



*Researching Childhood:*

# Thematic Analyses of Shaking the Movers Reports

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From the perspective(s) of King's  
Childhood and Social Institutions (CSI 3311)  
Undergraduate Students

This report was prepared by Daniella Bendo and CSI Student Kira Prince with funding provided by  
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Carleton  
UNIVERSITY



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# INTRODUCTION

From January to April 2021, undergraduate students from Dr. Daniella Bendo's third-year Childhood and Social Institutions (CSI 3311) Researching Childhood class at King's University College completed a thematic analysis report on a rights-based selected topic relevant to Shaking the Movers (STM). One of the objectives of CSI 3311 was to provide space for students to demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of the important concepts, methodologies, and current research and advances within the social study of childhood; and to understand and critically reflect on the various theoretical approaches to childhood. Students achieved these objectives by engaging in a thematic analysis of STM reports.

The students each started by conducting a literature review on their selected topic to identify key areas of research as well as research gaps. Based on the gaps that were identified, students developed a key research question that guided their thematic analysis. The thematic analyses focused on collecting and analyzing the viewpoints and perspectives of STM participants outlined in the STM reports. Each individual student selected five STM reports to analyze and themes were generated across the selected reports. At the end of the semester, the class hosted a research symposium with special guest – the Honourable Landon Pearson. During the symposium, student's each presented their research findings to the class.

This report contains the work of three students who each selected a topic and then extracted themes across several STM reports and will explain the process that the students underwent to generate their analyses and will showcase the key findings that were derived from the reports. . Each of the students consented to incorporating their work verbatim\* into the report.

\*with minor edits

## GENERATING KEY FINDINGS

Students first started their analyses by thoroughly reading through the selected STM reports. After this, the student's searched for common patterns and phrases amongst the reports. In order to highlight important passages and ideas that the children presented, students contrasted and compared ideas throughout the selected reports. Colour coding was used by some students to highlight quotes that related to one another and to identify key phrases. Each colour corresponded to a respective theme which helped distinguished the themes within the text so that the quotations could be extracted and put into a word document. The word documents were organized based on themes and included relevant quotations under each sub-theme. At the end of each quotation, an in-text citation to each STM report was included to identify where the quotation was derived. Once this coding process was completed, the students generated names for the themes that reflected the children's perspectives. Each of the thematic analyses yielded three to five themes which included an in-depth detailed description, evidence from the children's perspectives, and a critical analysis of the findings. Through this process, students developed their thematic analyses.

The topics that were selected by the students for the thematic analyses included: play and expression, mental health, education, identity and belonging, climate change, participation, youth justice, child welfare, and rights. This report includes analyses from the following select topics:

## Topic #1: Child-Caregiver Relationships, Identity, and Self-Esteem by Kira Prince

The Shaking the Movers reports that were analyzed include: "Standing up for Children's Right to Play" (2013), "Identity and Belonging" (2008), "Standing up for Children's Mental Health" (2012), "Child Rights and the Media" (2010), and "Speaking Truth to Power: Civil and Political Rights of Children" (2007). These reports were analyzed and the following key themes were generated: ostracization of others, involvement in children's lives, and the recognition of the self.

## Topic # 2: Children's Rights and Nature-Based Play by Megan Beaudry

The Shaking the Movers reports that were analyzed include: Shaking the Movers VII: Standing Up for Children's Right to Play in Toronto (2013), Shaking the Movers Early Childhood in Toronto (2019), Children on the Move: Shaking the Movers BC on Climate Change (2017), Shaking the Movers Early Childhood in Edmonton (2019), and Shaking the Movers X: Youth Rights & the Environment in Toronto (2016). These reports were analyzed and the following key themes were generated: importance of nature as foundation for play, identity formation through participation, constraints of adult control, young children's recognition of rights and voice.

## Topic # 3: Children's Rights and Education by Felicity Hocking

The Shaking the Movers reports that were analyzed include: Shaking the Movers II: Identity and Belonging, Shaking the Movers VII: Standing up for Children's Right to Play, Shaking the Movers: Civil and Political Rights of Children, IECSS/Shaking the Movers Workshop 2018: Can Disability be Positive, and Shaking the Movers III: Child Rights in Education. These reports were analyzed and the following key themes were generated: overwhelming unawareness of rights, children want to know their rights, barriers, barriers, and more barriers, and frustration.

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Topic #1:

# **Child-Caregiver Relationships, Identity, and Self- Esteem by Kira Prince**

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Theme #1

# **Ostracization from Others**



*Children are often ostracised and unincluded in the adult world, not being listened to as much. This ostracization can negatively affect a child's self-esteem, making them feel less valued. Children want more inclusion due to the current level of ostracization. This is demonstrated in the following excerpts from the selected STM reports:*

- "Sometimes our ideas get through but other times our opinions and ideas are just put aside because we are young." (Speaking Truth to Power: Civil and Political Rights of Children, 2007, p. 8)
- "Children need a different kind of protection than adults." (Speaking Truth to Power: Civil and Political Rights of Children, 2007, p. 10)
- "There is a separate country inside Canada." (Speaking Truth to Power: Civil and Political Rights of Children, 2007, p. 12)
- "Family not accepting a child's play and not being involved with it" (Standing up for Children's Right to Play, 2013, p. 14)
- "There is a lack of opportunity to learn." (Identity and Belonging, 2008, p. 12)

These reports have shown that children are experiencing feelings of ostracization. Adults try to "protect" children in a different way that can make them feel different, which sparks the discussion towards article three of the UNCRC which focuses on the best interests of the child. There is a divide in the treatment of children and adults. For example, Canada is one country, but there is a "separate country inside Canada", demonstrating a divide in one nation (Akbar, 2007, p. 12). More cultures need to be accepted in Canada to help bring people together, including youth culture. There is division and lack of opportunities to be able to learn about other cultures. In society, there are often ideas of what children should be doing and what adults should be doing. When this occurs, there is less opportunity to do things that others deem inappropriate based on structural norms. These children have voiced their disappointment of their families not being involved in their play. Perhaps, then, when children and adults co-participate in a common activity, their relationship will grow and strengthen. If this is true, children's self-esteem may rise and they may feel less ostracized and more involved. These children have voiced the lack of recognition their voices get. Because, as identified in the literature review, children's voices are often ignored both in research and in all other areas of life, children's self-esteem lowers. Their voices, ideas, and interest are put aside and not seen as legitimate and as concrete due to a child being young and continually changing, but that does not mean an adult should not get involved and take interest in what a child is viewing, involving themselves in, and more.

These children in the STM reports have spoken about the power relations between adults and children, with a separation between the two based on age. This affects their play and their activities because it is common in society for toys and activities to have "age limits", further separating what children do and what adults do. However, these children, as previously mentioned, have voiced disappointment in this ostracization and have spoken about the value of involvement within their lives, specifically in their play. If adults and children see the value in activities that each other are doing, despite some activities being taboo for older folks to engage in or younger folks to engage in, then the child-caregiver relationship might strengthen. A child may have higher self-esteem because they feel cared for instead of feeling a greater divide, especially in play they value and deem important.



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Theme #2

# **Involvement in Children's Lives**

*As previously mentioned, children may feel left out and not valued. There is a possibility that if adults involve themselves in children's lives, children can nurture a relationship which can impact their self-esteem. This is because children may want to be listened to and valued. This is demonstrated in the following excerpts from the selected STM reports:*

- "Parents should be more present and talk to their children and ask them questions and be in their lives." (Speaking Truth to Power: Civil and Political Rights of Children, 2007, p. 10)
- "Spend some more time with your children. One of the reasons they're socializing vastly with so many people is that they want attention: 'I'm doing this to let people know, so that they like and comment.' They want to exist in the world and to be known, in order to feel some sort of love. If that can be satisfied within the family, they won't need to shout to the world that 'I'm doing this.'" (Child Rights and the Media, 2010, p. 27)
- "Children want to build confidence by being included" Speaking Truth to Power: Civil and Political Rights of Children, (2007, p. 9)
- "More opportunities for interaction between students and teachers" (Identity and Belonging, 2008, p. 19)
- "The right to play means expression – it brings people together, everyone expressing themselves together" (Identity and Belonging, 2008, p. 14)
- "Facebook enables you to connect with people over long distances, but with people who you are close to, you connect with them about things that are irrelevant, that don't matter." (Child Rights and the Media, 2010, p. 26)
- "Relationships in homes are going to decrease due to computers, because we spend so much time on the computer. But that's the way forward, that's the way the world is going." (Child Rights and the Media, 2010, p. 27)

As highlighted from the STM reports in the preceding theme, children often feel ostracized and not included. Children want to be involved in various projects, conversations, and more, which has been evident from the reports I looked at. However, this study is particularly interested in the child-caregiver relationship and its effects on children's self-esteem when a child and their caregiver participate in similar activities. From these reports, children build confidence from being included and from being valued. These children have made it clear that children want to be involved in their parents' lives and vice versa. Play helps bring people together, which implies that when there is a similar activity between two or more people, there will be a larger or stronger connection.

These important factors that children have highlighted relate to how the child is feeling, and from these reports, these children appear to be disappointed and not pleased with the level of authentic and genuine involvement from adults in their lives. These children voiced that there is a connection about irrelevant things, but what researchers, caregivers, and other adults in a child's life need to know is what a child values in that relationship and in that connection. Thus, a child's voice must be listened to. It appears that if there is a common interest that the adult and the child are connected with, the child will feel better and the relationship will strengthen, because then the connection will be much more relevant. These children have identified that technology is becoming more and more relevant and that they believe the use of computers will decrease relationships. Does this have to occur, though? What if children and their caregiver(s) participate in a common online activity?

Animal Crossing: New Horizons is a Nintendo Switch game that came out on March 20th, 2020. This game has been a large part of many people's daily lives, especially during the pandemic. On Animal Crossing Facebook groups, I have noticed that many children have been involved in the game with their caregiver(s), taking that relationship to another level by gifting Animal Crossing related items, art, and more to each other which seemed to have strengthened the relationship of the child-caregivers at hand due to the excitement and the passion through these gifts and the receiving of these gifts. When reading the STM report on media, it reminded me of these connections that I have witnessed and interpreted on the Facebooks groups I am in. The children involved in STM have said that social media can be a divider in relationships, but if there is a common interest and/or activity such as the example, Animal Crossing, then perhaps instead of creating a division between adults and children, it may bring them together? This type of play may bring people together instead of tearing them apart. These children believe that play is important and can connect people, which contributes to their happiness and self-esteem. If adults involve themselves in what their children are spending their time doing and learn to appreciate the beauty in a game like Animal Crossing, then maybe a stronger child-caregiver relationship will occur and a child will feel more valued, excited, and happy, thus contributing to a higher self-esteem level. This involvement will take down the socialization of what is deemed "acceptable" for adults to participate in and can promote inclusion of children and adults, not making children so isolated from adults as if they are living in two separate worlds. These children's wishes are helping to reconceptualize the common discourse of socialization, transitioning from a division into a more inclusive environment where two separate "words" can come together, directly relating to the previous theme of ostracization of others where Canada is one country, but the children feel as if there are different countries inside of it. Involvement in children's lives will help bridge this gap and perhaps strengthen relationships and security of interests for children rather than being insecure or upset about what they like to do.

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Theme #3

# **Recognition of the Self**

*Ostracization and inclusion can affect how a child feels, as seen through the STM reports. These experiences and treatment affect how a child sees themselves and forms an identity. It is important to look at identity because this impacts a child's daily lives and their relationships, including their relationship with their caregiver(s). This is demonstrated in the following excerpts from the selected STM reports:*

- "Culture is important and sometimes it is neglected." (Identity and Belonging, 2008, p. 12)
- "Your personality is shaped by your culture." (Identity and Belonging, 2008, p. 11)
- "Parents shouldn't force the hijab on their daughter" (Identity and Belonging, 2008, p. 14)
- "The right to play is the right to be yourself" (Standing up for Children's Right to Play, 2013, p. 13)
- "It's human to express yourself" (Standing up for Children's Rights to Play, 2013, p. 13)
- "The right to play is being able to express yourself without being judged" (2013, p. 13)
- "When you're younger it allows you to form who you are" (Standing up for Children's Right to Play, 2013, p. 13)
- Play gives children identity (Standing up for Children's Right to Play, 2013, p. 16)
- Playing allows people to have a break and refresh and allows them to be happy. (Standing up for Children's Right to Play, 2013, p. 16)
- "It is derived from our perspectives of ourselves and others." (Standing up for Children's Mental Health, 2012, p. 11)

It is important to recognize "youth culture" and how it impacts a child's self-identity, further impacting a child's self-esteem. The children in STM have identified the importance of their culture, which includes youth culture. The children in these reports value expression and being able to freely do something without being forced. Play, which is what is an interest when looking at the child-caregiver relationship is important for children in forming an identity and expressing themselves. Play is a key part of children's culture and identity. These children have said that play helps them be happy, and when this information is combined with the desire to connect with adults and have their interests be valued, specifically their caregiver(s), having a common activity that is valued by adults can be beneficial in the development of the self and self-esteem for the child. Because children and adults are not always on the same page about what a child appreciates and does not appreciate, as identified in the literature review, these reports are significant in understanding what a child values in their life and what they participate in, which relates to how they view themselves.



It should be a goal to have children feel comfortable in their homes and thus to perhaps create a strong relationship with their caregiver(s) in order for a child to feel secure in their attachment and confident in what they like and what they do. “Support”, as identified in the literature review, is more of a subjective term than an objective term, and a child’s view of what support looks like needs to be listened to. If a child’s voice of what support they appreciate is listened to and executed, then perhaps the child-caregiver relationship will strengthen, and the child’s self-esteem will rise.

Children have voiced that they have the right to not be judged (negatively), which is important in strong relationships, in self-esteem, and in identity. If a child and an adult work together and move past the traditional discourses, which the children have been implying through their desires of parental/caregiver involvement in their lives, then there is a chance that their identities could strengthen, positively. This strengthening of the child-caregiver relationship could emerge to form less insecurity of what a child is doing if they aren’t doing it alone. If an adult shows interest in getting to know what a child is doing and involves themselves in it, too, then a child may feel more secure about themselves and their interests, which ultimately help form who they are. A child may even involve themselves in an “adult activity” such as woodworking with a caregiver, for example, which could bring adults and children together instead of children needing to be “protected” from the “adult world.” Our views towards someone and what they do impacts their views of themselves, so it is important to look at children’s activities and what they value with an open mind. This open-mindedness could help strengthen the child-caregiver relationship through a bonding and an acceptance of the child and the child’s abilities. Not every activity has to be either an adult activity or a child’s activity; activities can be for everyone (while still respecting youth culture by acknowledging that it exists) to help strengthen the gap between adults and children, to create stronger relationships, and to help strengthen a feeling of identity and self-esteem.

RECOGNIZE  
AND  
ENCOURAGE

YOUTH  
CULTURE

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Topic #2:

# **Children's Rights and Nature-Based Play by Megan Beaudry**



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Theme #1

# **Importance of Nature as Foundations for Play**

*Nature can help examine the way children understand their surroundings and have an impact on them. Children acknowledge natural environmental features, climate change and rights, while having an understanding of natural ways that might benefit their world. Nature promotes a more open space for children to exercise their competency and move freely in play interactions as they choose. This was expressed by the children through quotations such as:*

- "Personally, I believe that the most concerning environmental issue today is climate change, it just affects so many parts of our lives...Essentially everything in our lives is affected by climate change. Our whole lifestyle is threatened by it" (Environment STM Report, 2016, p.10)
- "I have a right to have fun outside" (Early Childhood STM Report, 2013, p. 21).
- "At home, "I'm happy ...when I'm outside" and "when I ride my bike" (Early Childhood STM Report, 2013, p. 14).
- "I found out that there was a forest near my school that we used to play in. I found out that they're starting to tear down that forest to build homes. That's sad for me as all the animals are going to be displaced. Ruining it for children and animals" (BC STM Report, 2017, p. 12).

When looking at nature-based play, one of the prerequisites is having space for children to participate in their own way. It is apparent that children enjoy playing outdoors and are aware that if our world is not protected then there will be nothing left, limiting their open space outdoors to play and explore. Thus, it shows us more about how children react to prominent problems in society, and are able to develop an understanding of it so they can contribute to saving the environment. Children are active contributors, not just passive objects within society and want to be part of the solution. The children's perspectives serve to re-conceptualize traditional discourses about childhood, which often focus on children as innocent and in need of protection. Additionally, it becomes evident how children are re-conceptualizing notions around play. Play is commonly identified as unimportant and unlikely to further children's knowledge and understanding. Children's perspectives on this theme, begin to show how important play is in providing spaces for creativity to exercise individual agency.

Along with this, under the UNCRC children have the right to a sustainable environment. This right was indirectly identified by the children through their responses, as they addressed things about their natural environment which they are entitled to. Thus, children's perspectives surrounding nature based play shows the importance of it in their lives, and the rights they have to participate in it as they see fit. These quotations help exemplify the way the children are aware of where their priorities lie; rather than just caring about their toys, friendships and more, they take a serious seat in advocating about nature. Children see how climate change is impacting society as a whole, rather than taking an individualistic approach.

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Theme #2

# **Identity Formation Through Participation**

*Children are strong contributors and have the capacity to interact in their environments, further developing their identity. The more children get to participate and share their ideas, the more their identity is shaped through the actions that they take, the knowledge they develop and what ideas they share. The formation of the self can be developed, as children are integrated into the world as active beings who have the ability to be unique contributors, in turn impacting the way they go about their lives in the future as well. Children's perspectives on nature are strongly linked to this identity formation, as children recognize their rights in order to play how they see fit and develop themselves further. The following quotes exemplify this:*

- "What I hope will happen in regard to environment because of the conference is that people will come out of the conference seeing that we have the capacity to combat these issues even on small scale. Maybe like convincing our parents to get solar panels for the house, or to waste less compost more, and recycle more. So just to be more motivated to participate on this issue on a micro level, as well as advocate them on social media" (Environment STM Report, 2016, p. 20).
- "Some people might want to be other people, but we should all be ourselves (V. age 10)" (Early Childhood STM Report, 2019, p. 27).
- "Children showed the educators their personal interpretations of self by expressing different ways to engage with the same selection of materials. Educators interpreted the unique ways that each child engaged with a given material as them expressing something about themselves – something about their identity" (Early Childhood STM Report, 2019, p. 15)
- Right to play means "getting to explore your surroundings and getting to know yourself" (Play STM Report, 2013, p. 14).

It is apparent that as children are involved in shaping their own lives, they are able to contribute to forming their own individual identity and implement their knowledge. The more their identity is shaped, the more they are able to demonstrate their competence as autonomous agents in the present. It allows us to see the way activities within a child's life play a significant part in shaping who they become and the meaning they make. In particular, nature play is one example, and within natural play spaces children's identity is being shaped. As the children participate in this, they further discover things about themselves, come up with ideas they want to implement in their lives and gain knowledge. Additionally, the way the children are speaking of this identity formation outlines a variety of rights under the UNCRC such as: the rights to play, the right to a safe environment, the right to identity and the right to an opinion. These show the perspectives children have on their rights that come out by forming their identity as autonomous beings. These quotations exemplify the complex process of identity formation and how each child has unique ways of developing this through their lifeworlds.

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Theme #3

# **Constraints of Adult Control**

*Adults are quick to identify children as passive, incompetent members who have limited knowledge to contribute. In reality, children have unique ways of thinking and want to be involved in the world they are a part of. They have much to contribute, and when children are constrained and controlled by adults they are very aware of this and recognize the assumptions adults have of them. Because of this restriction, adults try to limit the rights children are aware of and exercise in their lives. Children's perspectives on this adult restriction, in relation to their rights, is apparent through these quotations:*

- "The government is not helping, so it's up to us" (Environment STM Report, 2016, p. 12).
- "I think they should provide more education on what we do and how it affects water in negative ways. In school, they just teach you that the planet is going to die and that you should just turn off your lights, but its more" (Environment STM Report, 2016, p. 16).
- "Many youths shared that they don't have people to talk to that they trust or that they don't feel as though people actually care to hear what they have to say - in turn they use their passion of art, music, etc. to express what they can't always say" (Play STM Report, 2013, p. 19).
- When asked what prevented them from freely expressing themselves they exemplified "people, money, haters", "negative people" and "how you will be judged by others" (Play STM Report, 2013, p. 20).
- "We wanted others to see that we belong on campus and we have the right to play, learn, participate, influence changes and be heard" (Early Childhood STM Report, Edmonton, 2019, p. 17).

Play can be very regulated by adults and authorities, as they often try to control children by choosing their activities, the environment, and place rules and surveillance on children. Nature can begin to challenge this constrained space, as children are given more room to explore, take risks and make meaning. Along with this, nature may provide an open space where children are more likely to implement tactics to escape adult surveillance. Children are unique and competent members within society that can contribute significantly, but are very aware of the ways adults treat them. The children are aware of the way information may be left out of discussions because they think children are "too young to understand" or that "children don't care about topics like that." Therefore, it can be observed that children are aware of the way their rights are not being regulated and instead how they are being ignored. Some of these include the right to expression, right to a healthy environment, right to play, and right to know your rights. Through the quotations, their perspectives on this come out as they stress the importance of learning more about societal issues and also indirectly emphasize the importance of learning about their rights more fully. These perspectives show meaning making in play as they maneuver around these restrictions and still show their capabilities in action.

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Theme #4

# **Young Children's Recognition of Rights & Voice**



*Children, from a young age are able to recognize the rights they have in society and the way they should be informed of these rights. Even children in preschool have acknowledged their understanding of rights and the way they are involved in their lives. Children are active agents in their lives, sharing and contributing along the way. Children identify these rights through the following quotations:*

- "I feel that these environmental issues concern the rights of young children. It feels like these issues going on are violating the rights of young children. Children have the right to clean air, clean water, and a safe environment to live in." (Environment STM Report, 2016, p. 19).
- "Prior to attending this conference, what I thought of Article 31 'Right to Play' was that everyone had the right to play and rest. To me, this meant that the opportunity to play and rest for a child is important because I believe children and youth need time and space to relax, imagine, wonder, create, explore, marvel, or just enjoy the moment of life before growing up and indulging in huge responsibilities like supporting a family or having bills to pay" (Play STM Report, 2013, p. 27).
- "Right to play is meant to make sure that we live a happy and healthy life" (Play STM Report, 2013, p. 12).
- R. (age 4) drew water for his dinosaur because "water is a need"; N. (age 5) drew that she "has a right to sleep"; B. (age 5) said that she has a right to play. "I am drawing two friends" (Early Childhood STM Report, Toronto p. 18).

These quotations show the competence of children in the world, and their ability to understand and learn.

Children are often perceived as having limited understanding; although in reality have a powerful and knowledgeable grasp of the ways their rights are played out in their lives. Play, in particular was mentioned by the children, as they understood it as a right and entitlement; the natural environment is strongly linked to this, as it offers a space to play and participate. Many of the children identified aspects of the natural environment as central to their rights, which shows the importance of the environment in the eyes of children directly and how it relates to other aspects within their lives such as rights and participation. Additionally, these quotations further influence the way individuals understand children's unique traits and ideas. Thus, despite overcoming strenuous obstacles in order to be seen as present citizens, children are able to recognize barriers and implement tactics to escape these, contributing to their understanding of rights and voice in their own lives. Through the action of play, children express their voices and perspectives. Children do not only recognize their rights, but are constantly engaging in them, expressing themselves through their behaviours in play interactions. This shows that while voice is important, sometimes there is more to expressing voice, which includes being heard while expressing individual perspectives in various ways. Therefore, rather than rights being restricted solely to voice, they can also be projected through actions in play experiences with children.

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Topic #3:

# Children's Rights and Education by Felicidy Hocking

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Theme #1

# **Overwhelming Unawareness of Rights**

*The most prominent theme across all five workshops was: children and young people are overwhelmingly unaware of the rights they possess. In Canada, children have been legally entitled to their own set of rights since 1991 – the year the country ratified the convention. Therefore, for approximately thirty years, the Canadian government has failed to educate children and adults about the UNCRC and the rights they are entitled to. In the convention, it is specifically stated in article forty-two that the government is legally obligated to follow through on this educational aspect of the document. However, when analyzing the Shaking the Movers reports, it is clear this is not happening. Children are still very much in the dark about the rights they are entitled to as demonstrated by the following quotes:*

- “Originally, before hearing about this conference, I had no idea that as a child, I was protected under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.” (Hon. Pearson & Akbar, 2013, p. 27).
- “This is my first time learning about the right to play” (Hon. Pearson & Akbar, 2013, p. 13).
- “I never heard of the right to play before, I just thought it was something that kids do” (Hon. Pearson & Akbar, 2013, p. 13).

Additionally, some children felt that rights were only applicable to high achieving individuals. Many seen rights as something that needed to be earned, rather than something they are legally entitled to. For example, one child commented that: “Many youth don’t know that they can participate, or that it’s not just for the top students- the right to participate needs to be widely communicated” (Shaking the Movers, 2007, p. 6). This quote further articulates the general unawareness children and youth have regarding their rights, demonstrating how critical simply educating children is.

COMMUNICATE

CHILDREN'S  
RIGHTS

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Theme #2

# **Children Want to Know Their Rights**

*As stated in the previous theme, many children did not know about the rights they possessed separate from adults. Children were unaware that there are specific rights created just for them. But, if the child was aware of their rights, they did not realize they were something each of them was legally entitled to. Many thought it was something only high-achieving children earned through their hard work (Shaking the Movers, 2007). However, once the children did realize they possessed rights, a genuine feeling of a desire to learn became apparent in the way the children spoke. The children wanted to learn about their rights, how to use them, and what to do if they felt they were being violated; as demonstrated in the following quotations:*

- “There needs to be a way for young people to know their rights, to know what to do, and to know what process is in place to help if your rights are not being met” (Shaking the Movers, 2007, p. 13).
- “We need to educate each other and have more knowledge of what our rights are, this was the first time I heard about my rights” (Hon. Pearson & Akbar, 2013, p. 12).
- “Children in other countries know what their rights are... Most kids here don’t know about the Convention” (Shaking the Movers, 2007, p. 9).

Additionally, in the Shaking the Movers workshop, Shaking the Movers III: Child Rights in Education, young children were asked to engage in a drawing activity to express their thoughts and feelings. One child drew a teacher and a student with the words: “educating on rights at a younger age” (Lockwood, 2009, p. 13). These quotes demonstrate the desire children experience to know about their rights. Children are capable beings who want to be educated about the various protection, provision and participation rights and resources they are entitled to through the UNCRC.

This desire children exemplify in regards to learning about their rights helps answer the research question: how does this limited knowledge impact the child’s agency and ability to be their true self? Without the knowledge of their rights, children are forced to suppress their agency to their guardians to obey their wishes and follow their rules, even if they go against the UNCRC. This continues to limit children’s agency, resulting in a very thin level of agency and a lack of active citizenship. Therefore, children genuinely want to know about their rights to ensure a change is made to reflect the new paradigm of childhood, rather than the discourse of the child as a blank slate. This can be exemplified further in the following quotes:

- “Teachers say parents are supposed to foster values, but what if your parents are closed-minded? You end up getting confused and lost” (Lockwood, 2009, p. 10).
- “The main reason behind education should be to empower children” (Lockwood, 2009, p. 11)
- “We have the right to stand up and say, ‘This is what’s wrong.’ Adults should give us that chance” (Lockwood, 2009, p. 11).

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Theme #3

# **Barriers, Barriers, Barriers, and More Barriers**



*Unfortunately, due to the age of children and young people, they are often not taken seriously. Adults tend to depict children as futuristic becomings who lack the lived experience of adults and therefore are unknowledgeable about real-world things. These views suppress children's agency and place heavy barriers on their right to participate:*

- "Sometimes our ideas get through but other times our opinions and ideas are just put aside because we are young" (Shaking the Movers, 2007, p. 8).
- "As a youth, there is always a question – does our voice stick? The youth voice is questioned because it comes from youth who know less and have experienced less" (Shaking the Movers, 2007, p. 7).
- "The thing that is the most frustrating is being left out of the conversation. I am right there and everyone is fighting about accommodations and no one bothers to ask me. Even when I speak up they don't seem to want to listen" (Benincassa, et al., 2018, p. 7).

However, as demonstrated through these reports, age is not the only barrier children face when it comes to their rights. In these workshops, children acknowledged the large systematic barriers they face. Specifically, the lack of knowledge the adults in their lives have regarding the UNCRC:

- "Limitations are made by those who do not understand" (Smith, 2008, pg. 15).
- "Parents need to be informed of children's rights as well, this will help kids rights to be respected and met in daily life" (Shaking the Movers, 2007, p. 6).

Therefore, if adults are unaware of child rights, how are children supposed to learn?

In the Shaking the Movers VII: Standing up for Children's Right to Play report, children were asked what barriers restricted them from accessing their right to play and artistic expression, as laid out in Article Thirty-One of the UNCRC. The children responded:

- "School, I spend a lot of time doing math that I don't get enough time to go into the kitchen and cook" (Hon. Pearson & Akbar, 2013, p. 20).
- "Cost/money, we cannot always attend and school in order to learn art because of financial barriers" (Hon. Pearson & Akbar, 2013, p. 20).

When it comes to learning about their rights, children face many barriers. In addition to being viewed as unknowledgeable beings and the adults being uneducated, many other barriers also impact their ability to access their rights fully. This is demonstrated through the barriers face from accessing their right to play and artistic expression. Institutions like schools, prioritize learning curriculum material that is believed to help shape the child into a contributing member of society. Therefore, less time and money is often allocated to expressive or playful activities. Thus, creating a significant barrier for children to access their rights.

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Theme #4

# Frustration

*The final theme across each Shaking the Movers report is frustration. In the quotes from the child and youth participants, an overwhelming feeling of frustration, betrayal, and anger is present. This can be seen in their thoughts on their lack of knowledge regarding their rights, how much they truly want to know their rights, and the barriers society has created for these children. The entirety of the five different reports articulates the children's feelings. However, it is most prominent in these themes:*

- "There should be legal consequences for government if they don't fulfill their obligations" (Lockwood, 2009, p. 16).
- "No one wants to take out time for what they think isn't necessary, so make rights necessary!" (Lockwood, 2009, p. 26).

Children have simply had enough of being in the dark about their rights. They are frustrated with the lack of time institutions – like schools – invest into teaching students about the UNCRC. Children feel betrayed by the government for failing to fulfill their responsibility of educating the general public about their rights. Children are angry that they are continuously being treated as mere products of their adult guardians rather than the social agents they truly are. Additionally, children are tired of only knowing the UNCRC exists, they want to know how to use them, as identified in this quote: "It's one thing to know your rights, it's another to know how to use them" (Lockwood, 2009, p. 24). These feelings of frustration and betrayal are imperative to this study as it further enhances the importance of educating children about the rights they are legally entitled to and how to use them so they can act upon their capabilities fully.

CHILDREN ARE  
FRUSTRATED  
WITH

THE BARRIERS  
AROUND THEM

## CONCLUSION

The thematic analyses by Dr. Daniella Bendo's third-year Childhood and Social Institutions (CSI 3311) Researching Childhood class at King's University College provided a space for students to demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of the important concepts, methodologies, and current research and advances within the social study of childhood. This assignment allowed these undergraduate students to understand and critically reflect on the various theoretical approaches to childhood.

Upon researching what children thought, felt, and understood about themselves along with the way society interacts with them and treats them through the Shaking the Movers reports, some very important themes were created, using support and interpretation from the STM reports.

It can be said that children value their culture, which is not always understood and appreciated by adults. Nature, being one of the ways children play, is highly valued by them, along with being able to make a connection with adults in the ways children engage themselves in play and leisure activities. Children want adults to be engaged in their lives and to feel valued, as they often feel ostracized. Adults have a lot of control in children's lives, which can affect a child's ability to participate in their lives and thus form an identity and gain confidence. Additionally, children have voiced that they don't feel as if they are aware of the rights they have. If they aren't aware of their rights, are they really treated as full citizens? Children are frustrated with the barriers in their lives that help them form their identities, being seen as competent individuals, and be able to express themselves more and participate in their lives.

It is important to understand what children are thinking and feeling. The findings from these STM reports can help adults understand what is important to children, and thus where improvement can be made to help make children feel more comfortable, safe, included, and valued in their daily lives and in society. Children have a lot of positive contributions to offer, but to be able to receive these positive contributions, it is important to listen to them and to let them participate.

CHILDREN NEED MORE  
MEANINGFUL ADULT  
INVOLVEMENT

CHILDREN FEEL  
OSTRACIZED

NATURE IS  
MEANINGFUL

CHILDREN'S PLAY AND  
CULTURE ARE  
IMPORTANT

NATURE CHALLENGES  
CONSTRICTED SPACES  
FOR CHILDREN

PARTICIPATION  
INFLUENCES  
IDENTITY

CHILDREN NEED TO  
KNOW AND WANT TO  
KNOW ABOUT THEIR  
RIGHTS

CHILDREN ARE  
MEANING-MAKERS

CHILDREN ARE  
FRUSTRATED WITH THE  
BARRIERS AROUND  
THEM

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