and that there are actually multiple truths, and that these ways of understanding older children are contextual. It seeks to question that which we believe to be true about older children in OSHC, to understand the ways in which those truths are produced, and to identify new ways to think about older children.

This study also seeks to unmask the discourses that operate in OSHC and how they act upon the older child. Foucault (1977) writes of the human sciences and how they represented a "new type of power over bodies" (p. 191). He argues that in applying scientific method in this way, we have made ourselves objects of research, making it possible to "be described, judged, measured, compared with others" (p. 191). The 'objective truths' produced by developmental psychology allow us to classify and categorise children, and identify those who are 'normal' and those who are 'deviant' (Cannella, 2008; Foucault, 1977; MacNaughton, 2005). It creates a power that supports adults to intervene in the lives of deviant children and attempt to bring them closer to the norm. Dominant truths also serve to silence and repress other conflicting truths through a process of inclusion and exclusion. Other points of view are either drawn closer to the dominant truth or excluded altogether (MacNaughton, 2005). This normalising effect seeks to create a singular childhood rather than acknowledge the possibility of multiple childhoods (Cannella, 2008). This is knowledge that resonates with how we understand older children in OSHC, that they are considered deviant and referred to in ways that advocate for interventionist pedagogies. A poststructural approach to the question of older children invites us to reassess these accepted truths and discover new ways to know older children.

POSTSTRUCTURAL THEORY AND DISCOURSE

Poststructural theory regards language as central to the creation of knowledge.

> "Language is connected intimately with the politics of knowledge and that those politics are evident in the language we use to think of ourselves (our subjectivities) and to describe our actions and institutions." (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 3).

Foucault referred to language as discourse (Cannella, 2008). Foucault is not the only theorist to use the term 'discourse'. It has been used in a number of disciplines including philosophy, social theory and critical theory, but it is a term that is often vague and has a range of meanings (Mills, 2004). Mills (2004) suggests that Foucault used three different definitions of discourse at various times, and that other theorists often use those definitions interchangeably.

This study works from the fundamental proposition that discourse is more than just the written word. It regards discourse as including "all utterances and texts which have meaning" (Mills, 2004). This thesis deals with many forms of language referring to older children including: comments made by older children, academic and professional texts and comments from practitioners. In the context of this thesis, discourse is inclusive of all of these forms of language.

However, Foucault regarded discourse as something more active than just utterances and text that are passively assigned meaning. He also saw it as:

> "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 2002, p. 54).

Foucault assigned discourse an active role in the creation of knowledge, as something that constructs meaning as well as communicate it. He extends the definition to include "practices", moving the definition beyond words. Discourse therefore also refers not just to language but also actions. It refers to the systems and rules that work with the language to construct meaning (Mills, 2004).

Therefore, this thesis considers discourse to be all of the utterances, texts and practices that we use to construct what we consider true about older children in OSHC. Poststructural theorists believe that there can be multiple discourses and hence, multiple truths about different subjects (MacNaughton, 2005). What we consider true about a person or thing is determined by which discourses we participate in. For instance, developmental theorists would speak of older children differently when compared to a child's parents. Both would be different again when compared to how older children speak of themselves.

However, some discourses attract greater power and political currency. The power that a discourse possesses is also dependent on the setting. For instance, in the production of government policy, it is likely that academic discourses produced by adults about children would be more powerful than discourses present in the opinions of children themselves. Academic texts would be of a form and structure recognised and valued by government. In conforming to these rules and structures of academic discourse, a text attracts greater power and relevance. Discourses draw their power from the regimes of truth to which they are connected (MacNaughton, 2005).

Foucault, however, did not see the individual as passive in its relationship to discourse and power.

> "We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belongs to this production." (Foucault, 1977, p. 194).

He suggests that the individual actively participates in the creation and recirculation of discourse and is not merely acted upon. Davies (1994) argues that individuals position themselves and have power with respect to discourses.

This thesis will seek to uncover some of the discourses in operation regarding older children in OSHC. It will concern itself not just with the dominant discourses but also

those that are silenced and repressed. It will also try to uncover the rules and structures that privilege some discourses and disadvantage others. This thesis will investigate the ways in which the participants contribute to the discourses they inhabit. In doing so, it aims to make visible alternative truths about older children that until now may have been hidden.

POSTSTRUCTURAL THEORY AND BINARY OPPOSITIONS

This thesis will also draw on poststructural theories of binary oppositions. French theorist Jacques Derrida argued that one way in which Western language creates meaning is through its use of binary oppositions or binaries (MacNaughton, 2005). A binary consists of two opposing terms such as 'adult and child', or 'boy and girl'. He argued that the two terms are opposite and that each derives its meaning from the other. For instance, it is argued that it is impossible to define 'child', without also understanding what 'adult' means (MacNaughton, 2005).

However, the meaning that a binary creates goes beyond the literal definitions of the two words. A binary creates a hierarchical relationship between the opposites. One half of the binary is positioned as ascendant or superior, whilst the other is descendant or inferior. (Davies, 1994; MacNaughton, 2005). For instance, consider the 'adult – child' binary. In the context of Western culture, the adult occupies the ascendant position. When we try to define the two using familiar terms, the hierarchy becomes clear. The adult is 'mature' whilst the child is 'immature'. The adult is 'fully developed' whilst the child is 'partly developed'. The adult is 'strong' and the child is 'weak'. The adult is 'large' and the child 'small'. The hierarchy is not innate. Poststructuralists argue that it is socially produced and a function of what a culture holds most valuable (MacNaughton, 2005). In a different culture, with different social values, the child could occupy the ascendant position.

Another feature of binaries is that the ascendant term attracts the greater power, whilst the descendant term is considered weaker. The ascendant term is also held to represent what is considered 'normal' whilst the descendant term represents what

Derrida called the Other or abnormal (Davies, 1994; MacNaughton, 2005). In a binary the normal is privileged and rewarded (Cannella, 2008). It also seeks to repress the Other (MacNaughton, 2005). Being Other often means being singled out for identification and intervention. For instance, it is common for children with disabilities, for whom English is a second language or whose academic progress is slower than 'normal', to be directed to specialist programs. Being singled out in this way has the effect of making these children more visible and easily identifiable as Other (Davies, 1994). It also serves to include or exclude individuals (MacNaughton, 2005). Othering, like discourse, has a normalising effect. It is entwined with social processes that seek to move individuals towards the more privileged and socially preferred norm (Foucault, 1977).

Just as poststructural theory proposes the possibility of multiple truths, it also argues that an individual can inhabit multiple binaries. As binaries are socially produced, it is possible for a person to inhabit multiple positions depending on the setting (Davies, 1994; MacNaughton, 2005). For instance, a twelve year old child can participate in an 'older child–younger child' binary at OSHC, a 'male-female' binary and a 'good student-bad student' binary depending on the setting.

This research does not see poststructural theory of binaries as separate to theories of discourse and knowledge. These are all intertwined. However, I single binaries out for special mention in this conceptual framework, as my literature review has suggested that binaries are a feature of how some truths about older children may be created. This thesis will seek to identify some of the binaries relating to older children in OSHC. It will investigate how the participants position themselves and participate in relation to those binaries, and how they contribute to discourses of the older child.

SUMMARY

Very little is known about older children in OSHC outside of the understandings provided by developmental theory. In a setting where research is rare, adopting a poststructural methodology is an entirely new approach to learning more about older children. It is hoped that this approach will yield more knowledge to add to that provided by the well-worn approach of developmental theory.

CHAPTER FIVE – DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the analysis of the data from the nine participant interviews. It discusses the major themes to emerge from the data, and the dominant discourses and binaries in operation in relation to the older child at the three research sites. A number of discourses and binaries were revealed, but I have chosen to focus on an older child – younger child and a younger child – older child binary. These binaries are founded on discourses of the developing child, the vulnerable child and the difficult older child. A significant proportion of the data related to these binaries and they also relate closely to the findings of the literature review.

THEMES

The interviews produced a substantial amount of data, which was subject to a thematic and poststructural analysis. The first step was to identify all of the dominant themes present in the interview data. There were a number of significant themes to emerge (see Table 5.1).

THEME	SUB-THEMES
The availability of suitable activities	- Challenging activities - Enjoyable activities - Choice of activities
Friends	- The importance of same-age peers - OSHC friends versus 'normal' friends
Relationships between older and younger children	- Younger children are less capable - Younger children are annoying - Privileging of younger children - Types of play for younger children
Institutionalised leisure	- OSHC as an institutionalised leisure setting - OSHC is boring/great - Education versus leisure
Discourses of childhood	- The vulnerable child - Childhood and gender - The capable child - The hurried child
Venue and resources	- Buildings and infrastructure - Equipment

Table 5.1: Significant themes to emerge from interview data

The two most significant themes were:

- The availability of enjoyable activities at OSHC.
- The availability of same age peers at OSHC.

These were significant because they represented the most discussed topics. Whilst important statistically, they are also important ethically in representing the views of the participants. These themes also related closely to the content of Chapter Two, the literature review.

The most significant theme related to the importance of enjoyable activities. All nine participants identified that this was critical to their satisfaction with OSHC. As well as activities being the main topic of discussion, 77 of the 91 photographs selected by the participants were of activities. This is a significant number compared to photographs of other aspects of OSHC. Of those other 14 photographs, eight were of buildings and facilities that housed activities important to the participants. Although I expected activities to be important to the participants, I expected other aspects of pedagogy to also be important, so the level of importance of activities was somewhat unexpected. Other aspects of pedagogy like routines, transitions, and relationships with educators, which are central to the FSAC and NQS (DEEWR, 2011b; Early Childhood Development Steering Committee, 2009) were mentioned far less frequently.

The presence of similar-aged friends at OSHC was an equally significant theme, and discussed by all nine participants. For Jim, Emily and Oscar, the lack of similar-aged friends made OSHC less enjoyable. For the other six participants, having similar-aged friends was a positive aspect of OSHC. The emergence of this theme was unsurprising. Lodish (1976) suggests that older males prefer to socialise with same-age peers in school age care settings, and Gifford (1991) found that younger children were something that older children disliked about OSHC. Much child development literature also suggests that peers are important for older children (Berk, 2012; Erikson, 1964).

Identifying the themes in the interview data was an essential step in the analysis. It enabled me to make greater sense of a large amount of data, and to understand better what was most important to the participants. It assisted me to better honour their opinions by carrying those most prominent themes through to the next stage of analysis. Whilst identifying the themes provided interesting information about what is important to the participants, they only provided a very literal reading of the data. Further analysis was required to understand the experiences of older children from a different theoretical perspective to the developmental approach so common in OSHC. Poststructural theories were chosen to seek new understandings of the older child in addition to those offered by developmental theory. Whereas developmental theories offer a single, linear truth, poststructural theories offer the possibility of multiple and more diverse understandings of older children.

BINARIES

Once the dominant themes had been identified, the data relating to those themes was subject to a poststructural analysis. Poststructural theorists argue that language and power play a critical role in creating knowledge and that discourse and binaries are two significant ways in which it does so (Davies, 1994; Foucault, 1980; MacNaughton, 2005). The purpose of this phase was to reveal the most significant, socially created discourses and binaries that operate in the research sites. It aimed to make visible the structures that create and reinforce these discourses and binaries, the knowledge they create, and reveal how power can privilege or silence the older child.

Analysis of the data revealed the existence of a number of binary oppositions:

- older child – younger child
- younger child – older child
- home – OSHC
- 'normal' friends – OSHC friends
- sporty child – intellectual child
- male – female.

For this thesis, I have chosen to focus on analysis of the older – younger child and younger – old child binaries. These two binaries related to a significant amount of the data. They also relate closely to the findings of the literature review, which suggests that what we consider to be true of older children may be socially constructed. In addition, they provide two different perspectives on the tensions between older and younger children in OSHC and offer the possibility to test whether truths about younger and older children are singular and universal, or multiple and contextual.

The most significant binary is the older child – younger child binary in which the participants construct themselves as more developed and capable than younger children. The participants spoke of younger children in a manner consistent with poststructural theories of binary oppositions, that one half of the binary is superior,

normative and silent, whilst the other is inferior, deviant and visible (Davies, 1994; MacNaughton, 2005). Analysis of the older-younger child binary provides insight into how the participants create and reinforce knowledge of themselves and younger children.

The literature review for this thesis also revealed the existence of another way of understanding older and younger children in OSHC, a younger – older child binary. Unlike the older – younger child binary, this binary constructs younger children as more powerful and privileged. Analysis of the data from seven participants provided evidence of its social effects. In addition, it provided evidence that disrupts the discourse of the difficult older child, which is central to the knowledge created by the younger – older child binary. Tellingly, the strongest data relating to these two binaries emerged from Metropolitan and Moonahvale, where the participants share space and resources with younger children.

This chapter will examine the knowledge created by these two binaries, the mechanisms by which that knowledge is created, and the social effects it creates.

OLDER CHILD – YOUNGER CHILD

The interview data suggests that seven of the nine participants see themselves and younger children as a binary opposition. This section focuses on the language used by the participants and how it serves to construct knowledge that establishes the participants and their older peers as more capable and superior to the younger children that share their OSHC services.

During the interviews, care was taken not to influence the responses of the participants. In all but two interviews, the topic of younger children was not discussed unless raised by the participant. However, it is acknowledged that positioning them as co-researchers has the potential to encourage the participants to see themselves and younger children as a binary. The participants were aware from the outset that we were investigating the experiences of children aged nine to twelve years. As members of the target population, it is possible that this may have encouraged the participants to see younger children as a distinct group separate to themselves.

It should also be noted that only participants from Metropolitan and Moonahvale provided significant discussion of an older-younger child binary. The participants from Poppyhill rarely mentioned younger children. Dane Swan and Brett Lee only discussed younger children at the conclusion of the interview, and only when I raised the topic. Happy Hippo did raise younger children but in the context of them being "lower graded friends". This stands in direct contrast to the other six participants whose responses will be discussed in detail. Despite the small sample size in this study, it is a difference that appears significant. It may be due to the fact that older and younger children in Poppyhill have separate program spaces and do not have much contact with each other. This result was anticipated somewhat by a practitioner from Poppyhill who was unsure if having separate spaces was a good idea, and suggested that older children benefit from having more contact with younger children. Whether or not the data from Poppyhill indicates better relations between older and younger children, or an absence of relations can't be determined from such a small sample. Nor was this question the focus of my research.

They are babyish

Derrida argued that binary oppositions are a product of language and that each half of the binary is dependant on the other for its meaning (MacNaughton, 2005) and that we can only understand 'younger' in the context of what the participants consider 'older'. This is reflected in the data. The language of the participants defines what they consider older and younger children. The participants do not provide a chronological definition of the younger child. Whilst the use of words like "younger" (Captain) or "little" (Sebastian) establishes that they are chronologically younger than older children, we do not know where the line is drawn or if a line even exists. Only Jim defines younger children chronologically, defining them as "grade one, two or prep". However, the participants' language does indicate how they define "younger" in terms of behaviour and capacity, and that they consider younger children less capable, inferior and the opposite of themselves.

MacNaughton (2005) and Davies (1994) suggest that one characteristic of binaries is that one half of the binary is dominant and represents the norm, whilst the other is less powerful and represents a deviation from the norm. This is evident in many statements from the six participants from Metropolitan and Moonahvale.

> "Oh art and craft. Yes. That is a bit entertaining but yeah not that much because the art and craft here, it's aimed at kids below us" (Oscar).

> "They just grab big handfuls and stick everything on their little things, and
> honestly I'm quite a big fan of like creating things that actually make sense. I
> mean…. like and colours symmetrical and stuff like that, except these kids
> they grab every single piece in there and stick it in a random pattern and they
> get a big blob of Lego and have no idea what to do with it and dismantle it
> and then like yeah, and I'm like "yes some pieces ". Except then a bunch of
> little kids go swarming in like a pack of piranhas and start taking them all"
> (Oscar).

In these statements, Oscar communicates the superiority of older children through
her/his language. Oscar's use of "below" suggests that not only are the other
children younger but that their skills are "below" those of older children. The use of
"below" positions younger children as a deviation from Oscar's norm, being the
older child. Oscar's descriptions of how younger children play with Lego also
establish their inferiority. Oscar uses words and phrases like "random", "blob" and
"big handfuls" for younger children's work, which contrast dramatically with
"symmetrical" and "things that actually make sense" to describe Oscar's own work.
Oscar positions Oscar's own work as more adult-like by describing it as rational and
representational. This is a contrast to the work of younger children, which Oscar
suggests is haphazard and incoherent. This is consistent with MacNaughton (2005)
who argues that in the context of a binary, 'predictable' is superior to
'unpredictable'. Oscar's statements appear informed by developmental discourse
which assumes progressive, individual development from the more primitive child to
the highly developed adult (Cannella, 2008). Walkerdine (1993) regards this
discourse as "a central trope in modern narratives of the individual" in which the
individual develops from "animal, savage, primitive and childlike towards the adult
and civilized" (p. 455). Oscar considers older children closer to the adult ideal and
therefore superior. This is evidenced further by Oscar's use of the highly descriptive
phrase "pack of piranhas" which constructs younger children as primitive. Oscar's
comments are also consistent with the work of Riggins (1997) who argues that we

view the descendant half of the binary as a single group with shared characteristics. In discussing Lego, Oscar doesn't characterise younger children as individuals. Oscar constructs them as a collective with a shared purpose.

One important way that the participants discussed their superiority over younger children was via the activities at OSHC. Most photographs taken were of activities, demonstrating their fundamental importance in what participants do or don't like about OSHC. Activities are the currency by which the participants measure the worth of their OSHC.

> "Um I took a photo of the book shelf cos….there's not much book selection and um they're too babyish the books…. The younger kids read them" (Captain).

> "Interviewer: So the book you read, is that one you bring or is that one that's already here?
>
> Jim: Yeah um it's one I bring because the books already in the after care are not really my level.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. Are they for who? What level are they?
>
> Jim: Oh 3, 4's or 1, 2's".

Captain and Jim use the discussion on books to position younger children as inferior. Captain refers to the books at OSHC as "babyish" and Jim as "not really my level". This infers that the individuals who read them are infantile or of a lower level. Like Oscar's comments, these statements reveal developmental discourses of childhood where development is constructed as progressive and based on stages (Cannella, 2008; Dahlberg, et al., 2007). Jim uses "levels" to convey that Jim is at a higher stage of development. They suggest that older children are more advanced. These are binary statements with the books deemed either suitable or unsuitable for older children. They identify no middle ground. Their comments are consistent with

poststructural theories that the descendant half of the binary is considered inferior (MacNaughton, 2005).

They might get hurt

In the literature review, it was suggested that in contemporary Western culture, children are constructed as vulnerable (Cannella, 2008; Hendrick, 1997) and that their perceived vulnerability is reflected in the FSAC and the NQS. Enforcement of the NQS reserves the strongest penalties for breaches related to the protection of children, compared to those relating to pedagogy. (DEEWR, 2011b; Early Childhood Development Steering Committee, 2009). The data suggests that five participants also subscribed to the discourse of the vulnerable child. However, in the older - younger child binary, only the younger child is marked as vulnerable. The participants consider themselves more adult and less vulnerable.

> "It's not too safe for younger kids. Because they could fall and seriously hurt themselves. So that's why they have the red playground over there…. it's good because it means that people my age have an escape route from their buddies because some times they can get seriously annoying" (Oscar).

> " Interviewer: Okay. So the people that aren't fun to play with, who are they?
>
> Captain: The younger kids.
>
> Interviewer: Why aren't they any fun to play with Captain?
>
> Captain: Oh, it's just like if we are playing football you can't tackle them…. like we only tackle the age kids (sic) not the younger ones."

Oscar discusses younger children in the context of playground equipment that is set aside by practitioners for older children only. MacNaughton (2005) argues that socially constructed binaries aid the practice of exclusion whereby the dominant group excludes the other. Oscar demonstrates this by acting out the discourse of the

vulnerable younger child and supporting the physical exclusion of younger children from the equipment. In the name of protecting younger children, Oscar creates a privileged space from which the 'at risk' younger child is excluded. Captain also uses the perceived vulnerability of younger children to exclude them from a football game. Captain states that tackling is an important part of playing football. In doing so, Captain establishes a normative position, that people who are able to play football are fun, that football involves tackling, and that to play football you need to be able to tackle and be tackled. Younger children are deemed unable to be tackled, and so marked as not fun to play with and outside the norm.

Both Oscar and Captain are acting in a way that is consistent with how Dahlberg and Moss (2004) suggest discourses operate. They argue that individuals subscribe to discourses that have widespread public acceptance and we "govern ourselves" (p. 18) through these discourses. By accepting that a discourse represents a kind of truth, we allow it to influence our thoughts and actions. In doing so, individuals both enact and reinforce the discourse. Oscar, Captain and the practitioners all demonstrate their participation in societal and institutional discourses of the vulnerable child. The practitioners accept the 'truth' that young children are vulnerable and seek to protect them by quarantining them from spaces and experiences that they believe pose a risk. Oscar and Captain also accept the vulnerability of younger children and the institutional practices that flow from it to create a privileged space which only they possess the perceived maturity and ability to access. This reinforces the participant's belief in their superiority and also the younger child's vulnerability.

The younger child as Other

Another feature of binaries is that to be the descendant half of the binary is to be considered Other. To be Other means to be abnormal and inferior. Language plays a critical role in creating the Other. Whilst the dominant half is often unnamed, the differences of the Other are made visible and named (Cannella, 2008; Davies, 1994; MacNaughton, 2005; Mills, 2004). The participants from Metropolitan and Moonahvale demonstrate this with their own language.

> "Interviewer: And who do you play cricket with?
>
> Emily: Ah I like it when some of the staff just throw a ball for you and you get to hit it.
>
> Interviewer: Why do you like it when the staff do it?
>
> Emily: Oh, they actually throw something that you can HIT, unlike some people.
>
> Interviewer: Who are some people? Who throws a ball you can't hit?
>
> Emily: Oh, well, younger kids."

> "Captain: They're the older kids and they're more fun to play with
>
> Interviewer: Ah. More fun than who?
>
> Captain. Than the other people that come here.
>
> Interviewer. Okay. So the people that aren't fun to play with, who are they?
>
> Captain. The younger kids."

Emily and Captain position the younger child as Other with their language. Emily calls younger children "some people" whilst Captain calls them "other people". Their language de-legitimises younger children by denying them an identity and reinforces

the superiority of older children. By not naming them, the participants mark younger children as deviant and 'not like us'. Both participants invite us to reinforce the binary and the deviance of younger children by acknowledging that we know who "some people" are, without having to name them. Fabian (1983 cited in Mills, 2004) suggests that the use of third person pronouns by a member of the dominant group to describe the Other is a significant means of Othering and that it positions the Other outside the dialogue. Although Emily and Captain do not use third person pronouns, they use "some people" and "other people" in the same way, reducing all younger children to a single, homogeneous group and marking 'them' as outside the mainstream 'us'.

Emily and Captain also Other the younger child by word and action, by naming them and treating them as inferior play companions. Emily tells us younger children are incapable of playing cricket at a satisfactory level, which necessitates the choice of a practitioner as play companion. All six children from Metropolitan and Moonahvale express a preference for playing with practitioners rather than younger children.

> "Interviewer: Who are your favourite people to play table tennis with? Your challenging opponents?
>
> Cavli: Um, the staff.
>
> Interviewer: You like playing the staff? So why do you like to play the staff?
>
> Cavli: Because they're harder."

In selecting practitioners as the best available play companions, the participants mark younger children as the least desired companion, and most inferior. They establish a hierarchy of possible play companions with same-age peers at the top, practitioners second and younger children bottom. These actions exclude the younger child physically and socially.

Dane Swan suggests that in some situations playing with younger children is enjoyable but does so in a way that still Others the younger child.

> "Interviewer: So you don't play with any of the younger children here at after care?
>
> Dane Swan: No. But sometimes I do.
>
> Interviewer: Sometimes you do? When do you play with the younger kids?
>
> Dane Swan: Um when it's outside and they're playing 20-20.
>
> Interviewer: Yep.
>
> Dane Swan: And, it's, it's just fun because I can smash a six or a four."

Dane Swan enjoys playing 20-20, which is a cricket game, with younger children because they are easily defeated. To observe the spectacle that Dane Swan describes would to be witness to a physical display that reinforces the superior athletic skills of the older child. It would remind the younger child and any spectators of their inferiority. For the younger child it is potentially humiliating and a reminder of their outsider status with older children.

The participants' views of younger children as unsuitable playmates are consistent with other research. Lodish (1976) presented similar findings in his research into after school settings. He argued that older males preferred to socialise with same age peers, found younger males difficult, saw younger males as less competent and needed an activity focus to socialise with younger males. In contrast, he found older females to be more social and nurturing. Whilst the research used a small sample and can't realistically claim generalizable results, it does support some of the data from this study. All of the males from Metropolitan and Moonahvale communicated difficulties with younger children and a preference for same age peers. This study however had few female participants, and there was insufficient evidence to support the notion that they were any more social or nurturing than the males. Lodish also did not provide any insight into whether older children preferred to play with practitioners. Gifford (1991) reported comparable findings, suggesting that younger children are an aspect of OSHC that older children dislike.

The participants' comments are also consistent with poststructural theory related to Othering. By selecting same-aged peers and practitioners as preferred play companions, the participants are practising a form of exclusion. Dane Swan practises social exclusion by seeking to humiliate younger children. MacNaughton (2005) suggests that exclusion is a hallmark of socially constructed binaries and that

> "Otherness is used to create and then legitimate practices of exclusion and inclusion" (p. 65).

In a manner consistent with MacNaughton's theory, the participants use a Western developmental discourse to exclude the younger child. It is a discourse where the 'fully developed' adult is preferred to the partially developed child (Cannella, 2008; Dahlberg & Moss, 2004). The developmental discourse marks younger children as less capable, which the participants use as a justification for practising exclusion.

The participants also use the discourse to align themselves with adults. The older children identify themselves as 'most adult' compared to younger children who are constructed as 'least adult' and Other. Foucault (1977) refers to this as a "system of discipline" which "individualizes" or Others the inferior or deviant half of a binary, and makes them the focus of any "individualizing mechanisms" (p. 193). The participants individualise younger children by marking them as least adult and least competent. They also individualise younger children by singling them out for exclusion from their play.

YOUNGER CHILD – OLDER CHILD

The literature review for this study indicated the existence of a younger child – older child binary in OSHC. This binary opposed the vulnerable, less developed, younger child against the stronger, more developed, older child. The younger child is constructed as ascendant, silent and normative, whilst the older child is descendant, named and deviant. Prior to commencing the data collection, one expectation was that the research would uncover evidence to support the existence of the younger – older child binary. I had expected the participants to be more aware of their reputation as a difficult group, and to describe more behaviours that could mark them as risk takers, rebellious and bored (Berk, 2012; Erikson, 1968; Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2004; Lesko, 1996; Walkerdine, 1984). Significantly, the interview data did not provide as much evidence of this as expected.

On reflection, this is unsurprising. The younger – older child binary is an example of what MacNaughton (2005) calls an "officially sanctioned truth" (p. 21). The literature review suggested this binary is produced by adults and is supported by accepted, developmental truths of the child. In contrast, the interview data consists of the views of children, which represent a different perspective that challenges the younger – older child binary. Had this project also researched the opinions of practitioners then it is possible that more evidence of the younger – older child binary would have been revealed. However, given the size of this thesis, it was not possible to also include practitioners in the research.

Privileging the needs of the younger child

The interviews produced some data that supports the notion of a younger – older child binary. The six participants from Metropolitan and Moonahvale all identified instances where practitioners privileged younger children. Most of the incidences of privileging they identified relate to programming decisions. This is unsurprising as all participants spoke more about activities than any other theme.

Moonahvale and Poppyhill both provided some compulsory activities that all children were required to participate in. One of these is Active After Schools Communities (AASC), which is a government-funded program that aims to promote physical activity. Whilst government doesn't require the program to be compulsory (ASC, 2012), Moonahvale expected all children to participate. Jim provides examples of compulsory participation in AASC activities designed for children younger than him.

> "Jim: So, baseball the other week…. the activities were set for younger kids. The older kids could do them quite easily.
>
> Interviewer: What's annoying about it?
>
> Jim: That you can't like really show your best or improve that much."

Jim's comments provide evidence of the "systems of discipline" (Foucault, 1977, p. 193) that reinforce the binary. The sports activity is tailored to the needs of the majority younger child. Jim's unsuitability for the activity individualises and marginalises Jim. Jim complains that the activity doesn't allow Jim to show their best. Instead, Jim must modify her/his behaviour to bring Jim closer to the norm represented by the younger child. There is also a tension between Jim's comments and the FSAC which suggests that practitioners "plan environments with appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks" (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 34) and "provide time and space for children to challenge and practice physical prowess" (p. 30). Jim describes a setting that does not afford an appropriate level of challenge. Jim draws attention to how protecting

the vulnerable younger child is privileged over providing challenging play experiences for older children.

Captain and Cavli also provide examples of having to modify their play to protect the majority, younger child.

> "Um well I'm not allowed to play with some people cos I'm too old" (Cavli).

> "Oh, it's just like if we are playing football you can't tackle them….. we only tackle the age kids (sic) not the younger ones" (Captain).

These participants modify their play in response to the "normalizing judgement" (Foucault, 1977, p. 192) of practitioners who reinforce what is deemed appropriate activity for a child in OSHC. To not modify their play means that the participants risk identifying themselves as deviant and requiring correction by the practitioner.

Some participants suggest that privileging occurs not just within activities but also in the provision of materials and resources. They identified a number of ways in which this occurred:

- The majority of play equipment was better suited to younger children.
- Dress ups that were too small for older children.
- Few books that were suitable for older children.
- Movies that were better suited to younger children.
- Art materials that were better suited to younger children.

Sebastian asserts that the majority of equipment at OSHC is for younger children.

> "Have more older kids' activities….yeah cos most them are like little kids' things um like the dolls' house" (Sebastian).

Oscar, Captain and Jim also reported a similar scenario relating to the provision of books.

> "Oscar: Also books. Yes, that's another thing that they should have. They only have some books over there, except nothing really that interesting.
>
> Interviewer: Okay.
>
> Oscar: I mean like a couple of ones that say like 'whoever's learning the alphabet' or something like that, or 'there's a hippopotamus on my roof' or something like that. Yeah, I saw that one over there.
>
> Interviewer: So, younger children's books again.
>
> Oscar: Yes, yes."

All three indicated that they would enjoy reading books, but that the books provided are more suited to younger children. Jim explained that Jim provides her/his own books in order to have something suitable to read. This contrasts with the data from Poppyhill where Brett Lee and Dane Swan both suggest the books provided at their OSHC are suitable for older children. Brett Lee reads and enjoys the books provided at OSHC although Dane Swan prefers to read at home.

This bias towards younger children in the design of activities and the provision of resources is also evidence of the binary and the normalising mechanisms that reinforce it. These decisions are controlled by the practitioner and favour the younger child. This is consistent with Cannella (2008) who argues that children who fit the dominant construction of childhood acquire more power and are privileged as a consequence of their ascendancy. In OSHC it is younger children who more closely fit the dominant Western construction of a primary-aged child. The majority, younger child is regarded as more vulnerable, less capable and less adult than the minority, older child (Cannella, 2008). The older child, on the other hand, inhabits the socially constructed boundaries between middle childhood and adolescence (James, et al., 2008) and is considered more adult and less childlike. The participants must regulate their behaviour and interactions to bring themselves closer to the norm represented by the younger child or identify themselves as deviant and in need

of correction by a practitioner. The participants identified a number of ways in which they are corrected or correct themselves:

- Excluding themselves or being excluded from activities.
- Complying with decisions made by practitioners.
- Modifying their play to protect younger children.
- Not questioning practitioners.

These examples of self-correction would make the participants less visible and less likely to warrant external correction.

There were significant differences with respect to activity and resource provision in the different research sites. None of the participants from Poppyhill indicated that younger children were favoured in the ways described by other participants. This is likely due to the fact that Poppyhill programs for younger and older children separately, and provides them with separate spaces, which may reduce possible tensions. This is not to suggest that there is no younger – older child binary at Poppyhill. It is just not apparent with respect to activity provision in the context of this small sample. However, there may be merit in exploring whether having separate spaces for different ages helps to improve equity in relation to age.

In the minority

Another feature of the binary is that we expect older children to be in the minority. This is supported by census data which indicates approximately twice as many children aged six to eight years attend OSHC compared to those aged nine to twelve years (ABS, 2009). It is also corroborated by data from each of the three research sites, where the older child represented a minority (Table 5.2).

	5-6 Years	7-8 Years	9-10 Years	11-12 Years
Metropolitan	45	55	36	12
Moonahvale	14	8	6	2
Poppyhill	47	48	30	22

Table 5.2: Number of children currently attending OSHC at each research site

Jim and Emily from Moonahvale felt the effects of being in the minority most keenly. Jim is one of two children aged eleven to twelve years at OSHC, whilst Emily is one of six children aged nine to ten years. This compares with 22 younger children. On the days when I visited their service, Jim or Emily were often the only older child present. Both described ways in which being part of a minority affected them.

> "Actually more younger kids…. than older kids and yep we usually don't get our way" (Emily).

> "Interviewer: Is it often that your friends are still in the schoolyard when you go out?
>
> Jim: Oh not really. Only a few of them because it takes a while to eat and then pack up.
>
> Interviewer: Yep. And if you, so do Janice and the staff mind you doing that, playing with the kids who aren't in the program?
>
> Jim: Yeah yeah. They are fine with it.
>
> Interviewer: Oh that's good. And so tell me, let's say you're outside, and you're playing with your friends, and then they go home because their mums and dads want to take them home, what do you do then if you're still outside?
>
> Jim: Um, I just either go on the playground or kick the football to myself or a staff member."

For Emily and Jim, being in the minority directly affects how they experience OSHC. Foucault (1977) argues that

> "It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences." (p. 184)

This suggests that as well as encouraging homogeneity, normalisation also has the power to individualise. These comments from Emily and Jim evidence how they experience homogeneity and individualisation in their OSHC services. Emily experiences a "system of formal equality" in the form of a democratic voting process that is used to select activities. Emily suggests that the wishes of younger children are usually privileged by virtue of their greater numbers. Emily experiences a system that claims fairness, having to vote for activities despite knowing that "we usually

don't get our way". The simple voting process awards the decision to the majority. The minority, older child would only vote successfully if their choice matched that of the majority younger child. The voting process encourages Emily to vote with the majority, encouraging homogeneity. The involvement of all children in the decision gives the impression of consensus. However, it also marks and individualises Emily. If Emily chooses to vote against the group, Emily risks marking her/himself as non-compliant and also makes Emily's difference from the rest of the group more visible. The voting process gives the impression of fairness, equitably allocating one vote to each child, but in reality, as a minority and an outsider Emily finds that it serves mainly the needs of the majority younger child. This process also gives the impression of consensus but van Dyk (2006) suggests it is a form of self conduct where minor players like Emily and Jim give the impression of being heard, but reinforce norms and truths rather than upset them.

Jim provides a different description of how normalisation works at OSHC. Jim seeks limited opportunities to play with same-aged peers who don't attend OSHC before they go home, but once they have left, prefers to play alone. Technically, Jim is not supposed to play with non-OSHC peers, but Jim is able to do so with the practitioners' permission. Jim's comment "they are fine with it," communicates that Jim understands the practitioners are granting a favour, but also that practitioners have greater power with respect to such decisions. Whilst appearing fair, allowing Jim to play with peers also individualises Jim, and marks her/him as a child unsuited to OSHC and who doesn't fit in. When Jim's peers have left, Jim must return to a space more suited to younger children, reinforcing Jim's outsider status. In my follow up meeting after the interview, Jim informed me that playing with non-OSHC friends during OSHC time was no longer permitted. The revoking of this privilege is evidence of the normative power held by the practitioner. It demonstrates that in Jim's setting, the practitioner controls what is deemed appropriate activity for a school-age child, and in Jim's case, what is inappropriate. The practitioner requires Jim to comply and join the majority or mark Jim's deviance from the norm. It also demonstrates the shifting nature of truth and what is considered acceptable play for

school-age children. Not only does the practitioner control what is believed to be acceptable, they can also change what is acceptable.

The difficult older child

Another feature of the younger – older child binary is how it negatively constructs older children. Practitioners are told to expect older children to be negative and rebellious (Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2004), adversarial (Erikson, 1964) or argumentative and moody (Berk, 2012). The participants' responses do not provide any clear evidence to suggest that, from their perspective, these expectations represent anything that could be considered a universal truth about older children. However they describe some behaviours that practitioners may identify as challenging.

Emily provides the two clearest examples of behaviour that would challenge practitioners. The first describes Emily's response to compulsory participation in Zumba, a dance activity for children at OSHC. Zumba is part of the government-funded AASC program that the practitioners at Moonahvale deemed compulsory for all children.

> "I used to always lean forward and back and say to my friends that we all around me (sic) cos she had a sign on her t-shirt that said 'I love Zumba'. I changed it to 'hate'" (Emily).

> "Emily: Well, a few times in Zumba I got fed up with it and made the people who didn't want to just sit out and do nothing.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. So you couldn't do anything? You just had to watch?
>
> Emily: Unless you had like a note saying oh 'I've got a sore foot' and then maybe you get to read a book or something.
>
> Interviewer: Okay.
>
> Emily: Then they bought in the games after a while because so many people sitting out because they didn't want to do it."

Emily communicates a clear dislike for Zumba using the word "hate" to describe it. Earlier in the interview Emily declares that Emily and Emily's friends are "anti Zumba". Emily sees no virtues in Zumba, and uses no positive or moderate language to describe it. The behaviour Emily describes is a direct challenge to the authority of the practitioners. However, to merely characterise this as rebellious ignores the complexity informing the behaviour. Emily suggests that non-OSHC peers are likely to tease you about Zumba. Emily and all of the other participants identified having same age peers as critically important to them. It is likely that Emily sees withdrawing from Zumba as the lesser of two evils. Emily would rather act against the wishes of the practitioners than risk being teased by peers. So, whilst adults may see the behaviour as rebellious, it is understandable given the circumstances described. Emily's account provides an example of competing discourses. Davies (1994) argues that individuals are able to occupy and use different discourses and place themselves in a position of power by doing so. Emily can choose to occupy the discourse of the 'good child' seeking the approval of the practitioner, or occupy the discourse of the 'popular child' seeking the approval of peers. Emily's decision prioritises the approval of peers and evidences Emily's agency and ability to make political and strategic decisions.

Emily also discusses challenging elements of the way she/he plays with wooden blocks at OSHC.

"Interviewer: So explain to me what you do with the blocks and the army men.

Emily: Build towers. Um get told off for doing it too high above your head.

Interviewer: Really?

Emily: Although that is actually quite fun. Or just getting a few blocks and just getting another big block and smashing it down.

Interviewer: Do you get in trouble for that too?

Emily: For the noise yes. But that's FUN, getting in trouble.

Interviewer: So you get in trouble if you build it too high Emily?

Emily: Yep.

Interviewer: What's so good about building it high?

Emily: Oh that um when you get to smash it, there's a big clatter and clang.

Interviewer: So the noise, you like the noise.

Emily: Yep. They hate the noise."

A practitioner may find Emily's behaviour in this scenario challenging. Emily identifies loud noise as something that the practitioners do not like. The blocks described are large and heavy and the indoor space small, so it is also possible that the practitioners consider this activity a safety risk. Emily consciously chooses to be challenging in this scenario despite being aware that practitioners do not like the activity. However, Emily does say it's "fun" getting in trouble, which raises the possibility that "getting in trouble" may be part of the game for Emily and the practitioners.

Brett Lee also discusses the behaviour of older children at Poppyhill that may be considered challenging.

> "Interviewer: So, do you think the workers know that you're unhappy about being up here?
>
> Brett Lee: Yeah.
>
> Interviewer: So how would they know that you're unhappy?
>
> Brett Lee: Well…. up here like when we read, like after when we come back late, most people moan and groan."

As with Emily, Brett Lee demonstrates intent with her/his behaviour, which is designed to communicate displeasure at having to return to the younger children's space. However, Brett Lee suggests he only engages in moaning and groaning, which whilst negative, may not necessarily be deemed 'difficult' by practitioners. Brett Lee's behaviour however is seen more positively when viewed through the FSAC. It suggests that children are effective communicators when they "convey and construct messages with purpose and confidence" and are supported by practitioners who "respond sensitively and appropriately to children's conversations" (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 38). This contrasts with developmental views of the child, which may construct Brett Lee's behaviour as deviant and requiring intervention (Cannella, 2008). Instead the FSAC constructs Brett Lee's behaviour as effective communication and an opportunity for learning.

Some of the other participants identify behaviours that may be considered difficult. Sebastian sometimes likes to annoy practitioners when her/his friends have gone home. Captain and Happy Hippo sometimes get in trouble if they kick balls on the roof, but these incidents appear accidental rather than deliberate.

These behaviours can be understood in different ways. Little and Wyver (2008) argue that Western cultures increasingly see young children as 'at risk'. When viewed in the context of this construction of the vulnerable child, it is possible to see why practitioners could interpret the behaviours described as challenging. None of the

behaviours portray the older child as vulnerable. Instead they portray the older child as a risk. Emily's towers may be seen to be a physical risk personally and to younger children. Emily's Zumba rebellion and Brett Lee's complaints may be seen as a moral risk. These behaviours position the participants outside the mainstream construct of the vulnerable, innocent child.

We can also understand these behaviours from a developmental perspective which sees children as developing and immature compared to the fully developed, mature adult (Cannella, 2008). Emily's Zumba rebellion and Brett Lee's complaint are a challenge to the mature, rational adult who is deemed most capable of knowing what is best for the developing child. Likewise, as a developing child, Emily may be presumed as too immature to foresee the possible disasters that may result from building the tower. Cannella (2008) argues that the concept of maturity is used to regulate children's behaviour and to render them compliant. Those children deemed immature are singled out for intervention and correction. When viewed developmentally, these behaviours would be seen as deviant, immature and requiring correction.

It is also interesting to consider these behaviours in the context of the FSAC. The FSAC encourages practitioners to acknowledge a range of views of the child including postmodern views by acknowledging

> "their agency, capacity to initiate and lead learning, and their rights to participate in decisions that affect them" (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 7).

Emily and Brett Lee's resistances can be understood as an expression of independence and agency. Emily employed a successful strategy to get excused from an undesirable activity, whilst Brett Lee sought to communicate displeasure at being relocated. Emily's tower can also be understood in terms of agency as an activity that "enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity" (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 7). So, instead of constructing these participants as difficult, a postmodern perspective allows us to see children as political, strategic and decision makers. It challenges

traditional views of the child and provides the opportunity to engage with multiple images of the child.

Risky Behaviours

The developmental discourse which informs the younger – older child binary lead us to expect that older children are more likely to engage in risk taking activity than younger children. Kennedy and Stonehouse (2004) suggest that

> "Risk taking is often a part of their physical pursuits" (p. 49).

It is unclear whether the data from this project supports the idea that the participants engage in significant risk talking. All nine participants indicated that challenging activities were important to them. This is consistent with Musson's (1994) and Gifford's (1991) findings in which each suggest that challenging play was important for older children in OSHC. However, challenge does not necessarily imply that the play is risky. Risk suggests an element of danger and the possibility of experiencing harm (Macmillan Publishers Australia, 2012; Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2012; Oxford University Press, 2011) that is not necessary for play to be challenging. The participants provided many examples of play that they find challenging but that do not pose significant risk.

> "This is a puzzle. Um the reason why I took this because it challenges your head" (Dane Swan).

> "I took a photo of a table tennis table and I like it because it involves lots of sports and you have to try and get it past the opponent" (Cavli).

> "When you get in a grand final of Twister you sometimes versus the staff because they're the best" (Emily).

In each of these examples the participant communicates that they enjoy the difficulty of the activity. Dane Swan enjoys the cognitive challenge of a puzzle. Cavli enjoys the physical and tactical challenge of passing an opponent, and for Emily a practitioner provides the challenge. However, it is difficult to argue that any of these activities pose a significant risk of harm.

Some participants do provide examples of risky play.

> "Well this is one that I don't like. One, you could accidentally bash into things, but but the thing I like about is cos um it's really fun and there's like cos sometimes you like might be straight about to go into the wall but you do a really sharp corner" (Sebastian).

> "It's (the playground equipment) not my favourite. It's entertaining when you're like trying to play games like off ground tiggy, except really annoying when you trip over and hurt yourself on the ropes. It just really hurts when you fall over. Not to mention if you fall off the edge" (Oscar).

It is reasonable to suggest that there may be an element of risk in physical play that is challenging, but this does not always have to be the case. Sebastian talks about riding a toy car around the OSHC service and the enjoyment that it provides. Sebastian identifies the risk associated with the activity but also that she/he doesn't necessarily enjoy the risk. Sebastian suggests that the enjoyment Sebastian gains from the challenging activity makes the risk acceptable. Oscar speaks similarly of risk. Oscar is ambivalent about the virtues of the playground equipment, acknowledging the enjoyment it provides, but also its potential to cause harm. Captain talked about playing football on asphalt, that Captain enjoys the activity but seeks to play on a safer surface if possible. Captain will play on asphalt if it is the only surface available. Their statements are consistent with other research that suggests that children seek play that provides challenge and excitement, but also that they are capable of assessing risk and that they use these assessments to guide their play (Little & Wyver, 2010; Morrongiello et al., 2008). What the data suggests is that

some of the participants do put themselves at risk during their play, but the risk is something that they calculate and accept rather than seek. Seeing the participants as risk calculators is also consistent with how children are constructed in the FSAC. The FSAC suggests that "children develop their autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency" when they "take considered risk in their decision-making" (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 21).

Cannella (2008) argues that we interpret developmental theory as a set of universally applicable truths about children. Cannella also argues that it constructs children as incomplete and deficient, and that adults use this as justification to intervene in the lives of children. Adults appear to do this with regards to older children and risk taking. Developmental discourses construct the older child as a subject who compulsively seeks risk but does not have the maturity to suppress their urges or understand fully the consequences of their actions. This view of the child demands the intervention of a fully developed entity, an adult, to guide and protect the older child (Burman, 2008). The notion that all older children are inherently risk takers is challenged by both the FSAC and the data from the participants. The participants instead demonstrate that they have a variety of attitudes to risk and derive different levels of enjoyment from it. These multiple attitudes to risky play stand in contrast to the singular truth of older children as compulsive risk takers who require surveillance and intervention.

They are bored

The OSHC literature also leads us to believe that we can expect older children to find OSHC boring, or believe they are 'too old' for the service (Gifford, 1991; Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2004). However, only Oscar and Jim suggest that they regularly find OSHC boring.

"Interviewer: So on the days when Nelson has gone home and Matilda has gone home, and you're the last one here, what do you do?

Oscar: Ah, well sit on a beanbag and wait for time to pass.

Interviewer: You just wait?

Oscar: That's all I really can do.

Interviewer: You don't do anything?

Oscar: No.… So all I really can do is sit on the beanbag and wait for the time to pass, and hope my music lesson comes quick.

Interviewer: It doesn't sound exciting.

Oscar: No. Dreadful.

Interviewer: Alright. Anything else you want to tell me about OOSH?

Oscar: Um other than how boring it is right now. No."

> "Interviewer: Oh so who's left when you go home?
>
> Jim: Oh there's only ever like one other kid or sometimes it's just me.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. So what's that like? Cos you're at after school care, you're there on your own with one other kid. What's that like?
>
> Jim: Oh it doesn't really bother me because I just usually sit there and read or play with a football."

Both Oscar and Jim discuss how, in the absence of their friends, they just kill time until they leave OSHC. Their comments are consistent with the idea that older children find OSHC boring. However, Oscar and Jim's comments can also be understood in the context of a lack of peers. All nine participants indicated that friends are critical to their enjoyment of OSHC. Jim is one of only two children over eleven years of age at his service and had no same-age peers during any of my visits. Oscar has only one person they call a friend at OSHC and commented on their reliance on the friend to make OSHC bearable.

The other seven participants found OSHC more engaging.

> "Interviewer: If you could make the world's best after school care program, the best one in the world for you, ah what would it have in it? Or what would it look like?
>
> Happy Hippo: Um, a lot like this one."

> "Interviewer: So if you had a choice…. between going to after care….or staying at home, which one would you choose?
>
> Brett Lee: I don't mind."

Happy Hippo and Brett Lee's comments directly challenge the construction of the bored older child. Both named many aspects of OSHC that they find enjoyable. Dane Swan, Cavli, Captain and Sebastian indicated that they too enjoy OSHC. Like Oscar and Jim, all five regard the presence of friends as pivotal to their enjoyment of OSHC.

> "Interviewer: So do you like after school care?
>
> Captain: Sometimes yes, sometimes no.
>
> Interviewer: So why sometimes yes and why sometimes no?
>
> Captain: It depends on who's there and yeah.
>
> Interviewer: So who do you want to be here for it to be good?
>
> Captain: Um, the boys that I play with."

The data from this study troubles the truth of the bored older child. Six of the participants mostly enjoyed OSHC, and only Oscar and Jim declared OSHC boring. The complexities of their situations provide insight into why Oscar and Jim find OSHC boring and suggest that it would be simplistic to explain away their dissatisfaction as something inherent in the nature of older children. The data suggests that each participant experiences OSHC differently, and in multiple ways. It is consistent with postmodern philosophy that there are multiple forms of knowledge (Cannella, 2008). Cannella suggests that

> "the construction of knowledge is rooted in power relations; the knowledge created by those in power dominates." (p. 4)

This raises the possibility that the construction of the older child as bored and too old is knowledge created by those with the most power in OSHC, the practitioners and other adults. Looking at boredom from the child's perspective reveals more complexity.

The FSAC also paints a different picture of the older child. It constructs the child as something more than a subject who would be bored without the intervention of a

practitioner. It depicts them as "confident and involved learners" who have "greater capacity for independence, self-direction and collaboration"(DEEWR, 2011b, p. 32). However, the FSAC does also reserve a role for practitioners in creating an environment that supports children to display these qualities. The FSAC presents an opportunity for practitioners to see the older child in a more positive and complex light, rather than just an inherently bored subject who is difficult to entertain.

Supporting and disrupting the binary

The interview data does provide evidence to support the existence of an older – younger child binary. It demonstrates that many of the participants are aware of being a minority in OSHC, and are able to provide instances of how the majority younger child is privileged. They describe how many activities are better suited to younger children and fail to engage them. They also provide insight into how more resources are provided for younger children, and into other processes that privilege the younger child.

However, as well as supporting the existence of the binary, the data challenges the notion that the binary represents a singular 'truth' about older children in OSHC. Whilst some participants describe behaviours that may be considered challenging, they also describe much behaviour that positions them as cooperative and compliant. Some also provide insight into the motivations behind disruptive behaviours and boredom. They show themselves to be strategic and capable in moving between competing discourses to meet the demands of a particular context. In addition, rather than describing themselves as risk takers, some of the participants indicate that they are more considered, being assessors and managers of risk. Their responses demonstrate diversity. Whilst some responses are consistent with the depiction afforded by the younger – older child binary, others seek to disrupt it.

It is interesting to consider the FSAC and whether it plays any role in recirculating or disrupting the binary. The FSAC is consistent in that it constructs all children who attend OSHC as a single group. Age as a type of diversity is only mentioned once in the FSAC.

"Resources need to reflect the breadth of age groups and interests and capabilities that are sharing the environment." (DEEWR, 2011b, p. 15)

The way in which the FSAC constructs primary-age children as a single, homogeneous group is unlikely to challenge what practitioners consider a primary-age child to be, or disrupt the notion of older children as outsiders. Metropolitan and Moonahvale evidence this, where children, regardless of age, share resources, space and programming. In those services where a homogeneous view of the child is reflected in their pedagogies, the younger-older child binary was most apparent. Adopting a homogeneous view of all primary-aged children gives the appearance of equity as it constructs all children as the same with equal access to resources and opportunities. However, it serves to highlights the gaps between the older child and the norm and how this individualises the older child (Foucault, 1977).

SIMILAR DISCOURSE, DIFFERENT BINARY?

The older – younger child binary is most evident in the data from Metropolitan and Moonahvale where older and younger children share space and equipment. The comments of the participants appear based on the same developmental discourse that informs the younger – older child binary, namely that younger children are less developed and more vulnerable (Cannella, 2008; Walkerdine, 1993). However, rather than privilege the younger child, the older – younger child binary excludes and disadvantages younger children. Younger children or the activities with which they are associated are described by older children as "little" (Oscar, Sebastian) or "babyish" (Captain). The participants regard younger children as less capable, which they find frustrating and undesirable. The participants appear to value and reward individuals who are more adult-like and more developed.

This stands in contrast to the younger – older child binary which values and rewards the less developed and more vulnerable younger child. Practitioners hold the younger child in need of greater protection, whereas the more developed older child is deemed better capable of self-care. The data from Metropolitan and Moonahvale supports this by documenting how practitioners direct more attention and resources to the care of younger children.

So, although founded on the same developmental discourse, these two binaries work differently. Older children privilege those subjects with more adult-like qualities. Practitioners privilege those that appear more vulnerable and child-like. It is a demonstration of how knowledge can be socially and culturally produced (Foucault, 1980), and that what we consider to be true about older and younger children in OSHC varies depending on whose perspective we adopt, the older child or the adult.

In the final chapter, I present my conclusions, which summarise the key findings of the research. These findings will summarise the thoughts of the participants and how they really experience OSHC. It also suggests some recommendations that may deliver improvements in OSHC for older children.

CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION

OSHC practitioners have regarded children aged nine to twelve years as difficult to care for and educate for over 20 years (Gifford, 1991). The limited texts available are consistent in how they depict older children and single them out for special pedagogical approaches. Older children are frequently regarded as difficult, rebellious, competitive, aggressive, bored, too old and like teenagers (Kennedy & Stonehouse, 2004; Longobardi, 2001; Musson, 1994; Tarrant & Jones, 2000). These depictions of older children are similar to how adolescents are portrayed in developmental literature (Berk, 2012; Erikson, 1964, 1968) and present older children in a negative light.

How we currently view older children appears founded on developmental theory and adult perspectives, but are there other ways to understand older children? Developmental theory is a dominant voice in how we currently understand children in OSHC, and also in other forms of early childhood education and care (Cannella, 2008; Walkerdine, 1984). However, there is now a body of post-modern scholarship that troubles whether developmental theory can provide universal truths that apply to all children, and as such, questions whether it should be the foundation of our pedagogical approaches. Foucault (1977) argues that human sciences represent a power over individuals that allows those with the most power to control, monitor, study and pathologise others. He also argues that the knowledge it produces, whilst commonly considered 'truth', is socially produced and can shift and change across settings and epistemes which undermines its claims to universality (Foucault, 1980). Cannella (2008) and Walkerdine (1984) argue that developmental theory enables adults to establish developmental norms and stages by which they can measure children and intervene in their lives. MacNaughton (2005) suggests that it represents a challenge to equity and is a particularly Western view of children that discounts other perspectives. It also undermines the rights of those who fall outside the norms it produces, pathologising their diversity and singling them out for intervention by adult experts. In the context of OSHC, older children are marked as deviant and singled out for intervention.

This research sought to address the following questions using poststructural theories and critiques of developmental psychology:

- How do children age nine to twelve years experience Outside School Hours Care in Australia?
- What social and cultural influences inform those experiences?

It applied this methodology to disrupt existing power structures and bring forward the voice of older children. As co-researchers and critics of their OSHC services, the nine participants have shown themselves to be many things including constructors of knowledge, political activists, effective communicators and capable researchers. Their data provides new insights into how older children experience OSHC. It provides knowledge consistent with our current understandings but also much knowledge that disrupts them. The following section summarises the findings from this research project and the recommendations that can be drawn from them.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the findings and recommendations of this research and reports on each as a direct response to the two research questions and methodological questions. The recommendations of this study flow directly from the findings. There are six findings and eight recommendations that have implications for practitioners, policy makers, professional support providers and researchers who work with OSHC, and of course, children. Although presented individually, these recommendations are all interconnected.

How do older children experience OSHC?

The interview data revealed much about how the participants experience life in OSHC. Whilst there were commonalities across participants, each one experienced OSHC differently. Rather than use this data to draw conclusions that apply to all older children, I intend to highlight the multiple understandings of the older child that emerged from the data and the complexities represented by the nine participants.

Finding 1

The research provides new understandings of older children in OSHC.

By making multiple discourses visible, the participants disrupted the discourses of older children as difficult and risk-takers. All participants identified challenging play experiences as critical to their enjoyment of OSHC, but spoke about challenging play in a way that did not necessarily imply risk-taking. The participants' attitudes to risk varied, with some not enjoying risk at all. Some participants identified behaviours that could be interpreted by practitioners as challenging, but which are also informed by a range of complexities, suggesting that it would be simplistic to merely label the behaviours as 'challenging'. The participants described a range of behaviours that both support and disrupt the dominant construction of the older child as bored, challenging and risky. They instead showed themselves to be

strategic, political and effective communicators who are capable of moving across discourses.

Recommendation 1

Training and professional support providers should ensure that a range of theoretical positions, including postmodern theories is presented to practitioners.

This research shows that developmental theories are only one way of understanding older children in OSHC. In presenting a range of theoretical frameworks, training and support providers can encourage practitioners to see children from multiple perspectives and not just the singular, linear perspective afforded by developmental theory. This research also shows that the FSAC encourages practitioners to understand children from a range of theoretical perspectives including postmodern understandings of the child. Professional development for the FSAC should include specific attention to the different theories it draws upon and their implications for pedagogical practice. This could reveal ways of understanding children that disrupt the discourse of the difficult older child.

Finding 2

The research provides new understandings of how older children speak about younger children.

The participants constructed knowledge about themselves and younger children, seeing them as opposites to form an older child – younger child binary. They spoke about younger children as though they were less capable, less adult, more vulnerable, inferior and Other. The older children enacted the binary by excluding younger children and marking them as the least preferred play partner. Their language drew upon Western discourses of the child as a developing subject.

Finding 3

There were fewer tensions between older and younger children in the research site where older and younger children had separate spaces and programming.

In Poppyhill, which has separate spaces and programs for older and younger children, there was little evidence of an older-younger child binary or a younger-older child binary. The participants also appeared to enjoy OSHC more. Whilst the sample for this study was too small to claim this as conclusive, the trend appears significant.

Recommendation 2

Further research should be conducted into the effects of adopting separate program spaces and programming approaches for older and younger children.

The data from Poppyhill provided little evidence of the older-younger child and younger-old child binaries compared to the other two research sites. A clear opportunity for future research would be to investigate the effects of separate age spaces and programming. Investigating this question across a wider sample of services could allow for a more conclusive investigation.

What social and cultural influences inform the experiences of older children?

Despite the participants showing themselves to be capable and agentic, the power relationships in OSHC meant their experiences were greatly affected by social and cultural influences. Discourses of the developing child and vulnerable child, and binary understandings of older and younger children were sometimes enacted by practitioners to disadvantage older children.

Finding 4

How adults understand older children and how older children understand themselves is different, and contextual.

The literature review and data analysis suggest that adults see children who attend OSHC as a younger-older child binary in which the younger child is dominant and privileged. Interestingly, older children also see themselves and younger children as a binary, but they see themselves as dominant. Both binaries appear informed by the discourse of the developing child. It demonstrates that what we consider to be true about older children can vary depending on context and positioning.

Finding 5

Older children can be disadvantaged in OSHC by virtue of their minority status and practitioners enacting discourses of the developing and vulnerable child.

The participants from Metropolitan and Moonahvale revealed how normalisation operated in OSHC. The participants provided evidence of how they moderate their play and behaviour in response to the normalising judgement of practitioners. They identified how practitioners enacting discourses of the developing and vulnerable child, privileged the majority younger child through equipment provision and activity design. Compulsory sports activities provided via the AASC program were also biased towards younger children. Practitioners also employed democratic processes that claimed to act in the name of fairness but sometimes privileged the majority younger child.

Recommendation 3

Practitioners should reflect critically on systems and structures within their OSHC that privilege younger children.

The accounts of the participants highlight how programming for the 'norm' best serves the needs of majorities and can isolate and individualise those who fall outside the 'norm'. Practitioners should reflect critically on their pedagogies, and their understandings of older children to identify how they advantage or disadvantage different individuals and groups. They should also reflect upon their pedagogies from a number of theoretical perspectives. The FSAC presents a range of alternative theoretical perspectives that could be used by practitioners to guide reflection and provide more equitable outcomes for older children.

Recommendation 4

Policy makers need to consider the implications of compulsory activities like those delivered under the AASC program.

Policy makers need to consider how normalisation operates within compulsory activities that cater for broad needs and how it can exclude and disadvantage minorities. The participants demonstrated their capacity to critically evaluate and form opinions of things that affect them. Children should be consulted throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of government programs that affect them. The participants' accounts also highlight the tensions between compulsory activities like AASC, and OSHC as a leisure space. In developing programs, policy makers should also consider the question of whether OSHC is education or leisure.

Methodology

There were a number of limitations in this research that need to be acknowledged. The size of a Masters thesis meant there were many themes, binaries and discourses revealed in the data that could not be addressed. It also placed restrictions on the sample size, limiting any claims to generalizable findings. Also, time constraints impacted on participant recruitment. More time may have made it possible to involve rural OSHC services and more female participants. Greater representation from both groups would have added to the depth of the data. Whilst researching from the perspective of children has yielded new knowledge, including the perspectives of parents and practitioners would have strengthened the research. Finally, although engaging children as co-researchers was successful, there is an opportunity to engage children more deeply in the design of future research, honouring their agency and further limiting any adult biases that may influence the children's data.

Finding 6

Older children are competent meaning makers that provide insight into matters that affect them.

> "Interviewer: So do you think though that taking photographs and doing an interview, is that a good way to measure what's good about after school care?
>
> Oscar: Yeah I think it is except um we've got a pretty small amount of people, so we could all have different points of view then but, they're all, it's not going to make a general picture of what um people our age like. So it would be better if there was more people cos then you could get a more accurate picture of what we enjoy."

The participants validated the decision to involve them more deeply in the research process. In the above quote, Oscar and I engage in a discussion on the tensions between quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This discussion evidences

Oscar's willingness to engage in the research process and Oscar's ability to think critically about the methodology. Other participants also engaged in the research process in a range of ways that influenced the conduct of the project. The participants consistently showed themselves to be capable and involved, and produced data that was less influenced by my own biases and therefore a more reliable account of how they experience OSHC.

Recommendation 5

Practitioners should involve children meaningfully in the planning and evaluation of pedagogy.

The participants showed themselves to be capable of thinking critically about their OSHC and providing insight into their experiences. Practitioners could use this information to improve experiences for older children.

As an area that is significantly under-researched (Cartmel, 2007), OSHC presents as a rich source of future research opportunities. This study into the experiences of older children is by no means definitive. Given that it is an issue that has concerned practitioners for many years, it would benefit from further attention from researchers.

Recommendation 6

Further research should be conducted on the following topics:

- OSHC as an institutionalised leisure space
- Children's perceptions of OSHC friends versus 'normal' friends
- Australian hegemonic, male and sporty child discourses in OSHC

There were many themes and binaries revealed in this study that could not be addressed within the scope of this Masters thesis. The listed topics figured prominently in data analysis and represent an opportunity for future research.

Recommendation 7

Further research should be conducted into older children in OSHC from the perspective of older children and other stakeholders.

This research investigated this question from the perspective of older children. However, the issue should also be researched from the perspectives of other stakeholders, including practitioners, families and younger children. This is consistent with the position taken in this paper that there are multiple perspectives and ways of understanding older children. To conduct research with all of these groups would afford the opportunity to obtain a more complex and complete understanding of older children in OSHC.

Recommendation 8

Further research should be conducted into older children in OSHC using different theoretical and methodological approaches.

This research produced new knowledge about the older child by adopting a different theoretical perspective from the traditional approach afforded by developmental theory. Researching from other theoretical perspectives such as poststructural feminist theory and post-colonial theory could produce more knowledge. In addition, Oscar's critique of my qualitative approach to this question came too late in the research process to be acted upon. Further research could also be conducted using a mixed-method approach.

CONCLUSION

Children aged nine to twelve years in OSHC are spoken of negatively, and in a way that positions them as outsiders in a care and education service that is meant to include them. By examining this issue critically and from the child's perspective, this thesis suggests that older children are more diverse and complex than developmental 'truths' about older children suggest. It has revealed new knowledge of the older child that can be used by practitioners to understand better how power and knowledge disadvantage not just older children, but also other minorities. This thesis presents an opportunity for practitioners and policy makers to revisit an issue that has concerned them for many years from a different theoretical perspective. Of course, the complexities in OSHC are not just limited to older children. Many OSHC services operate from facilities and professional environments that impose limitations on their pedagogies (Cartmel, 2007) and their ability to cater for the diverse capabilities and interests presented by such a broad age group. Regardless, this thesis presents an opportunity to develop new pedagogies that recognise the diversity of older children, and see them less as problematic and rebellious risk-takers. It presents an opportunity to create inclusive OSHC services that do more than just cater for the majority younger child and improve outcomes for all children including those aged nine to twelve years.

POSTSCRIPT

For most of the life of this thesis, it had included an excerpt from a training calendar (Figure 6.1). The excerpt provides the outline of a training session for OSHC practitioners on working with older children. I had intended to use the document in my literature review to evidence how developmental constructions inform how practitioners and other stakeholders understand older children.

TRAINING SERIES

OLDER CHILDREN IN OSHC

It's no secret that many OSHC services find it a challenge to meet the needs of older children. Upper primary aged children are often either entering adolescence or displaying many of the behavioural traits of adolescence. They will sometimes challenge authority, engage in risk taking, seem bored and seek to distance themselves from other children in the service. It's a stark contrast from other children in an OSHC service but is it unexpected? This series will allow you to explore the needs of upper primary aged children in depth and devise a range of strategies that will help you to better meet the needs and work more effectively with older children.
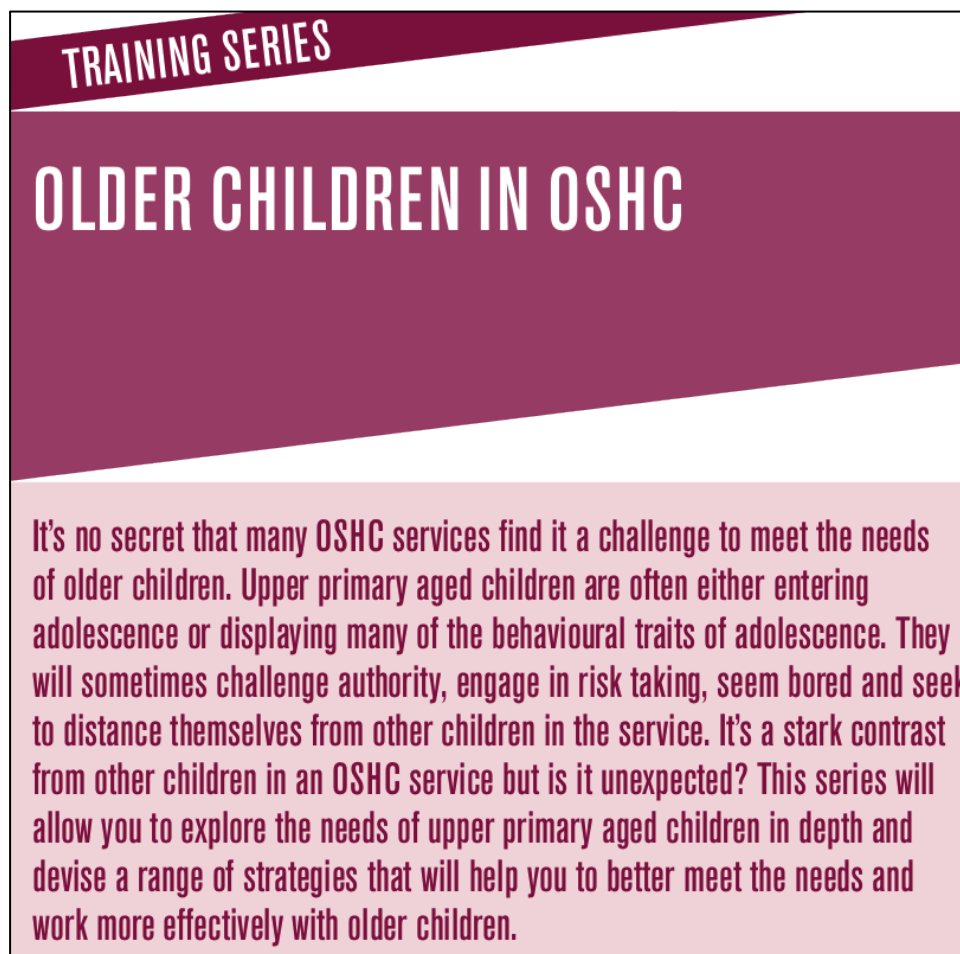
Figure 6.1 Excerpt from training calendar (CCC, 2009)

However, during the final stages of writing this thesis, I realised that this document was produced during my previous employment with the Community Child Care Association and that the language contained within it was mostly mine. This resulted in a great deal of angst about whether or not it would be 'good research' to keep the document in my literature review. I wanted to keep it because the language was powerful and illustrative of discourses of the older child. However, the words were

mine, so how could they be an objective reflection of how others view older children? For this reason, I removed the excerpt from the literature review.

Still, I thought it important to keep this excerpt in the thesis in some way. Although I wrote the words, they are a living example of how discourse operates. As the product of a needs analysis, they were informed by many sources, including the scholarship in OSHC texts, and the opinions of practitioners and colleagues. So whilst I wrote the text, the words it contains are the words of many people who are involved with OSHC. This text evidences how I participated in both the creation and recirculation of knowledge.

I include this excerpt here as a postscript and as testament to the transformative process I have experienced in writing this thesis. At the time I wrote the excerpt, I participated in and lived within the discourse of the difficult older child. It was only through seeking other theoretical perspectives and stepping outside that discourse, that I was able to see older children differently and reveal new knowledge about how they experience OSHC. This excerpt is a reminder that even though it is sometimes messy, seeking different perspectives and complexity can lead to greater understanding and equity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Your task is to take photographs of things that you do or don't like about your OSHC service

2. You can take photographs of any aspect of OSHC that you think is important including activities, play spaces, meal times and routines

3. Try to take photographs of the OSHC program but not other people. For privacy reasons, you need special permission to take photographs of other people

4. If you accidentally take photographs of other people, I will help you to delete those photographs

5. If you would like to talk about other people as part of the research, I will support you to do so. Together, we can create pseudonyms or "fake names" that will protect their privacy and yours

6. You can take as many photographs as you like but I would like you to take at least ten

7. You can delete any photographs you don't want to keep

8. At the end of the week, you will need to choose the 10 photographs that you think best represent what you do and don't like most about OSHC

9. I will bring your ten photographs to the interview

10. If you like, you can have digital copies of all of the photographs you have taken at the end of the interview

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Thank you for conducting this research with me. How did you find the task of photographing your OSHC program?

2. Did you encounter any difficulties in conducting your research that you would like to tell me about?

3. Can you explain to me what this is a photograph of?

4. Can you explain why you chose this photograph?

5. What is it that you like or don't like about this part of the OSHC program?

APPENDIX C: SERVICE INFORMATION FORM

Service information form.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. Please complete this form, which will provide us with basic information on your service.

1.	Service name	
2.	Number of registered places for Before School Care, After School Care and Vacation Care	BSC ASC VC
3.	Hours of operation for Before School Care, After School Care and Vacation Care	BSC ASC VC
4.	Average daily utilisation for Before School Care	M TU W TH F

5.	Average daily utilisation for After School Care	M TU W TH F	
6.	Average daily utilisation for Vacation Care	M TU W TH F	
7.	The total number of boys and girls who currently attend your service	Boys Girls	
8.	The total number of boys and girls aged 5-6 years who currently attend your service	Boys Girls	
9.	The total number of boys and girls aged 7-8 years who currently attend your service	Boys Girls	

10.	The total number of boys and girls aged 9-10 years who currently attend your service	Boys Girls	
11.	The total number of boys and girls aged 11-12 years who currently attend your service	Boys Girls	

APPENDIX D: PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENTS

D1: PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT – CHILD PARTICIPANT

Researchers from the University of Melbourne would like to know from you what you think about Outside School Hours Care. This is part of a research project that looks at what children aged 9 to 12 years think of Outside School Hours Care.

The aims of the project are to:

- To learn more about what children aged 9 to 12 years think about Outside School Hours Care
- To help Outside School Hours Care workers in their work with children aged 9 to 12 years
- To make Outside School Hours Care better for children aged 9 to 12 years

We would like you help us in the following ways:
- Go to a 15 minute meeting that describes the project
- Go to another 15 minute meeting on the rules of the project and how to use the camera
- Take photographs of your Outside School Hours Care for one week
- Go to a 15 minute meeting to choose the 10 photographs you want to use in your interview
- Go to an individual interview of up to 45 minutes where you tell us your ideas about your Outside School Hours Care
- Go to one more meeting with the researcher to hear the results of the project.

If you say yes and then decide you don't want to talk any more you can say no or stop whenever you like and we will stop asking you.

We will not show or talk about your individual work with your family, teachers or school unless we are worried about your safety or wellbeing because of something you have shared with us. If we are worried we will let you know that we are going to talk to someone that can help.

When we write about the ideas you have shared with us we won't use your name. Instead we will use a pretend name (pseudonym)

If you take photographs, we ask that to protect privacy, you don't take photographs of other people. The researcher will help you to delete any photographs you accidentally take of other people. If you would like to share your ideas about other people, the researcher will help you do this by talking and choosing a pretend name (pseudonym) for them.

When you are finished you can look over what you said and you can tell us if you are happy for us to use your ideas. If you have completed any writing or taken photographs, we will ask you if we can use this work and then make copies.

If you have any questions about what is written in this letter or anything else, please talk to the researcher or your parent/guardian.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kylie Smith,

Equity and Childhood Program, Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

For the research team

D2: PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT – PARENT/GUARDIAN

This letter invites you to provide permission for your child to participate in the research project that is being run by Dr Kylie Smith and Bruce Hurst from the University of Melbourne. This research project is part of Bruce Hurst's Masters study.

The title of the project is: **The experiences of children aged 9 to 12 years in Outside School Hours Care in Australia**

The project aims to:

- To increase knowledge about how children aged 9 to 12 years experience Outside School Hours Care
- To increase knowledge about how social and cultural factors influence older children's experiences of Outside School Hours Care
- To provide knowledge to guide the practices of Outside School Hours Care practitioners
- To improve the experiences of older children in Outside School Hours Care

We would like your child to participate in this project in the following ways:
- Attend a 15 minute briefing session on the purpose of the research project
- Attend a second, 15 minute session instructing them in the use of the digital camera and briefing them on the protocols for the projects
- Participate by taking photographs of their Outside School Hours Care service over a period of one week
- Attend a 15 minute meeting to select the 10 photographs to be used in the interview
- Participate in an individual interview of up to 45 minutes
- Attend a final meeting with the researcher to review the outcomes of the research.

This project has received clearance by The University of Melbourne's, Human Research Ethics Committee. To protect your child's privacy, responses and notes will be recorded in the form of coded categories, avoiding the need to use respondents' names and addresses. Participants have a choice to be named or referred to by pseudonym in any reports or publications arising from the study. The data generated by the project will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Mr. Hurst's office, which is locked when not in use. Confidentiality will be protected subject to any legal requirements.

Involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied. There will be no effect to ongoing assessment, grades or management of participants in a dependent relationship with any researchers or contractors involved in this project.
All data will be destroyed after five years.

If you have any concerns arising from the conduct of this research project, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, the University of Melbourne, Victoria, 3101, Australia. Phone: 8344 2073, Fax: 9347 6883

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kylie Smith,

Equity and Childhood Program, Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

For the research team

D3: PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT – OSHC SERVICE

This letter invites you to provide permission for your Outside School Hours Care service to participate in the research project that is being run by Dr Kylie Smith and Bruce Hurst from the University of Melbourne. This research project is part of Bruce Hurst's Masters study.

The title of the project is: **The experiences of children aged 9 to 12 years in Outside School Hours Care in Australia**

The project aims to:

- To increase knowledge about how children aged 9 to 12 years experience Outside School Hours Care
- To increase knowledge about how social and cultural factors influence older children's experiences of Outside School Hours Care
- To provide knowledge to guide the practices of Outside School Hours Care practitioners
- To improve the experiences of older children in Outside School Hours Care

We would like your service to participate in this project in the following ways:
- Completing a questionnaire which provides basic information on your service
- Allowing three children aged 9 to 12 years who attend your service to:
  - Attend a 15 minute briefing session on the purpose of the research project
  - Attend a second, 15 minute session instructing them in the use of the digital camera and briefing them on the protocols for the projects
  - Participate by taking photographs of their Outside School Hours Care service over a period of one week
  - Attend a 15 minute meeting to select the 10 photographs to be used in the interview
  - Participate in an individual interview of up to 45 minutes
  - Attend a final meeting with the researcher to review the outcomes of the research.

This project has received clearance by The University of Melbourne's, Human Research Ethics Committee. To protect the privacy of the participants, responses and notes will be recorded in the form of coded categories, avoiding the need to use respondents' names and addresses. Participants have a choice to be named or referred to by pseudonym in any reports or publications arising from the study. The data generated by the project will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in Mr Hurst's office, which is locked when not in use. Confidentiality will be protected subject to any legal requirements.

Children who participate in the project will not be able to take photographs of other people. The researcher will assist the child to delete any photographs accidentally taken of other people. The researcher will refer to your service's policy regarding the taking of photographs when setting the project guidelines with the children.

Involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied. There will be no

effect to ongoing assessment, grades or management of participants in a dependent relationship with any researchers or contractors involved in this project.
All data will be destroyed after five years.

If you have any concerns arising from the conduct of this research project, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, the University of Melbourne, Victoria, 3101, Australia. Phone: 8344 2073, Fax: 9347 6883

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kylie Smith,

Equity and Childhood Program, Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

For the research team

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORMS

E1: CONSENT FORM – CHILD PARTICIPANT

Consent form

(Middle years: For the child/young person to complete if parent consent form has been signed)

Researchers from the University of Melbourne would like to know from you what you think about Outside School Hours Care.

You can talk about your ideas, write, take photographs, or share you ideas in any other way you would like to. Your ideas will then help us to tell people about what children think about Outside School Hours Care and make a list of suggestions and guidelines for the people who work in Outside School Hours Care about how to make it better for kids.

We will be putting these suggestions and guidelines in reports, books, articles and on the Internet so people all over the world can read about how to make Outside School Hours Care better for children.

We are asking you to share some of your ideas to help make these suggestions and guidelines. If you decide to take part a person doing research at The University of Melbourne will come and ask you some questions and you will choose ways to give your ideas.

Would you like to share your ideas?

Yes ☺   No ☹

Please write your name here:

If you say yes and then decide you don't want to talk any more you can say no or stop whenever you like and we will stop asking you.

We will not show or talk about your individual work with your family, teachers or school unless we are worried about your safety or wellbeing because of something you have shared with us. If we are worried we will let you know that we are going to talk to someone that can help.

If you take photographs, we ask that to protect privacy, you don't take photographs of other people. The researcher will help you to delete any photographs you accidentally take of other people. If you would like to share your ideas about other people, the researcher will help you do this by talking and choosing a pretend name (pseudonym) for them.

When you are finished you can look over what you said and you can tell us if you are happy for us to use your ideas. If you have completed any writing or taken photographs, we will ask you if we can use this work and then make copies.

Can we take photographs or make copies of your work?

Yes ☺   No ☹

Can we use your ideas to write about what children say for people to read and look at?

Yes ☺   No ☹

Can we put your work on the Internet for people to read and look at?

Yes ☺   No ☹

When we write about the ideas you have shared with us we won't use your name.
Do you have a name or word you would like us to use (as a pseudonym) when we talk about your work?

Yes ☺   No ☹

Name to be used:

If you have any questions about what is written in this letter or anything else, please talk to the researcher or your parent/guardian.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kylie Smith, Equity and Childhood Program, Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

For the research team

E2: CONSENT FORM – PARENT/GUARDIAN

I,………(Name)

of………

……… (Address)

hereby consent for my child …………………………………………………………………………………(Child's name) to be a participant of a human research study to be undertaken by Dr Kylie Smith and Bruce Hurst. I understand that the purpose of the research is to contribute to the following project:

The experiences of children aged 9 to 12 years in Outside School Hours Care in Australia

I acknowledge that:

(1)   The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study have been explained to me to my satisfaction. I am fully aware that my child will be:
   i.   Attending a 15 minute briefing session on the purpose of the research project
   ii. Attending a second, 15 minute session instructing them in the use of the digital camera and briefing them on the protocols for the projects
   iii. Taking photographs of their Outside School Hours Care service over a period of one week
   iv. Attending a 15 minute meeting to select the 10 photographs to be used in the interview
   v.   Participating in an individual interview of up to 45 minutes
   vi. Attending a final meeting to review the outcomes of the research.

(2)   Individual interviews may be audio-taped, transcribed and the transcriptions used for data analysis.
(3)   The information your child provides will be coded and kept separately from their name and address.
(4)   Results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic and professional journals.
(5)   Individual results will not be released to any person except at the individual's request and on the individual's authorisation.
(6)   Your child can choose to be named or referred to by pseudonym in any reports or publications arising from the study.
(7)   My child and I are free to withdraw our consent at any time during the study and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied, in which event my child's participation in the research study will immediately cease.
(8)   I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information my child provides will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.

Signature   Date

(Parent/Guardian)

E3: CONSENT FORM – OSHC SERVICE

I,………………………………………………………………………………………………………(Name)

of………………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………(Address)

hereby consent for my Outside School Hours Care service

…………………………………………………………………………(Service name) to participate in a human research study to be undertaken by Dr. Kylie Smith and Bruce Hurst. I understand that the purpose of the research is to contribute to the following project:

The experiences of children aged 9 to 12 years in Outside School Hours Care in Australia

I acknowledge that:

- (1) The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study have been explained to me to my satisfaction – including:
  - i. Completing a questionnaire which provides basic information on your OSHC service
  - ii. Allowing three children aged 9 to 12 years who attend your service to:
    1. Attend a 15 minute briefing session on the purpose of the research project
    2. Attend a second, 15 minute session instructing them in the use of the digital camera and briefing them on the protocols for the projects
    3. Participate by taking photographs of their Outside School Hours Care service over a period of one week
    4. Attend a 15 minute meeting to select the 10 photographs to be used in the interview
    5. Participate in an individual interview of up to 45 minutes
    6. Attend a final meeting with the researcher to review the outcomes of the research.

- (2) Individual interviews may be audio-taped, transcribed and the transcriptions used for data analysis.
- (3) The information the children and I provide will be coded and kept separately from their name and address.
- (4) Results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic and professional journals.
- (5) Individual results will not be released to any person except at the individual's request and on the individual's authorisation.
- (6) My service or the children can choose to be named or referred to by pseudonym in any reports or publications arising from the study.

(7)   The children and I are free to withdraw our consent at any time during the study and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied, in which event the child's or service's participation in the research study will immediately cease.

(8)   I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information the children or I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.

Signature   Date
_____

(Service Representative)

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Author/s:
Hurst, Ian Bruce

Title:
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Date:
2013

Citation:
Hurst, I. B. (2013). Children aged nine to twelve years in Outside School Hours Care in Australia. Masters Research thesis, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne.

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Children aged nine to twelve years in Outside School Hours Care in Australia