Lost in transition: An investigation into young children's experiences and understandings of wellbeing during the transition to school

by

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AEDI	Australian Early Development Instrument
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
AMA	Australia Medical Association
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CIS	Critical Interpretive Synthesis
EAL/D	English is an Additional Language/Dialect
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ECECS	Early Childhood Education and Care Service(s)
EDI	Early Development Instrument
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
IEYS	Integrated Early Years Services
HiAP	Health in All Policies
MSC	Middle Childhood Survey
QLLR	Qualitative Longitudinal Research
SDH	Social Determinants of Health
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WHO	World Health Organisation
WPR	What's the Problem Represented to be?

SUMMARY

Despite increased calls to include children's perspectives in child wellbeing research, young children's voices continue to be largely excluded. The exclusion of young children's perspectives from current constructions of wellbeing is additionally problematic due to the widespread acceptance of the transition to formal schooling as an ideal time to assess and intervene in child wellbeing.

In this thesis I explore how to include young children's experiences and understandings of wellbeing within current constructions. This exploration gives insight into the ways in which young children's experiences and understandings differ from current adult derived conceptualisations and operationalisations of wellbeing. I also analyse how children's accounts of their own wellbeing during the transition to school can inform current initiatives and models of support in relation to the transition to school: such as current calls for increased service integration within early childhood education and care contexts.

Drawing on children's rights discourses and citizen-child theory, my research study was designed to enable the co-construction of knowledge *with* children about their perspectives of their own wellbeing. To achieve this, I developed a visual research method using emoji to support children's active and meaningful engagement in the research process and minimise adult/researcher input, language, and conceptualisations of wellbeing during child focus groups.

In the initial stage of the study, I tested the use of emoji to analyse young children's capacity to participate in participatory wellbeing research and share their experiences and understandings of wellbeing when research methods that value and make space for children's participation are used. In the initial study, I compared young children's experiences and understandings of their own wellbeing with widely used child wellbeing measures and indicators. Through analysis of the data, children's accounts led to the identification of two novel child-identified indicators of child wellbeing: opportunities for play and children's agency.

From the initial research stage I adapted the emoji method to engage with the two child-identified indicators of wellbeing across a longitudinal study that followed 20 children transitioning to school. I analysed data to explore how diverse levels of service integration influenced children's experiences and understandings of their own wellbeing. Service integration alone was not a significant factor in relation to children's experiences of wellbeing. The inclusion of children's voices within current constructions and operationalisations of wellbeing can have theoretical, practice and policy benefits within early years sectors to support child wellbeing.

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed: Jennifer Fane

Date: May 2020

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PUBLICATIONS ARISING FROM THE THESIS

1) Fane, J. (2019). Child wellbeing: Contested views. In Y. Andrew and J. Fane (Eds.) *The Sociology of Early Childhood: Young Children's Lives and Worlds.* New York, New York: Routledge.[1]

2) Mackenzie, C., MacDougall, C., Fane, J., & Gibbs, L. (2018, September). Using Emoji in Research with Children and Young People: Because We Can?. In *3rd World Conference on Qualitative Research* (Vol. 1).

3) Fane, J., MacDougall, C., Jovanovic, J., Redmond, G., & Gibbs, L. (2018). Exploring the use of emoji as a visual research method for eliciting young children's voices in childhood research. *Early Child Development and Care*, *188*(3), 359-374.

4) Fane, J. (2017a). Conducting a Qualitative Systematic Review of Interdisciplinary Research - Investigating Children's Health & Wellbeing during the Transition to School. *SAGE Research Methods Cases*, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473981089

5) Fane, J. (2017b). Researching with Visual Methods: Eliciting Children's Voices in Child Wellbeing Research. *SAGE Research Methods Cases*, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473997844

6) Fane, J. (2017c). Using emoji as a tool to support children's wellbeing from a strength-based approach. *Learning Communities Journal,* 21(Special Issue November 2017) pp. 96-107. https://doi.org/10.18793/LCJ2017.21.08

7) Fane, J. MacDougall, C., Redmond, G., Jovanovic, J., & Ward, P. (2016). Young children's health and wellbeing across the transition to school: A Critical Interpretive Synthesis. *Children Australia, 41*(2), 126-140. https://doi.org/10.1017/cha.2016.4[2]

8) Fane, J., MacDougall, C., Jovanovic, J., Redmond, G. & Gibbs, L. (2020). Preschool aged children's accounts of their own wellbeing: Are current indicators applicable? *Child Indicators Research.* DOI: 10.1007/s12187-020-09735-7[3]

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[1] Publications 1-6 are listed in Appendices 1-6.
[2] Publication 7 is included in the body of Chapter 2.
[3] Publication 8 was accepted for publication on March 31st, 2020 (after thesis was originally submitted) and published May 2nd, 2020. It was included in the final version of this thesis, post examination.

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides context for the research study presented in this thesis. Chapter One begins by providing necessary contextual information about myself, the researcher, current gaps in the child wellbeing literature that I seek to address in this thesis, and the significance of my research to the discipline of public health.

1.1 Background

My interest in this research started during my work as a kindergarten (first year of school) teacher in British Columbia, Canada. The school district I worked for had a strong focus on community and early years linkages and was using the Early Development Instrument (EDI), a population based measure of a child's readiness to begin school. The EDI is a teacher completed questionnaire used to identify areas of vulnerability within communities, with the purpose of addressing these areas with programs and supports for young children and their families as they transition to formal schooling. As I dutifully filled out a questionnaire for every one of my students and attended meetings and feedback sessions on the instrument's purpose; I first became aware of the shared interest in child development between education and public health sectors.

I began to see the many linkages between my role as a teacher and the public health interests and initiatives that took place within my community, province and country. As a teacher, I could see how the EDI supported my school community by identifying the need for preschool programs, early learning centres and increased resources in specific neighbourhoods. However, when completing the physical health and wellbeing section, I couldn't help but reflect on how different the questionnaire's understanding of child health and wellbeing was compared to mine and wondered why there was such a disparity between my view of child wellbeing as an educator and the view of child wellbeing from a population-based assessment perspective.

I brought these questions with me to Australia when I decided to enrol in a research higher degree. When deciding to begin this process, I had to consider which discipline would best support my investigation into young children's health and wellbeing - education or public health? This research sits in the space between these two intersecting forces in the lives of young children and their families. As children move between early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings and transition to formal schooling, they also move through a range of health, care, and education service providers, all whose

work encompasses child health and wellbeing. Despite these shared goals, however, education and health sectors, for a variety of political, funding, and professional constraints and practices, struggle to work cohesively together in the support of children and families. So, while an investigation into child wellbeing during the transition to school may appear to be an education or education sector 'problem', interest in child wellbeing extends far beyond education and firmly into the realm of public health and health related public policies.

What does this mean for this thesis? It means that this research inquiry has been situated within the discipline of public health and investigated using discipline-appropriate methodological approaches from a public health perspective. Currently, child wellbeing is largely defined within public health discourses as a measurable and useful construct in supporting the healthy development of young children to become healthy, successful and happy adults (Ben-Arieh, Hevener-Kaufman, Bowers-Andrews, George, Joo-Lee, et al., 2001). However, this focus on children's future development has been critiqued for its emphasis on children's well-becoming, rather than their wellbeing. Building from this critique, I began to wonder what an investigation of child wellbeing might look like if it focused on young children's current state of wellbeing – and thus this research began.

1.2 This Study

This study seeks to investigate the ways in which wellbeing is defined and operationalised in the early years (children birth-to-eight years of age). Amidst increased interest in child wellbeing and social indicators research in recent decades, the question of how wellbeing should be defined remains unresolved, giving rise to "blurred and overly broad definitions" (Foregeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, & Seligman, 2011 p.81). As such, the concept of wellbeing, as argued by Thomas (2009), remains "intangible, difficult to define and even harder to measure" (p. 3). Despite this, wellbeing continues to feature prominently in early years learning frameworks, curriculum, public health literature, and education and health policy documents globally (Ben-Arieh & Frønes, 2011; Carter, 2012; Cronin de Chavez, Backett-Millburn, Parry, & Platt, 2005; Heshmati, Tausch, & Bajalan). As strong levels of wellbeing in the early years are correlated with academic achievement and lifelong health (Barblett & Maloney, 2010), wellbeing has been operationalized as an indicator of healthy development and school readiness, viewed as a 'snapshot' or culmination of a child's early learning and care environments and experiences (Land, Lamb, Meadows, & Taylor, 2007).

The transition to school has been identified as a significant process in children's lives and determined to be a "critical factor in determining wellbeing and school success" (Huf, 2013, p.63). It is widely accepted and used as a 'point in time' to measure and assess children's academic readiness, health and overall wellbeing (Goldfeld, Sayers, Brinkman, Silburn, & Oberklaid, 2009). The assessment of child wellbeing during the transition to school acts as a form of feedback for communities, providers of health and education services, and local, state, and national governments through reporting on how young children and their families are tracking towards identified benchmarks and milestones (Sayers, Coutts, Goldfeld, Oberklaid, Brinkman, et al. 2007; Ben-Arieh et al., 2001). The assessment of young children's readiness for school is not new. However, the inclusion of health and wellbeing indicators, and this information being collected at a population level are relatively recent additions, of which the purpose is to support a more holistic view of children and their development (Allin, 2007). The inclusion of health and wellbeing indicators have made for a more nuanced understanding of young children and their readiness for school. Yet, within these current constructions, children (who are the subjects of these wellbeing assessments) have been largely excluded. Current constructions of child wellbeing have been created by adults and informed by what adults have determined is important for young children, generally relying on measures and indicators that can be easily observed and recorded (Biggeri & Santi, 2012), with a focus on objective measures (Thomas, 2009). This has led to a focus on negative measures (such as infant mortality rates, low birth weight), rather than the inclusion of subjective measures of wellbeing such as an individual's self-assessment of their own wellbeing, which is frequently used in adult wellbeing measures (Bradshaw, 2002).

The longstanding exclusion of children from current constructions and operationalisations of wellbeing has resulted in two significant concerns highlighted in the wellbeing literature. The first is that without children's meaningful participation in informing or confirming current wellbeing measures, the utility of current constructions in relation to measuring child wellbeing has received little attention (Ben-Arieh, 2008). Secondly, the exclusion of children's voices from matters that affect them is equally problematic in relation to the rights of children. As a central tenet of children's wellbeing is the protection of children's rights (valentine, 2011), children's participation in their own wellbeing is in of itself a supportive mechanism for wellbeing.

The exclusion of children's perspectives of their own wellbeing in current conceptualisations and operationalisations has been largely justified, both explicitly and implicitly, through claims that children (and particularly young children) lack the cognitive and language abilities to participate in the assessment of their wellbeing (Hymel, LeMare & McKee, 2011), that proxy measures (such as adult

assessments of children's school achievement) are required due to children's lack of maturity (Axford, 2008), or that collecting data from children is too difficult (Bradshaw, Hoelscher & Richardson, 2007).

Within childhood research paradigms, the voice of the child and children's active participation in the social world has received substantive interest and investigation in the past three decades (Esser, Baader, Betz & Hungerland, 2016). However, this interest has not yet extended to young children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing in widespread ways. Young children continue to be excluded from research and policy documents, reinforcing the long-held beliefs and practices that the voices of young children are unnecessary, unimportant, or unreliable in relation to current conceptualisations of child wellbeing. As current constructions of wellbeing are frequently used as a formative assessment of children's early development and current wellbeing during the transition to school, this has resulted in gaps in knowledge about how young children understand and experience wellbeing during the transition to school. This knowledge gap is problematic, as the results of these population-based wellbeing assessments are used to inform policy and practices in both the health and education sectors (Thomas, 2009). These current challenges and gaps in empirical knowledge about young children and their wellbeing during the transition to school form the rational of the research study reported in this thesis.

1.3 Defining the Problem

To begin an investigation into current conceptualisations and operationalisations of child wellbeing, Bacchi's (2009) *What's the Problem Represented to be?* (WPR) approach was used to frame what is currently problematic about wellbeing constructions. The framing of the problem, as argued by Bacchi (2012) is an essential first step as it supports the critical interrogation of public policies and discourses and how current problems (such as the assessment of child wellbeing) are represented. Once the 'problem' is framed and understood, then it can be subjected to critical scrutiny and investigation. This thesis defines the problem as "Are current conceptualisations and operationalisations of child wellbeing accurate or supportive of young children as they transition to school"?

1.4 The Research Questions and Aims

The research question was developed to address the defined problem. The guiding research question for this study became *How can the inclusion of children's voices and children's understanding of their own wellbeing inform the current conceptualisations and assessment of child wellbeing during the transition to school?*

The aims of this research study were to:

1. Explore how young children conceptualised their wellbeing

2. Develop child informed indicators of wellbeing derived from young children's experiences and understandings

3. Use child informed indicators of wellbeing to explore children's wellbeing as they transition to school

4. Investigate how service integration in ECEC settings impact upon children's experiences of wellbeing during the transition to school

1.5 Significance to Public Health

The social factors that impact individuals in early childhood are powerful "direct and indirect predictors of lifelong health and well-being" (Smith-Chant, 2009, p. 145). Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has been identified as a key social determinant of health, linked to a number of social domains that "play a role in determining health over the life course…such as child development, parental employment, gender equality, poverty, and social integration" (Friendly, 2009, p. 129). These social domains are also understood as social determinants of health (SDH), the economic and social conditions that shape the health of individuals, communities, and nations and are the primary determinants of, and individuals' ability to be healthy or become ill (Raphael, 2009).

The Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986), developed form the first International Health Promotion Conference, was one of the first global documents to recognise the "political, economic, social, cultural, environment, behavioural, and biological factors" (WHO, 2008, p. 110) that influence health. Building from this, the concept of SDH first appeared in the work of Tarlov (1996), where he developed a model demonstrating that inequities in the quality of housing, education, social acceptance, employment, and income translated into poorer health outcomes for individuals who compared unfavourably within communities or societies. An initial report by Wilkinson and Marmot (2003), and a final report by the Commission of the Social Determinants of Health in 2008, both commissioned by the World Health Organisation (WHO), solidified the place of SDH in health policy documents through a call to action to address the SDH and health inequalities through policy initiatives (Fisher, Baum, MacDougall, Newman, McDermott, et al., 2017). The WHO continue to assert that national governments must broaden the focus from conventional concerns of health policies and interventions (such health-care services, environmental hygiene and disease control) and seek to improve health and reduce health inequity across all portfolio areas through policy initiatives (Fisher et al., 2017; Marmot & Friel, 2008, World Health Organisation, 2013). It is widely accepted that there needs to be

further coordination or 'joining up' of government departments and sectors across all levels of government to tackle complex or 'wicked' health and social problems (Baum, Delany-Crow, MacDougall, Lawless, van Eyk et al., 2017; Exworthy & Hunter, 2011).

While the health sector has been identified as having a crucial stewardship role for other policy areas attempting to address health inequalities, Fisher et al.'s (2016) analysis of Australian health policy documents found that there was little engagement between the health sector and the policy sectors "most able to influence systemic socioeconomic inequalities in Australia" (p. 962). This lack of engagement between health and other key sectors is troubling, as argued by Baum (2019), as addressing health equity through the use of policy requires synergistic policies across sectors that are supported by structures and mechanisms that facilitate collaboration. Another troubling aspect that can interfere with intersectoral engagement between health and other sectors is the interpretation of health sector stewardship as health imperialism, the idea that all policy areas should be subordinate to health (Kemm, 2001). Kemm (2001) argues that while the framing of social goals, such as education, as determinants of health does not alter the task of policy work in other sectors, it can serve to disrupt the balance of power and influence between sectors, making intersectoral work challenging. Additionally, the division of fiscal and legislative responsibilities for health in Australia is complicated by the divisions between national, State, and local government tiers. Given that health policy "often bridges the national/State/local government divide and policies on the same topic are common across jurisdictions" (Fisher et al., 2017), this environment provides additional challenges to intersectoral work.

Recognition of these longstanding challenge is evident in the development and implementation of Health in All Policies (HiAP), an approach used internationally to promote and achieve policy coherence for better and more equal health outcomes (Ståhl, Wismar, Ollila, Lahtinen & Leppo, 2006). A HiAP approach recognises that public policy broadly, not just health policy, is responsible for promoting health and equitable health outcomes, and that intersectoral approaches are needed to achieve policy coherence and equitable outcomes (van Eyk, Delany-Crowe, Lawless, Baum, MacDougall et al., 2019). The concept of HiAP recognises that intersectoral work is challenging, specifically in relation to understanding and aligning outcomes, developing a common language, and linking agendas (Baum et al., 2017). However, the HiAP approach also recognises the magnitude of co-benefits intersectoral work can have on all participating sectors when there is a sustained commitment to this work. As argued by Baum et al. (2017), given traditions of health imperialism in health policy development, an effective strategy to support the work of the health sector in developing health policies with other sectors is "put[ting] the business of the other sectors first, and working with

them to identify co-benefits which advance the other sector's priorities" (p. 11), alongside the priorities of the health sector.

In 2007, South Australia commenced the implementation of HiAP through the linking of HiAP to South Australia's strategic plan, calling for the 'joining-up' of government sectors and services (Government of South Australia, 2007). The rationale for joining sectors was to provide a foundation for the health sector and health policy makers to work intersectorally to advance other sector's policy objectives to achieve equitable health outcomes (Ståhl et al., 2006). In South Australia, HiAP approaches have been developed with a variety of sectors, including education (Government of South Australia, 2013). Van Eyk et al. (2019), report on a HiAP project undertaken between health and education sectors in South Australia to increase parental engagement in children's literacy, a proven SDH, across lower socio-economic families. Their findings suggest that the intersectoral approach developed through a HiAP approach supported a broader focus for literacy education that included an equity perspective and increased understanding in the education sector of the link between health and education/literacy, alongside an increase in child literacy.

The above example speaks to the potential efficacy of intersectoral efforts to support health outcomes, specifically in relation to the education sector. It also speaks to the need for the health sector to work respectfully with other sectors, which includes listening to the priorities of the sector, understanding and being cognisant of the language used within the sector, and fostering relationships through a co-benefit approach (Baum, Delaney-Crowe, MacDougall, van Eyk, Lawless et al., 2019; Delany-Crowe, Popay, Lawless, Baum, MacDougall, et al., 2018). A co-benefit approach to HiAP initiatives is understood as a key feature which secures and supports the co-operation of other sectors despite the multitude of challenges in multisectoral work (Lawless, Baum, Delaney-Crowe, MacDougall, Williams et al., 2018). HiAP policies are one of many approaches (see for example Commonwealth of Australia, 2015a, 2015b), used to integrate health and education services in Australia to better support children and families in the early years, building from the recognition of the importance of health and wellbeing for children's academic success and lifecourse. Further examples of this work can be seen in the inclusion of health and wellbeing as key facets of early years and school curricular frameworks and schools and early childhood education and care services as essential sites for the promotion, access, and assessment of health, and the integration of health and education services into co-located services (service integration) (Wong & Press, 2012; Wong & Sumsion, 2013).

As previously outlined, this research sits in the space between these two essential and intersecting forces in the lives of young children and their families: education and health. Given the rich history of intersectoral and interdisciplinary work in the areas of health and education in South Australia, an investigation into how health and education sectors currently work together to support child wellbeing during the transition to school is relevant to the discipline of public health. This interdisciplinary lens which adopts a co-benefit approach to intersectoral work supports the development of evidence based practices and policies in addressing child health outcomes. As integration and intersectoral work between these two sectors increases, the need to complete interdisciplinary research which understands and accounts for the structures, priorities and language of schools and the early years and seeks to understand the impacts of service integration on its intended recipients is an essential piece supporting the development and wellbeing of young children (Sumsion, Press & Wong 2012; Nichols & Zannettino, 2008).

An example of ongoing multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary work in the early years in Australia is the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), the Australian adaptation of the Canadian Early Development Index (EDI), introduced at the beginning of this chapter. The AEDC and EDI are population based instrument stemming from epidemiology, a sub-discipline considered the basic science of public health (Cates, 1982). The AEDC instrument is currently being used nationwide in schools to gather population-based data on child development in five key areas: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge. This instrument, completed by first year of school teachers in Australia and Canada alike, is an example of a joint effort between the health and education sectors to inform the creation of policy and implementation of services and practices that support the healthy development of children.

Within the increased integration of education and health services, public health perspectives and tools for gathering large scale population-based data have been instrumental for informing schools, communities, and policy about children's development and wellbeing during the transition to school. However, with disciplinary knowledge and traditions can come bias regarding whose voices should be heard, and how and what should be measured. Child wellbeing continues to be frequently characterised by deficit approaches. This is evidenced in the ways in which child wellbeing during the transition to school has been operationalised, such as the AEDC's focus on developmental vulnerability. Drawing on perspectives and traditions in early childhood education and childhood studies, this thesis seeks to add to the growing movement within the discipline of public health that acknowledges and works to redress children's exclusion from health knowledge and research. To do

this, a key contribution that this thesis makes to the discipline of public health is the development, application, and refinement of a method for conducting wellbeing research *with* young children. One which engages with and can inform current conceptualisations of child wellbeing and the tools and instruments which exclude children's voices from our understanding of their health and wellbeing. Through this methodological contribution, this thesis seeks to investigate whether current conceptualisations of child wellbeing are either accurate or meaningful to the subjects of child wellbeing research, children themselves.

1.6 Research Timeline

Given the multi-stage, longitudinal nature of this research study, a timeline is depicted below to support the reader in temporally situating the research process. Additionally, each chapter opens with a revised timeline indicating where in the research process the chapter is situated.
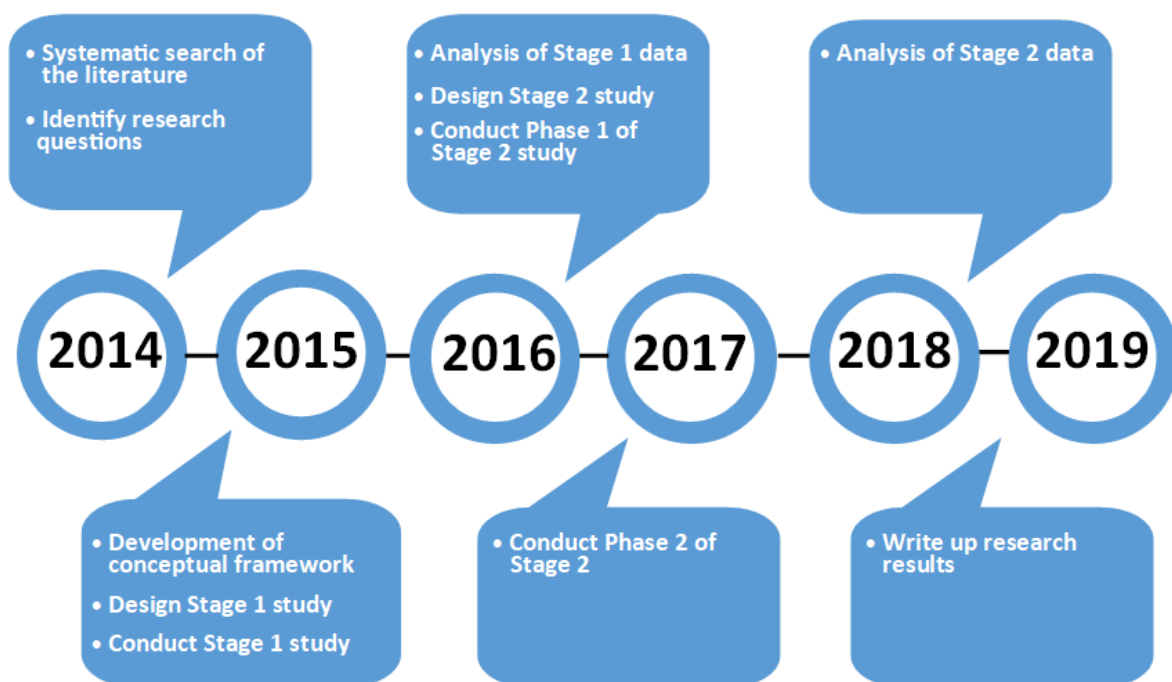
Figure 1. Research timeline

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

Following Chapter 1, I have organised this thesis as follows:

In Chapter 2: *Systematic Review* I present a systematic review of the literature on child wellbeing during the transition to school, offering a synopsis and critique of current conceptualisations and operationalisations of young children's wellbeing. Analysis of the findings of the systematic review identified two key gaps in the literature: (1) young children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing; (2) the role of service integration in supporting wellbeing in the early years. These two gaps in knowledge form the basis of the research study.

In Chapter 3: *Theoretical Perspective* I provide a brief overview of past and current conceptualisations of childhood and childhood research across relevant disciplines. Building on this work, I outline the theoretical perspective that underlies this research study, citizen-child theory, and how this theoretical orientation informs the methodology of the study.

In Chapter 4: *Methodology* I introduce the multi-stage research process employed in this study to investigate young children's experience and understandings of wellbeing during the transition to school. Stage 1 of the study trialled emoji as a visual research method with 78 three-to-five-year old children across eight diverse ECEC settings to explore how young children conceptualise 'being well' and explore young children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing in relation to current child wellbeing indicators. Stage 2 of the study used child-identified indicators of wellbeing identified during Stage 1 to investigate the impacts of the transition to school on four-to-six-year old children's wellbeing using a qualitative longitudinal design. The analytical approaches used to analyse data from both stages are detailed in full in this chapter.

In Chapter 5: *Results and Discussion – Stage 1* I report the findings from Stage 1 derived from the use of the hybrid approach to data analysis outlined in Chapter 4. Emerging themes from the data are explored in relation to relevant theory and empirical research to investigate and elucidate children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing. From this process, two novel child-identified indicators: opportunities for play and children's agency and control were delineated. This chapter also reflects on the use of emoji as a visual research method for conducting child-centred participatory wellbeing research with young children.

In Chapter 6: *Results and Discussion – Stage 2* I report the findings from Stage 2 derived from the use of the structured approach to trajectory analysis applied to both phases of data as outlined in Chapter 4. As the two novel child-identified indicators had yet to be explored in relation to child wellbeing from young children's perspectives, children's accounts of the child-identified indicators are explored

to investigate how the transition to school impacted upon children's wellbeing to inform knowledge of these two newly identified indicators.

In Chapter 7: *Theoretical and Practical Implications* I interpret my findings and consider them in relation to the research aims and questions that underlie the thesis. I expand upon strengths, limitations and theoretical insights emerging from this study. This includes discussion of how the findings of this research apply to the state of child wellbeing and service integration literature, and implications for further research, policy, and practice in relation to young children and the transition to school.

1.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 provides context for the research study and a timeline representing the research process. The next chapter provides a systematic review of young children's health and wellbeing as they transition to school. This review was conducted to identify key gaps in the literature in relation to young children's wellbeing during the transition to school.

CHAPTER 2 – Systematic Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the current empirical, theoretical, and applied literature pertaining to the health and wellbeing of children as they transition to school developed through a systematic review of relevant literature. The systematic review process I employed and my findings have undergone the process of peer review and have been published in a peer reviewed journal (Fane, MacDougall, Redmond, Jovanovic & Ward, 2016). The body of this chapter (starting at 2.2) includes the published paper which details the systematic searching and analysis processes, and discussion of the findings. I conclude the chapter by explaining the relevance of the systematic review to the development and design of the research study reported in the thesis.

2.0.1 Research Timeline
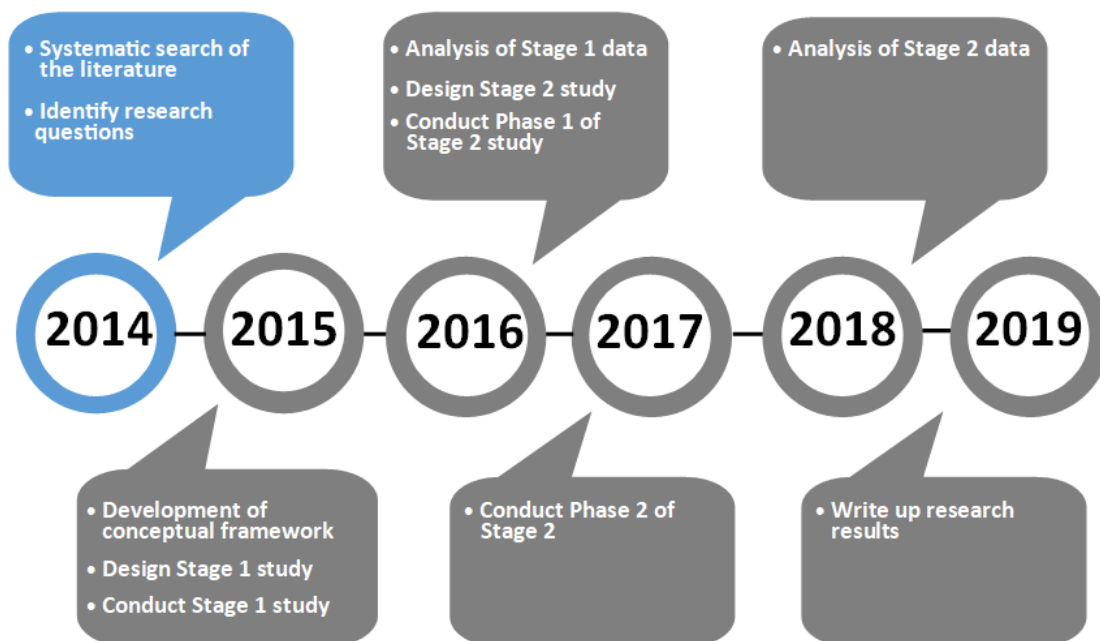
Figure 2. Research timeline – Chapter 2

2.1 Background

The transition to formal schooling has been positioned as an ideal time to gather evidence of children's early development. This transition is often viewed as the culmination of a child's early learning and care experiences, which can irrevocably impact upon future academic, social, and economic life (Goldfeld, Sayers, Brinkman, Silburn, & Oberklaid, 2009). It is also a time where children move between services and sectors, which has prompted a shift in Australia policy foci to work interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in the early years (birth-to-eight-years) to "attend to the challenges of optimizing every children's health, care, and educational outcomes (Grant, Gregoric, Jovanovic, Parry & Walsh, 2018) during times of significant transition in young children's lives. Grant et al. (2018) assert that the challenges of working multidisciplinarily is compounded by philosophical differences and understandings of children and childhood by professionals working in the early years in health and education sectors, and how this impacts upon the experiences of children transitioning across and between sectors and services. Due to these challenges, it is important to acknowledge that disciplinary knowledge and understandings of the transition to school vary greatly between disciplines and sectors, despite having shared goals of supporting children and families and reducing health and social inequalities.

Within early years literature, the transition to school is understood to be more than the first day of formal schooling, or the time between early learning and the first year of school. It is instead a concept with numerous interpretations that refer to the totality of young children's lives and experiences. As such, the transition to school includes the experiences of children and families within multiple structures (such as education and care services) and the connections between them (Bonhan-Baker & Little, 2004). While the importance of practices and processes to support children during the transition to school is undisputed in the literature, answers to the questions 'what are effective transition practices?' or 'what does a successful transition look like?' are less clear (Dockett & Perry, 2004a). This likely stems, in part, from the current and widely accepted view of transition as contextually bound and experienced by individuals in different ways (Dockett & Perry, 2004a, p. 217). This conceptualisation builds on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology systems model which has inspired ecological perspectives on the transition to school such as the Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition (Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2000; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). This view of children and their experiences acknowledges the interrelated nature and impact of family, childcare/early learning, community, and health services on children, and the need to support children and families in ways that recognise the totality and complexity of children's experiences (Crowley, 2001).

Despite no consistent definition of what the transition to school should look like, children and families experience very real change during this time and can require a variety of support mechanisms as they move through systems, providers, and environments. Programs and practices to support children and families during the transition to school are widely used in early childhood education and care settings, both in Australia and internationally (Einarsdottir, Perry, & Dockett, 2008). Due to a culmination of factors which converge during the transition to school, there is widespread acceptance in the literature that the first year of school is a useful point at which to collect data on young children and their previous learning and care experiences. As such, the time of children's transition to school is widely used to assess children's school readiness, or preparation for formal schooling. In the fields of public health and epidemiology, the concept of measuring and reporting on certain characteristics (such health outcomes SDH) is 'very common', however, this approach has been less common in education (Guh, Gadermann & Zumbo, 2007). While this is partially due to disciplinary approaches to research and knowledge building, it is also impacted by understandings in the field of education that school readiness is a heavily contested topic (see Graue, 2010), and that previously, there has been significant challenges to interdisciplinary work between these two sectors in relation to child health outcomes (Grant et al. 2018).

School readiness is generally understood as the assessment of children's development prior to and during the transition to school and has traditionally focused on children's cognitive skills such as reading, writing, and numeracy (Graue, 2010). However, the concept of school readiness continues to be expanded to incorporate a more varied understanding of child development including non-cognitive skills such as: adaptability, flexibility, independence, and cooperation in addition to cognitive skills (Janus & Duku, 2010). Stemming from the continued interest and efforts in assessing child health and wellbeing using measures that go beyond indicators of children's basic survival, as is evidenced in the continued use and engagement with 'State of the Child' reports, (Ben-Arieh, 2012), child health and wellbeing has increasingly been included within the construct of school readiness, and is commonly assessed during children's transition to school. As the increasing focus on, and inclusion of, measures of health and wellbeing become a normalised part of the transition to school landscape, a review pertaining specifically to how health and wellbeing across school transition is being conceptualised, supported, assessed and understood is arguably both timely and necessary.

Recent research within early years literature points to a lack of communication and consensus between researchers, policy makers, and service providers about how to identify, assess and support young children's health and wellbeing (Ben-Arieh, 2012; Cronin de Chavez, Backett-Millburn, Parry, & Platt, 2005; Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders, 2012). While there is broad agreement on the definition

of child health, the definition of wellbeing remains largely unresolved, and has resulted in 'blurred and overly broad definitions' (Foregeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, & Seligman, 2011, p. 81). Even within a single nation, such as Australia, conceptualisations of wellbeing in national reports and frameworks vary considerably. For example, despite having a shared focus on research to support the health of children and families, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) and the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) define and understand wellbeing in very different ways. ARACY's view of wellbeing is expressed as 'the good life', which is defined by the successful obtainment of positive outcomes in the five key result areas: feeling loved and safe, being healthy, opportunities for learning, material basics, and community participation (ARACY, 2013). In contrast, the AIFS definition appraises wellbeing in terms of how children spend their time, stating that children's construction and use of time and participation in positive activities are indicators of health's positive development, particularly in the attainment and development of skills (AIFS, 2014, p.51). These two examples of current conceptualisations reflect the tension between the views of wellbeing as a holistic and lifelong state of being encompassing personal and social needs and opportunities, and a largely developmental view which situates child wellbeing as the building block for future development.

Moreover, constructions of wellbeing in research, policy, and practice in the early years are also highly discipline specific. For example, the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the national curriculum framework for early childhood educators working across the birth-to-five sector, encompasses many of the holistic understandings of wellbeing expressed in ARACY's definition, but also includes the concept of children's agency (Australian Government Department of Education, 2009). Despite little consistency in definitions, however, as strong levels of wellbeing in the early years are correlated with academic achievement and lifelong health (Barblett & Maloney, 2010), wellbeing has been increasingly operationalised as an indicator of optimal child development, even if it remains intangible, difficult to define and even harder to measure (Thomas, 2009). The continued lack of consensus in how to define and determine child health and wellbeing across the transition to school denotes the very real challenge in synthesising 'what we know' and 'what needs further evidence or exploration'. In this context, the need for a systematic review of the literature pertaining to children's health and wellbeing across the transition to school was identified.

During preliminary searches, it also became evident that there was a very real gap in the literature addressing the dichotomy between education and health care in the early years. This gap speaks to the need for a systematic review that is able to cross distinct disciplinary and methodological boundaries. To this end, the aims of this review were threefold: (a) synthesise current research on

child health and wellbeing during the transition to school (b) identify research interests, methodologies, assumptions, and theoretical perspectives being used by the range of disciplines working in this area, and (c) identify gaps in research to inform future policy and the development of services, practices, and partnerships that support the wellbeing of children and families.

2.2 Methods

This review focuses on the Australian context, but also includes research across a range of OEDC countries and geographical/ political entities such as the UK, Canada, the EU, and the USA. Australian policy reflects many of the early childhood policy directions championed by international bodies (such as the OEDC and the United Nations Children's Education Fund) and is based on the dual discourse of (i) starting strong and (ii) investing in the early years (Irvine & Farrell, 2013, p.221). Therefore, the findings of this review are arguably of relevance to both an Australian and a wider international contexts.

2.2.1 Systematic Review Framework

To complete a systematic review of this nature, a framework that could accommodate the complexity of this field of literature was sought. The Critical Interpretive Synthesis (CIS) method offers an interpretive approach to systematic review which can be applied to a whole corpus of evidence, regardless of study type (Dixon- Woods, Cavers, Agarwal, Annandale, Arthur, et al., 2006) – a necessary consideration when attempting to complete a review that crosses the diverse nature of early child research, practice, and policy perspectives. Designed by Mary Dixon-Woods et al. (2006), the CIS method allows for the production of a 'mid-range' theoretical account of the evidence and existing theory that is neither too abstract (so as to lack applicability) or too specific (that explanatory scope is limited). Within the context of the present review, the application of the CIS method is intended to produce a mid-range account of the current conceptualisations and operationalisations of child health and wellbeing during the transition to school.

2.2.2 Formulating the Review Question

In accordance with the CIS method, a preliminary research question was chosen to allow the systematic search to act as a 'compass', rather than an 'anchor' (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). The preliminary research question was 'How and in what ways do traditional (non-integrated) and

integrated approaches to school transition impact upon early childhood health and wellbeing?' Using the CIS method, the research question and criteria for inclusion/exclusion are iteratively developed throughout the review and investigation of the literature. During this process, the preliminary research question was developed into the final iteration used to guide the extraction, analysis and critique of data: 'How can social indicators and socially critical ways of viewing health and education be used to inform understandings of health and wellbeing of children transitioning to school?'

2.2.3 Searching the Literature

This review undertook systematic searches of selected electronic databases. As per the CIS method, it also included a number of diverse strategies for locating relevant literature such as: website searching, reference list combing, contact with experts, and expertise from within a multidisciplinary team of supervisors to identify the literature for inclusion.

The systematic database search included six databases, which returned a total of 6,445 records identified through keyword searches, which were subsequently screened by reading titles and abstracts to determine relevance to the preliminary research question (see figure 3). A complete record of the systematic database searches using PRISMA diagrams[4] are founds in Appendix 7. From these search strategies, 109 papers were selected to undergo further screening

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4 PRISMA diagrams are four-phase flow diagrams that are available via a downloadable Word template for researchers to improve the reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff & Altman, 2009)
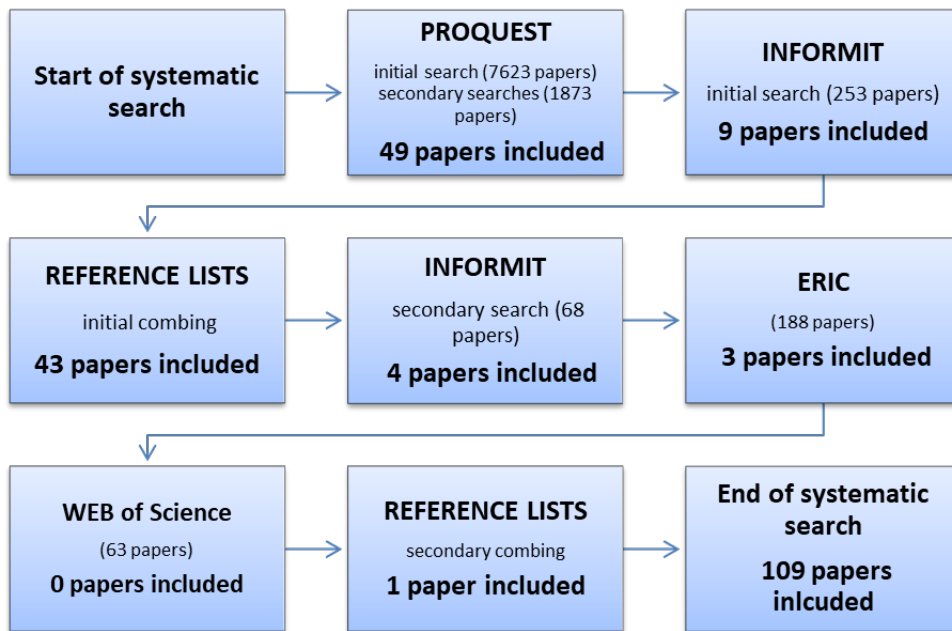
Figure 3. Results of systematic database searches

2.2.4 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used during the systematic database search to select papers that were highly relevant to the research question. Theoretical sampling was used during the iterative stage of the review to remove papers identified as no longer relevant, and add papers using the aforementioned searching strategy.

2.2.5 Determination of Quality

As per the CIS method, a two-pronged approach was used to determine the continued relevance of the papers to the research question and the quality of the included papers. After all papers were re-assessed to determine their relevance to the final research question, criteria were chosen for both quantitative and qualitative research studies to identify and exclude primary papers (empirical studies) of unsuitable quality to prevent distortion during the review (Dixon- Woods et al., 2007). For quantitative studies, the Cochrane Collaboration's PICO(T) (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome, and Type) framework was used to identify studies to be excluded due to fatal flaws (Higgins & Green, 2011). For 11 qualitative studies, the model put forward by Tracy (2010) identifying 'eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research' (worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility,

resonance, significant contribution, ethical, meaningful coherence) was used to evaluate and exclude poor quality papers (for further discussion of exclusion criteria for qualitative research see Campbell et al., 2003). For mixed methods studies (eight papers), a combination of the two criteria was used according to the data being evaluated. Any paper that was found to be of insufficient quality or relevance to the finalised research question was excluded. Secondary papers were screened by relevance to the research question.

Following this process, all papers chosen for inclusion underwent further screening to determine their weighting in the review, based on whether the papers took the form of empirical research, re-analysis of research, commentary and editorial work, or reports and policy documents. The grading system proposed by Attree (2004) was used, a 4- point grading scale of A-D. Papers that would have been graded as D were excluded through the determination of quality screening. Papers that were secondary analyses or, while providing useful background evidence had only limited relevance to the research question, were graded C. Papers graded A or B were primary papers of rigorous quality that were used to identify main themes and concepts. The difference between A and B was determined by their relevance to the research question. The grading of papers facilitated the emergence of prominent themes during the iterative phase of the analysis. Of the 109 papers initially included, 54 were eventually excluded, resulting in 57 papers to be included in the review (see figure 4).
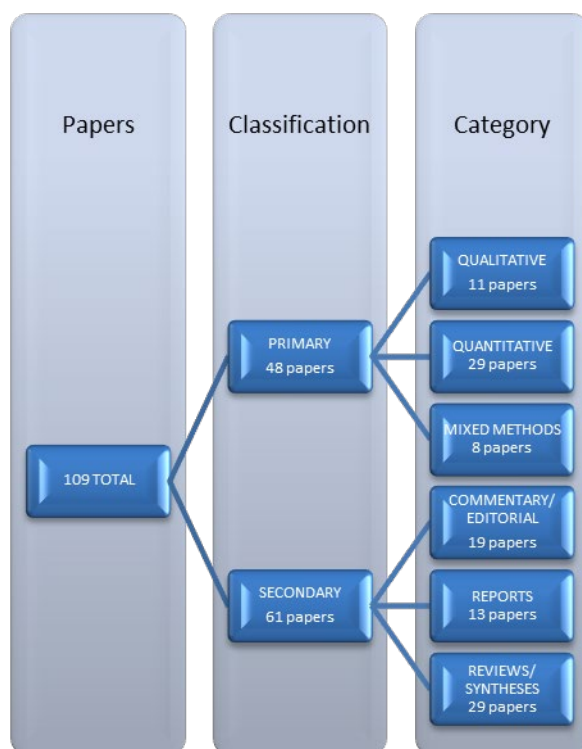
Figure 4. Categorisation of papers included in the systematic review

2.2.6 Data Extraction

During the data extraction process, each paper went through a rigorous examination during which the aims, methods, frameworks, instruments, and key findings were identified and recorded. Alongside the extraction of data, as per the CIS method, a critical analysis of each paper was undertaken to investigate how the paper/report was presented, represented, or positioned within the literature. The full data extraction process for the 54 papers is included in Appendix 8.

2.3 Conducting the Analysis

The distinctive characteristic of the CIS method is its movement beyond a summary of the data reported to a more fundamental critique which may involve questioning taken for granted assumptions (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). The CIS method allowed the critique of literature to be 'dynamic, recursive and reflexive' rather than a series of single, final steps. The iterative and interactive phase of the analysis uncovered a variety of potential themes and subthemes. As these emerged they were identified and coded to document patterns, categories, and the frequency of each theme across the literature, while recursive and reflexive processes enabled early and emergent themes to be further developed. Ultimately many papers went through multiple inspections as they were compared against the themes and theoretical structures being developed throughout the analysis.

2.4 Findings

During analysis of the included literature, seven prominent and distinct themes were identified. These seven themes are discussed below, ordered in relation to their frequency across the literature and the weighing given to the papers from which they emerged. As per the CIS method, each theme is discussed in regard to the way it is represented and positioned within the literature.

2.4.1 Conceptualisations of Health and Wellbeing for Young Children

Discussion about social indicators, used to detect evolving norms, values, and changes in children's health and wellbeing status, was the most common theme found by this review. There was much discussion about the importance of social indicators and their potential value in responding to a range of needs and concerns relating to health and wellbeing such as: identification, monitoring, goal setting, and increased accountability (Moore, Brown, & Scarupa, 2003; ARACY, 2013; Eldridge, Beneforti, &

Macdonald, 2011; Janus, Brinkman, & Duku, 2011; Sayers et al., 2012; Ure, 2008). However, a significant challenge was the lack of consistency in the call for, use of, and/or application of social indicators to childhood health and wellbeing research. While child social indicators are meant to provide meaning for statistical data and empirical support for theories and models, they raised a host of validity and reliability challenges (Ben-Arieh, 2012), which the literature did not engage with or attempt to resolve.

While investigating the social indicators literature, the review found the terms 'health' and 'wellbeing' were used largely interchangeably and often without further definition. While it is to be expected that these concepts would have a variety of different definitions depending on epistemological or discipline specific views, health and wellbeing are different concepts (see Earls & Carlson, 2001). When health and wellbeing are used interchangeably or lumped together as synonymous terms, it becomes unclear what the research or report is suggesting should be valued, measured, or identified. This is a significant limitation for the current literature found in this review. Compounding this confusion was the conceptualisation of indicators to identify children's health and wellbeing. In its truest sense, wellbeing is the 'right now', or 'this specific point in time'. In the case of children transitioning to school, indicators for wellbeing would focus on children's quality of life in the present (Fattore, Mason, & Watson, 2008), their current experiences of being and being well. Despite this, the vast majority of papers in actuality referred to children's future ability to lead happy and productive lives – their well-becoming. The literature's preoccupation with well-becoming, rather than wellbeing is also evinced by the intense focus on the design and implementation of programs, interventions, and supports for children that aim to positively support children with what they will need to be happy, healthy, and fully functioning adults. The confusion in the literature regarding whether the focus should be on wellbeing as opposed to well-becoming (which appears in actuality to be of greatest concern) was a rarely stated yet recurrent issue. If child social indicators are to be used to provide statistical data and empirical support for theories and models of child health and wellbeing, further discussion pertaining to the interchangeable use of health and wellbeing, and wellbeing and well-becoming is warranted.

2.4.2 Measuring Health and Wellbeing during the Transition to School

School entry is widely regarded as a useful time to reflect on children's cumulative early childhood development experiences (Goldfeld et al., 2009) and there has been extensive investigation of how best to obtain data on the health and wellbeing of children in this age group. Despite established links between the "quality of children's early life experiences [and] indicators of health, social wellbeing,

and economic viability in adult years" (Ure, 2008, p.11), there is agreement that Australia, like some other OECD countries, currently lacks a valid data source on the social and emotional wellbeing of young children (ARACY, 2013; Eldridge et al., 2011). As such, the literature refers to an array of assessments and instruments designed to gauge children's capabilities, competencies, and health and wellbeing status before, during, and after the transition to school. While the systematic search included only papers which reported on an assessment/measurement tool that covered at least one aspect of health and wellbeing, this review found 87 different instruments in recent and/or current use (AIFS, 2014; Corter, Patel, Pelletier, & Bertrand, 2008; Curtis & Simons, 2008; Denham, 2006; Edmunds & Stewart-Brown, 2002; Giallo, Kienhuis, Treyvaud, & Matthews, 2008; Goldfeld et al., 2009; Guhn, Janus, & Hertzman, 2007; Guhn, Zumbo, Janus, & Hertzman, 2001; Hymel, LeMare, & McKee, 2011; Janus et al., 2011; Janus & Duku, 2010; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, & Wildenger, 2007; Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services Division, 2003; Sayers et al., 2007; Sayers, 2008; Sayers et al., 2012; valentine, Thomson, & Antcliff, 2009;Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012).

The focus of these instruments varied considerably and, through the process of data extraction and analysis, they were categorised into eight groups: social and emotional competency focus (17), behaviour focus (18), teacher/educators perspective focus (13), academic skill focus (14), health assessment/diagnostic focus (10), parent/ family perspective focus (8), transition to school focus (4), and learning/care environment focus (3). A full listing of the instruments and categorisation in listed in Appendix 9. The differing foci of these instruments make it difficult to compare the instruments in terms of their validity/psychometric properties, or their ability to contribute to a holistic understanding (incorporating both cognitive and non-cognitive measures) of child health and wellbeing during the transition to school. These challenges are also exacerbated by the lack of agreement as to whether either positive indicators (such as happiness or self-esteem) or negative indicators (such as illness or deficits) are most useful in childhood health and wellbeing research (Pollard & Lee, 2003).

In regard to this review's focus on the child wellbeing and well-becoming during the transition to school, the instrument that was most cited/examined/used was the Early Development Instrument (EDI) or AEDI (the Australian adaptation of the EDI) – now referred to as the AEDC (Australian Early Development census). This instrument is a teacher-completed checklist which reports on children's prior to school development (see Janus et al., 2011). There was strong evidence within the literature to support the use of this instrument by studies investigating its validity and ability to act as a comprehensive tool for gathering data to identify, at the community level, areas of vulnerability for

children during their transition to school (Brinkman, 2012; Goldfeld et al., 2009; Guhn et al., 2001; Janus et al., 2011; Sayers et al., 2007).

Widespread and international use of the EDI/AEDI/ AEDC speaks to its utility for collecting meaningful community-level data on a range of social indicators for transition-to-school aged children. However, there are still questions and concerns raised in the literature as to whether the current design of this instrument, and others, have indeed moved beyond the narrow and highly contested view of school readiness, specifically in regard to children's health and wellbeing. While the general discriminant and convergent validity of the EDI/AEDI/AEDC has been evidenced by many of the included papers, the physical health and wellbeing domain was identified by Janus et al. (2011) as having the lowest internal consistency of the five domains. The work of Hymel et al. (2011) also called into question the discriminant validity of the physical health and wellbeing domain. This suggests that while the EDI/AEDI/AEDC has demonstrated its validity and efficacy as a tool for gathering data during the transition to school, there remain questions as to the ability of the EDI/AEDI/AEDC (and other reported tools/instruments) to accurately and comprehensively report on dimensions of health and wellbeing.

2.4.3 Parents and Families as Actors and Agents in Transition

A significant amount of research was identified in the review characterising the transition to school as a process that families experience with their transitioning child, rather than as an event that happens to the child (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2010; Sayers et al., 2012). Indeed, there is strong agreement within the literature that families and parents are important actors within the transition process. This has likely been an important force behind the call from both policy makers, researchers, and practitioners for increased parental/family involvement in the transition to school. The conceptualisation of the transition to school as an experience necessitating the involvement of families and parents was demonstrated by a variety of studies included in the review (Bonhan-Baker & Little, 2004; Dockett & Perry, 2004b; Giallo et al., 2008; Giallo, Treyvaud, Matthews, & Kienhuis, 2010; Janus, Kopechanski, Cameron, & Hughes, 2008; La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2007; Sayers et al., 2012;Wildenger,McIntrye, Fiese, & Eckert, 2008). While the majority of these studies focused on the experiences of transition from both a parent and family perspective, there was also discussion about children's experiences and how these differed from those of parents and family. Dockett and Perry's (2004b) findings articulated discernible differences between the experiences and perspectives of children and parents and highlighted the important implications of this when creating partnerships between schools and families. Similar findings emerged in a study by Laverick (2008),

which emphasised the need to account for these differences within the transition process. Both in terms of policy and practice, the repositioning of the parents and families as active actors and agents during the transition process now sees family involvement increasingly recognised and called for in the development of transition to school programs (Bonhan-Baker & Little, 2004; Dockett, 2008; McInnes & Nichols, 2011). In addition, partnerships between parents and family and other transition actors (schools, ECEC settings, health, and community agencies) have received significant attention. Likewise, there has been broad interest in the experiences of parents and families, and how they relate to child health and wellbeing, with studies examining areas such as: parental efficacy (Giallo et al., 2008), parenting intervention programs (La Paro et al., 2003; Thompson, valentine, Mullan, Longden, & Harrison, 2010), and past and present experiences of parents and families during transition (Janus et al., 2008; McIntyre et al., 2007; Wildenger et al., 2008).

While there was significant evidence to show that partnerships between parents/families and other transition actors are integral to successful transitions and the design and implementation of services, research has also highlighted that there can be impediments to this. In a recent study by Kaehne and Catherall (2013), findings suggested that, despite efforts to include family/parents through service co-location and planning, the majority of parents were unaware or mistaken about changes to services and the impacts on transitions for their children. Parents' lack of knowledge about organisational structures and professional practice within children's services, as well as their focus on the specific needs of their own child rather than on those of children more generally, were issues raised by the authors (Kaehne & Catherall, 2013). In another review of the literature and research study of partnerships between parents and early childhood service providers, McInnes and Nichols (2011) also identified a potential lack of congruence between the goals and needs of parents and service providers, arguing that partnerships among a variety of professionals and parents can be disempowering for parents, adding layers of complexity and introducing barriers to their ability to make decisions based on their child's needs.

While it is not reasonable to expect all parents to have high-level competencies in early childhood development and education, the specific knowledge they bring about their child and the child's needs remains an essential component of successful transitions, as identified in ecological models of transition. However, it does raise questions about what partnerships between parents and transition actors could or should look like. Several papers also cautioned against the assumption that a partnership model is necessarily 'good' or 'best' practice. Papers critical of the view that partnerships in and of themselves are the best solution point out that partnerships should be carefully constructed,

facilitated and examined in order to maximise their efficacy (Kaehne & Catherall, 2013; Nichols & Jurvansuu, 2008; Wong, Sumsion, & Press, 2012).

2.4.4 Service Integration in Early Childhood Education and Care

Calls for further service integration in ECEC settings feature prominently in the literature, with service integration seen as a tool for supporting the health and wellbeing of children and families (AMA Taskforce on Indigenous Health, 2013; Atkinson, Doherty, & Kinder, 2005; Eastman, Newton, Rajkovic, & valentine, 2011; Mustard, 2008; Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services Division, 2003; Schmeid et al., 2011; Sims, 2011; The Centre for Community Child Health, 2008). While there are a variety of different definitions of service integration and what it entails, it is generally considered to constitute services that are connected in ways that create a comprehensive and cohesive system of support (Dockett et al., 2011). However, within the reviewed literature, service integration was often left undefined (see Wright, 2005 for further discussion and examples of early years' service integration in Australia). Although papers sometimes mentioned the rationale for the integration or 'joining-up' of services (Wong & Press, 2012), several discussed the often 'unspoken' problems that come with service integration, such as difficulties working in multi-disciplinary teams and interprofessionally (Nichols & Jurvansuu, 2008; Rous, Myers, & Stricklin, 2007). Wong, et al. (2012) also argue that including educators and health practitioners in collaborative teams can become problematic due to existing hierarchical structures, which often devalue the work of those in the ECEC sector. Calls for increased service integration have been widely echoed in policy documents and reports in Australia, yet concerns remain about the almost complete lack of empirical evidence regarding the impacts of service integration on child and family outcomes (Wong & Sumsion, 2013).

2.4.5 School Readiness and 'Ready Schools'

'School readiness' (or children's readiness for the transition to school) continues to be a highly contested concept evoking specific criticism within the literature (for further discussion see Graue, 2010). While some papers claimed that current conceptualisations of school readiness have moved far beyond previously narrowly defined cognitive skills-based definitions (see Janus & Duku, 2010), the utility of focusing on the child's ability to be ready for school as an important and necessary aim for the ECEC sector continues to be debated in the reviewed literature (Curtis & Simons, 2008; Dockett, Mason, & Perry, 2006; Goldfeld et al., 2009; Guhn et al., 2007; La Paro et al., 2003). There has also been some attempt to re-focus school readiness from children needing to be ready for school,

to schools being ready to support the health and wellbeing of children (Clark & Zygmut-Fillwalk, 2008; Curtis & Simons, 2008). However, these 'expanded' views of readiness remain closely tied to cognitive measures of reading and math proficiency (Curtis & Simons, 2008; Janus & Duku, 2010). While some studies attempted to investigate health and wellbeing during the transition to school independently of academic variables, these studies were largely focused on socio-behavioural outcomes such as problem behaviour (Edmunds & Stewart-Brown, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2010; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2012), which, as this synthesis argues, is no more holistic in regard to health and wellbeing than the academic measures they seek to move away from. The literature clearly identifies the need to expand of the concept of 'school readiness', though there was no agreement as to how this might be redefined.

2.4.6 A Focus on those Most at Risk During Transition

Within the literature there was a subset of papers and reports that focused on specific populations identified as 'at risk', such as children with special needs and/or chronic health conditions, children and families from low socio-economic status backgrounds, children of immigrant and refugee families, and Indigenous children (AMA Taskforce on Indigenous Health, 2013; Dockett et al., 2006; Janus et al., 2008; Janus, Lefort, Cameron, & Kopechanski, 2007; Kaehne &Catherall, 2013; Rous et al., 2007; Sayers et al., 2012; Sims, 2011). While this review has highlighted that child health policies frequently emphasised the need for a partnership approach to be combined with a mix of flexible integration strategies, this is particularly so where vulnerable and disadvantaged families are concerned (Schmeid et al., 2011). Of these 'at risk' groups, Indigenous children and children with special needs garnered the most attention in the literature. As this synthesis has already demonstrated, the measurement of health and wellbeing through validated assessment tools is a focus for much of the literature. However, as Sayers et al. (2012) indicate, the research regarding 'at risk' families is particularly focused on whether [identified] tools would be applicable and inclusive for all children; in particular, families with an Indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background or who have a child with a disability (2012, p.48).

In Australia, research and policy documents concerning Indigenous children and families stressed the need for flexible and integrated strategies specific to Indigenous community needs in order to work towards reducing, and eventually eliminating, health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children (AMA Taskforce on Indigenous Health, 2013; Dockett et al., 2006; Sims, 2011). In addition, Dockett and Mason (2006) assert that assessment tools and school readiness checklists also need to be adapted for Indigenous children because what is valued in their culture is not what is

generally assessed (2006). This is echoed by Sims' findings (2011), which indicate that policy recommendations, planning, and practices to support Indigenous students are often based on assumptions that Indigenous early years support and programs can be modelled on programs for non-Indigenous children.

While it was encouraging to observe an increased awareness and interest in supporting Indigenous children's outcomes in the early years, this review also noted disparate approaches to supporting Indigenous health and wellbeing. For example, the report by the AMA Taskforce on Indigenous Health (2013), titled The Healthy Early Years – Getting The Right Start in Life, was largely written from a biomedical and individualistic standpoint, focusing heavily on risks and what Indigenous families and parents can (and should) do to prevent poor health outcomes for their children. While this report did highlight key issues and challenges for Indigenous families and the services that support them, it took little account of the social determinants of health and power relationships that are key factors in health disparities between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. In contrast, Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children – Annual statistical report commissioned by the AIFS (Sims, 2011) identified similar key issues, but instead took a strengths-based approach to the amelioration of health disparities faced by Indigenous children and families.

Children with special needs were identified as the other key 'at risk' group in this review. While there was a substantial amount of literature on transitions for children with special needs, there was very little literature relating to the transition to school, with only two papers explicitly concerned with this topic (Janus et al., 2008; Rous et al., 2007). This finding echoes a review conducted over seven years ago by Janus et al. (2007), demonstrating a continued gap in the field's knowledge base. There were, however, four other papers that, in some way, addressed related aspects of health and wellbeing for young children with special needs during transitions (Brinkman, 2012; Edmunds & Stewart-Brown, 2002; Janus et al., 2007; Kaehne & Catherall, 2013).

While the literature generally differentiates between the specific needs of 'high risk' groups, it is important to note that high risk categories often overlap. For instance, Indigenous students are over-represented in special education (Graham, 2012), and there is a correlation between children considered at risk due to low socio-economic status and those considered at risk due to special health care and education needs (Goldfeld, O'Connor, Sayers, Moore & Oberklaid, 2012). This, taken with the findings of papers included in this review, suggests that there remains a dearth of knowledge and research addressing high-risk child populations and their health and wellbeing as they transition to school.

2.4.7 The Voice of the Child in their Own Wellbeing

The last theme emerging from this synthesis is the role that children's voices can and/or should play in early childhood health and wellbeing research. A small number of papers were found to have addressed this theme (Dockett & Perry, 2004b; Goldfeld et al., 2012; Jones & Sumner, 2009; Stephenson, 2012). Of the four papers that explicitly covered an aspect of child voice, only one was specifically about child voice and young children's understanding of their own wellbeing (Stephenson, 2012). Two other papers included some data from children (through surveys or focus groups) as part of their wider data collection (Dockett & Perry, 2004b; Goldfeld et al., 2012), and a fourth extolled the virtues of including child voice, yet lacked frameworks, methods, examples, or suggestions of how to incorporate or highlight child voice within research (Jones & Sumner, 2009). Stephenson's work (2012), however, offered an example of a highly detailed study into child voice and child wellbeing by exploring the transition of a small cohort of students moving together from the same kindergarten (pre-school) to the same primary school, and drawing on children's capacity to participate in and inform research. The lack of interest in capturing the child's voice as part of research into child health and wellbeing is interesting considering the wider interest in including or hearing children within other areas of early years research areas (see Clark, 2005). It suggests there may be an opportunity to use this alternative approach to enhance our understanding of young children's health and wellbeing across the transition to school.

2.5 Discussion

The findings of this CIS indicate that, while there is great interest in the health and wellbeing of young children, there is little cohesion across the health and education sectors in regard to research, policy, and practice during children's transition to school. In the discussion that follows, areas of contestation and continued challenge concerning the health and wellbeing of transition-to-school aged children are explored in response to key themes that emerged

2.5.1 Positioning 'Readiness' within Health, Wellbeing, and Well-becoming

Despite the recent and considered efforts to include health and wellbeing as part of the determination of school readiness, this review asks whether it is possible or appropriate to conceptualise wellbeing (or well-becoming) as a measurable outcome that can be assessed as part of general school readiness.

There is extensive literature on the definitions of and history behind the concept of school readiness by leading authors in the field (see Graue, 1993, 2010; Kagan, 1992; Meisels, 1996; Meisels, 1998, 1999; Pianta, Cox, & Snow, 2007), and it is broadly understood as an outcome of children's early development (Janus & Offord, 2007). The present review seeks to extend this literature and current debates by questioning the positioning of health and wellbeing as merely another aspect of school readiness. The literature synthesised in this review is very clear that children's wellbeing and well-becoming (throughout childhood and later years in life) depends greatly on their physical, mental, social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual health. When health and wellbeing are positioned as generalist indicators of an overall outcome of school readiness, holistic ideas of wellbeing and well-becoming become greatly over-simplified and expressed as 'qualities'. An example of this simplification is found in research compiled by the US National Center for Education in Statistics in which teachers stated that physical health, being 'well-rested', curiosity, and enthusiasm were 'essential qualities' of ready children (1993, as cited in Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle, & Calkins, 2006). Similarly, despite being created nearly a decade later, the EDI/AEDI/AEDC uses similarly random parameters to determine a child's physical health and wellbeing such as school absences, hunger, tiredness levels, and coordination (Janus & Offord, 2007).

Rather than reimagining health and wellbeing, studies tended to continue using health and wellbeing as generalist and problematic indicators of school readiness. A way forward would be to rethink the combination of indicators necessary to assess child health and wellbeing in more holistic ways. To this end, Meisels (1999) offers an alternative approach to conceptualising readiness, termed the 'interactionist approach', which takes into account dimensions of children's biological, social, and environmental factors in its assessment of their readiness. Further thinking and consensus around holistic measures of child health and wellbeing, taking us beyond the observation of easily measured qualities and behaviours, would support the literature's aim to move away from narrowly defined conceptualisations of readiness. This would also promote further discussion and engagement with the question of what should be the actual focus of these measurements: health, wellbeing, or well-becoming? And what indicators might be chosen to meaningfully explore them

2.5.2 Whose Voice is being Heard?

In the review's earlier discussion of instruments used to measure at least one facet of health and wellbeing, it was noted that the vast majority of instruments were completed by teachers, educators, or health practitioners. Out of the 87 instruments identified, only seven investigated family and or

parental experiences of their child's health and wellbeing, and only four were completed by the parents/families themselves. While not wanting to suggest that parent/family perspectives should be the sole measure, there is a significant amount of research, grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (1979), which has indicated the benefits of including the voices of parents and family members to a great extent in transition-to-school literature, especially if the parental/family involvement has been carefully planned, scaffolded, and supported.

Another concern that several papers raised was the absence of the child's voice within existing research on child health and wellbeing, a concern shared across many disciplines that work explicitly with children. Until the late 20th century, research paid little close attention to the experiences of children and childhood, and what attention was paid to children was based on a behaviouristic view of child development that relegated children to a primarily passive (Corsaro, 2005). These developmental approaches still dominate today, framing children as developing and incomplete versions of adults (Danby & Farrell, 2004) or as in their very nature not grown up and thus not yet something rather than something (Waksler, 1991). Despite a large and continually growing body of research that shows children to be competent actors and participants in research, and advocates for the inclusion of their own voices, in practice their voices, especially those of young children, remain most often 'silenced' and excluded from decisions which shape their lives (Pascal & Bertram, 2009, p. 253). This exclusion continues even though a number of disciplines that contribute to early years research have long-standing traditions of including the voice and experiences of marginalised people in the research process. Disciplines such as education, public health, sociology, and the New Sociology of Childhood (Corsaro, 2005; Prout, 2011) all advocate for Participatory Action Research methods, which require those being researched to be active participants within the process (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). Given that the need to question the nature of knowledge and the extent to which knowledge can represent the interests of the powerful and serve to reinforce their positions in society (Habermas, 1971 as cited by Baum et al., 2006, p. 854) has received widespread acceptance, there is a need to critically examine whose voice and interests are being heard and included in current conceptualisations of child health and wellbeing.

The results of this synthesis suggest that the lack of attention to the child's voice is indicative of broader disengagement with children's experiences. The majority of authors felt no need to acknowledge or justify their exclusion of children's experiences, or to draw on other related research that has incorporated understandings based on children's voices. This is underscored by many authors' reliance on methodologies that reflect the deficit view of children as 'incomplete adults'. For

example, Hymel et al. (2011), in their study of the convergent and discriminate validity of the EDI, claim that given young children's "limited cognitive and language skills and attention spans" (p.270). As such, it is not surprising that many researchers rely on adult rating as an efficient way to evaluate child attributes.

While it has been recognised for over two decades, in part as a result of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Zhang, 2015), that children can be positioned as active participants in social research, only two papers included and/or focused on the voice of the child in understanding and conceptualising child health and wellbeing (Dockett & Perry, 2004b; Stephenson, 2012). By contrast, the increasing value and importance given to children's voices in other areas of early years research is reflected by a recent large-scale study children's views of their community, involving 350 young children, their families, and educators in South Australia (Harris & Manatakis, 2013), and a previous study of early experiences of school by Briggs and Potter (2003), involving 100 five-to-six year olds. From this work, current foci for researchers working in the early years is no longer why the voice of the child is important, but how can it be captured (Stephenson, 2011)?

While there remains some debate about how best to authenticate and meaningfully incorporate children's voices into the research process (see Zhang, 2015), there is broad support for a number of research methods that allow researchers to 'listen' to children (Clark, 2001; Dockett, Einarsdottir, & Perry, 2011; Lipponen, Rajala, Hilppö, & Paananen, 2015). These include the Mosaic Approach (Clark, 2001), the Jigsaw Approach (Stephenson, 2011, 2012), the Children's Voices Framework (Harris &Manatakis, 2013), and visual and video observational methods (Clark, 2011; Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2015), which suggest future ways to capture children's understandings and experiences of their health and wellbeing and challenge the nature of current knowledge.

2.5.3 Integration: What do we Need to Know?

As reported in the findings, service integration continues to be the main focus of Australian early years policy and research, a finding that can be attributed to the Starting Strong (2001) and Starting Strong II (2006) OECD reports which highlighted the need, through government action, to move towards the integration of ECEC services (ECECS) (Cleveland & Colley, 2013; Kaga, Bennett, & Moss, 2010). These recommendations have informed policy internationally, with examples of service integration in early childhood education and care settings being programs such as Early Excellence and the Sure Start Centres in the UK, Head Start in the US, and Toronto First Duty in Canada (Cleveland & Colley, 2013; Corter et al., 2008; Kagan & Kauerz, 2007). In their review of the literature on the integration of early

years provision in Australia, Press et al. (2010) note that annual state and national government reports, and the websites of the relevant departments, clearly reflect the widely held belief that further service integration is important and beneficial for Australia. This has been demonstrated by attempts to increase integration for national and state programs (for example, via National Partnerships in the early years through the Council of Australian Governments), as well as efforts to integrate service delivery for children and families across state government departments (Press et al., 2010). Nevertheless, while there are a number of different models being used to improve service integration, this review has found there is a lack of empirical research to support that assumption that service integration, in and of itself, has beneficial impacts on child health and wellbeing, and this remains an area for further investigation itself, has beneficial impacts on child health and wellbeing, and this remains an area for further investigation.

2.6 Future Pathways

Current conceptualisations of young children's health and wellbeing and the role of service integration in the early years emerged from the findings of this review as two areas demanding further exploration and empirical research. The current literature conceptualises young children's health and wellbeing in ways that are problematic, and the emerging challenges are compounded by the use of deficit-based child development models that have led to the exclusion of children's voices from existing research. While there is certainly a place for adult-led measures and assessment of child health and wellbeing, this review argues that the reliance on these methods comes at the expense of child-centred understandings of children's health and wellbeing. This has resulted not only a lack of empirical research regarding child health and wellbeing, but also a lack of acknowledgement for and valuing of young children's ability and capacity to be active participants in childhood research, rather than passive recipients of service delivery.

In light of these findings, this review asserts that there are several key questions that could usefully guide future research. The first relates to whether health and wellbeing can be meaningfully positioned as outcomes within the transition to school. *Can health and wellbeing be usefully defined in ways that move beyond narrow conceptualisations of school readiness, and, if so, what would the appropriate indicators of health and wellbeing be, and from whose perspective?* Secondly, in order to redress the lack of empirical evidence concerning the need for and impacts of service integration, future research must ask *What are the impacts of service integration on young children and their families? Does it deliver the benefits assumed by policy makers, and, if so, what models make service integration most effective in supporting children's wellbeing during the transition to school?*

2.7 The role of the Systematic Review in relation to the thesis

The systematic review revealed two important gaps in the literature warranting further research: the exclusion of young children's voices in current conceptualisations and operationalisations of child wellbeing, and the lack of empirical evidence on the efficacy of service integration as a supportive mechanism for child wellbeing during the transition to school. These two gaps informed the development of a guiding research question and the four aims of this study. Due to the breadth and scope of the study, the study is separated into two distinct phases. The first phase of the study will address aims one and two, the exploration and development of children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing in relation to current child wellbeing indicators. The second phase of the study then builds from this work to address aims three and four through an investigations of children's wellbeing during the transition to school using child identified indicators and the impact of service integration on their transition.

As indicated by the research timeline at the beginning of this chapter, the systematic review was conducted in 2014, providing a rigorous analysis and critique of the state of the literature at that time. Due to the multi-stage, longitudinal nature of the research study, data analysis and the writing of the thesis took place in 2016 to 2019, after the conclusion and subsequent publication of the systematic review. To address concerns about potential gaps in more recent literature, data base searches were preformed after each data collection phase prior to analysis of data from both phases of the study. This was completed to ensure that analysis and reported findings engaged with any new and relevant literature in relation to the research question/aims and themes that emerged from the data. Recent and relevant literature in relation to the findings of the study are discussed in Chapters 5, 6 & 7 where appropriate.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter reports on a systematic review on the state of the literature relating to young children's health and wellbeing during the transition to school. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a rationale for the research study through evidencing the gaps in the literature that this study addresses. The following chapter describes the theoretical perspective that underlie the research process and how this perspective informed the study design.

CHAPTER 3 – Theoretical Perspective

3.0 Introduction

Building from the gaps in the literature identified in the systematic review, I present a brief history of the ways in which children and childhood have been conceptualised and explore current perspectives and discourses of children in relation to childhood research. Building from this work, I elucidate ways to reframe child wellbeing research through the identification and selection of a theoretical framework that recognises the need for young children to become active participants within the research process and co-creators of knowledge. Building from this work, I identify citizen-child theory as the theoretical perspective employed in this research study which draws from past and present understandings of children and childhood to present a conceptualisation of citizenship that frames children as capable and necessary co-creators of knowledge. I conclude this chapter by situating citizen-child theory in relation to the identified gaps in the literature the research question and aims.

3.01 Research Timeline
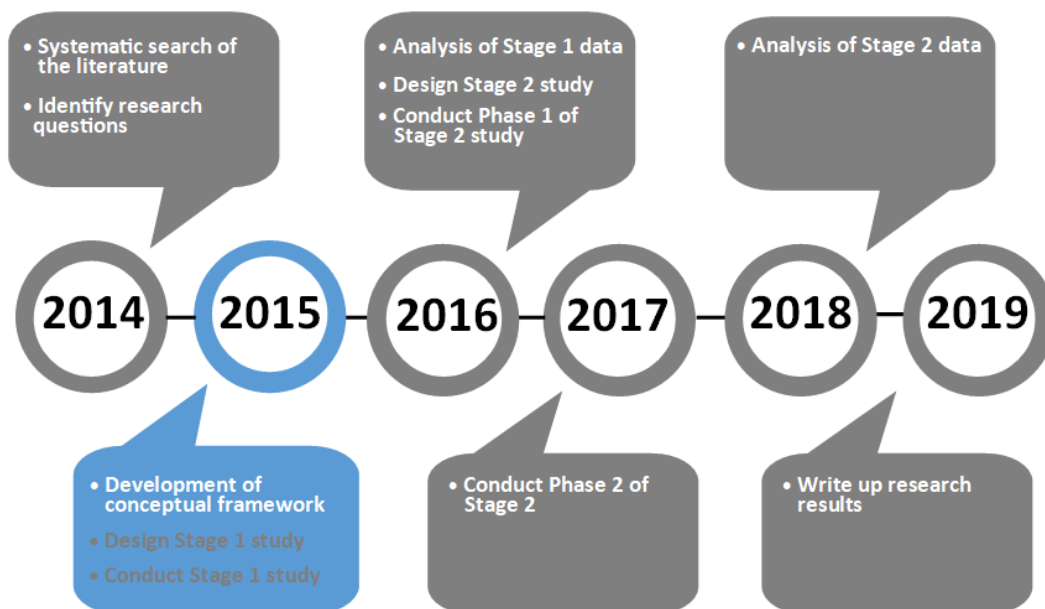
Figure 5. Research timeline - Chapter 3

3.1 Applying a Theoretical Perspective to Child Wellbeing Research

A key finding identified in the systematic review of child health and wellbeing during the transition to school reported in Chapter 2 was the overwhelmingly atheoretical nature of the literature. While acknowledging the atheoretical stance most of the included empirical studies and commentaries took, the discussion ensuing from the review also challenged the concept of research being atheoretical or lacking a theoretical base. Instead it was argued that all research is theoretically informed in its design and analysis, and that not stating the theoretical 'knowings' and assumptions that underlie the research process does not mean that they are not there – rather it means that they are to be taken as truths and left unquestioned (Broom and Willis, 2007). In the case of childhood research, the taken for granted truths that under scored the majority of studies included in the systematic review are that young children are fundamentally incapable of participating in research, or that it is too difficult to engage young children in the research process due to their status as children. This taken for granted assumption also implies and that is reasonable and acceptable for adults (parents, educators, carers) to speak on behalf of children. While rarely explicitly stated, research on children that does not involve children as active participants comes from a theoretical stance that knowledge is acquired through scientific discovery, and that young children are not capable of this process as they are not yet fully developed (Esser, Baader, Betz & Hungerland, 2016). Children being viewed as 'incomplete adults' (Danby & Farrell, 2004) and unnecessary co-contributors to knowledge continues to be a pervasive issues in positivist childhood research, especially in regards to health and wellbeing where outcomes and measurement are often at the fore. However, this view of children has been, and continues to be challenged in several disciplines, even for young children.

3.2 Perspectives on Children & Childhood – Past and Present

This chapter seeks to explore and problematize past and present conceptualisations of children and childhood. It should be explicitly stated that these perspectives and understandings are constrained by and embedded within what Cannella (2002) refers to as a Euro-American dominant historical knowledge base. As argued by Cannella (2002), knowledge that has contributed to, and continues to form understandings of children and childhood is informed by a largely patriarchal, middle class, Euro-American, educated, and white perspective. This perspective grounds widely held current beliefs about children, the decisions we feel are necessary to make for them, and what is 'known' and left

unquestioned about them (Canella, 2000). Leaving these questions 'unasked' is what Mayall (2002) refers to as the separation of childhood research from politics. She argues that this artificial separation is completed in the name of science and children's development and needs. However, as childhood is contextually bound within the political, economic, cultural, and social contexts at work within a given society or grouping of similar societies, this separation is indeed artificial and requires critical questioning to untangle. Past and present perspectives on childhood within western contexts need to be explored and problematized as a precursor to this study's work in redressing current (arguably) limiting conceptualisations of children and children's wellbeing.

Prior to discussing current conceptualisations of children and childhood, however, a useful starting point to the discussion is to begin at the point where childhood was recognised as a distinct stage of life, and how this distinction has shaped current understandings of childhood. Questions relating to this distinction and the changing understandings of childhood throughout medieval to modern period have been a cause of significant debate in the 20th and into the 21st century (Corsaro, 2011). Until more recently, as argued by Corsaro (2011), history has paid little attention to children and childhood, and what attention was paid to them stemmed from behaviouristic views of child development that relegated children to a "primarily passive role" (2011 p. 27). This is largely responsible for creating discourses of children as pre-beings, or becomings that develop steadily along defined trajectories until they reach adulthood. Within these discourses, developmentalism, or the idea that children progress systematically through stages towards adult capacities is palpable. Corsaro (2011), argues that within this deterministic view of the child and child development, children are depicted as 'consumers' of culture established by adults, where concern lies in the end point of development, or the child's movement from immaturity to adult competence. Developmentalism, which concerns itself with what children become, defines children's development solely as the "child's private internalisation of adult skills and knowledge" (Corsaro, 2011 p.18). Theories of development and developmental approaches to understanding children and childhood have dominated discourses and practices in research, parenting, and education for centuries (Burrows & Wright, 2001). Theories of development have been employed to describe and explain every minutia of children's lives, from "readiness for toilet-training to capacity for moral judgement" (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1992 p.1). Developmental approaches to understanding children and childhood still dominate thinking, practice, and research today, demonstrated in chapter two, evidencing that the current state of the literature continues to frame children as becomings, and a developing incomplete version of adults (Danby & Farrell, 2004). These discourses construct children as progressing through fixed stages of change, as revealed through scientific discovery, to determine what is best for them (Burman,

2007). In this way, developmental discourses attempt to turn the breadth of children, childhood, and the myriad of developmental pathways and progressions they may take into a scientific story of childhood that is testable and within limits (Walkerdine, 1993).

Substantives challenges to the behaviourist and developmental understandings of children and childhood were first witnessed in the 1980s and 1990s, coinciding with substantive shifts in the character of social life in what Prout (2011) calls, a crisis of social theory. Prout (2011) argues that in this era of 'intensified social change' (i.e. 'post-fordism', 'late modernity', 'post-modernity', 'risk society' etc.), the increased 'disordering' of society compelled the search for new means of analysis to undertake the task of understanding contemporary life. Perceptions of risk and modern society's quest for order, security and new social norms post industrial revolution is what Beck (1989, 1992) and Giddens (1991) have termed risk society. These discourses of risk and the unknown permeate society and, as demonstrated by substantive research, leads to fear and the demand to mitigate risk through social measures of control under the guise of transparency (Kean 2005; Kline, Stewart, and Murphy 2006; Robinson 2005, 2008; Smeyers 2010) which position children as perennially at risk (Lupton, 1999). Constructions and understandings of children and childhood have always been influenced by the social, economic, and political landscapes that shape adult lives (Qvortrup, 1991). However, due to the pervasive discourses of developmentalism that position childhood as a time of risk, heightened fear about risks to and for children in modern day society (both real and perceived) have often disproportionately impacted on the lives of children who are viewed as needing protection and separation from the adult world.

In children's lives, these discourses of risk and protection have very real impacts on the spaces and places children spend their time, from expectations in the home, to frameworks, regulatory bodies, and child protection practice in early childhood education and care, school, health provisions (Jovanovic & Fane, 2016). As part of these continued shifts in how society perceives children and their role in the social world, the landscape of childhood research has seen significant change over the past several decades. New perspectives and ways of conceptualising children and childhood have come to the fore from a number of disciplines including children's rights discourses (Clark, 2005), early childhood education and care (Cannella, 2002) and the new sociology of childhood (Corsaro, 2011).

3.3 Children's Rights Discourses

Children's rights discourses have stemmed from the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) established in 1989 (Clark, 2005). Among a host of civil, political, economic, social,

health and cultural rights for children which bind the 194 signatory nations by international law, the UNCRC established the right for children to have a voice in matters that affect them. This right has spurred many whose work involves children or children's research to involve children's opinions and perspectives within the formation of policy and practice. However, despite the increased interest in redressing the exclusion of children's voices in matters that affect them, as noted by Pascal & Bertram (2009), children's voices, in practice, remain "silenced and excluded from decisions which shape their lives" (p.253). Pascal and Bertram (2009) additionally highlight that this is particularly true for young children. To counteract the 'silencing' of children in knowledge about childhood, the concept of child voice, or listening to children, has become an increasing area of focus across child welfare and social research arenas (Komulainen, 2007).

Two fundamental beliefs about children form the notion of child voice and its place in research and knowledge-making about childhood (Thomson, 2009). These two beliefs are children's capacity to speak, and their right to do so. These fundamental beliefs are enshrined in the UNCRC under articles 12 and 13. Article 12, which is additionally understood as one of the four guiding principles of the UNCRC, speaks explicitly to children's capacity to form their own views, express them freely, and have them carry weight in matters affecting them (United Nations, 1989). Cook and Hess (2007) assert that article 12 is an essential consideration for childhood researchers, as it recognizes children's perspectives as distinct from those of adults. This distinction also affirms that children are innately imbued with the capacity to share their knowledge and understandings about childhood, by virtue of being children.

A distinct feature of a rights-based approach to child research is the equal commitment to both process and outcomes (UNICEF, 2007). This means that positioning children as partners in the research process who can provide valuable and necessary insight to the research question(s) is as important as the outcomes of the research. Equal weighting and commitment to both the process and outcomes in a rights-based approach proffers two essential considerations for participatory child research. The first is the insistence that the processes themselves should respect and fulfil human rights (Sengupta, 2000). This means that until children have been given the chance to participate and have their rights upheld, children's voices are not being heard. The second is that a rights-based approach can allow for redefinition of the nature of a problem or question under investigation from the view of the participants (Uvin, 2007). Allowing opportunities for children themselves to contribute to the way that aspects of childhood is defined and problematised is an essential part of this process. As such, childhood, from a rights-based approach, cannot be understood without the inclusion of children's

voices and experiences, and that the arbitrary silencing of children is a fundamental attack on children's rights.

3.4 Early Childhood Education and Care

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) has long recognised that the concept of childhood has and continues to change over time, and that these changes are generally interpreted as positive, progressively more complete, and adding to our understanding of children and childhood (Cannella, 2002). In addition to ECEC's mandate of educating and supporting the learning of children, ECEC also incorporates the education and journey of adults as they learn about young children. This is a central tenet of ECEC, that supports educators to *know* the best route to learning through the exploration and engagement with children's learning (italics in original text) (Farquhar & White, 2014). Within the ECEC discipline, there is a strong tradition of working against the 'institutionalisation' of children's learning using child-centred rather than teacher directed approaches (Wood, 2014), and strength-based rather than deficit approaches to children's learning and development. ECEC discourses and guiding frameworks regularly position themselves as rejecting the traditional developmental perspectives which have dominated the wider education sector. Yet, as argued by Cannella (2002), we don't have to look far to see how the dominance of developmental and behavioural views of children have and continue to shape the ECEC sector as well. This is especially true within the increased regulatory scrutiny of the ECEC sector (Jovanovic & Fane, 2016), and increased focus on attainment of education outcomes (Farquhar & White, 2013).

Indeed it is difficult, and arguably problematic, to move away from any conversation of the impact of child development in relation to childhood given the considerable and constituent flux of children's interests, abilities, and opportunities throughout their experiences of childhood. Despite the critique of developmental approaches in early childhood education, their use in relation to pedagogy and practice has likely increased possibilities for young children and contributed to more fulfilling and enjoyable childhoods (Cannella, 2002). However, a reliance on theories of developmentalism at the exclusion of critique of the impacts of developmentalism to understandings of childhood continues to be a contentious issue in the discipline of ECEC.

3.5 The New Sociology of Childhood

A third discipline with substantive interest in past and present understandings and conceptualisations of childhood is sociology. A branch of sociology, referred to as the new sociology of childhood, began as a reaction to the almost complete absence of studies on children in mainstream sociology (Ambert,

1986 as cited in Corsaro, 2011). The new sociology of childhood began in the late 21st century (post 1980) building on four existing theoretical perspectives: interactionist sociology, structural sociology, feminist discourses, and social constructionism (Prout, 2011). Prout (2011) argues that in redressing the lack of space provided to childhood in modernist social theory, the new sociology of childhood was presented with a double task: to create space for childhood within sociological discourses and confront the "complexity and ambiguity of childhood as a contemporary and destabilized phenomenon" (p.6).

In attempting these two tasks, Prout (2011) posits that the new sociology of childhood has largely limited itself to the first, and that doing so "clear[ed] a space for childhood within modernist sociology largely *on its own terms"* (italics in original text) (p.6). This emphasis on creating space for childhood studies at the expense of confronting 'complexity and ambiguity of childhood', however, has resulted in a number of unresolved dichotomies within the literature such as:

- children as agents versus childhood as social structure,

- childhood as social construct versus childhood as natural, and

- childhood as being versus childhood as becoming (Prout, 2011).

To redress these challenges, Prout (2011) has reconsidered the new sociology of childhood as 'a way forward' in the conceptualisation of children and childhood, exploring key concepts he has deemed essential to reconceptualising childhood. One of these concepts is the concept of symmetry which questions the distinction between child and adult. The concept of symmetry does not argue that there are differences between children and adults, however, the arbitrary separation of the two is, argued by Prout (2011), problematic as

> "different versions of child or adult, including the very distinction between them, emerge from the complex interplay, networking and orchestration of different natural, discursive, collective and hybrid materials" (p.9).

Questioning the arbitrary distinction between child and adult in relation to childhood research highlights several key considerations. One of which is that the symmetrical treatment of children in research which argues that "any differences between carrying out research with children or with adults should be allowed to arise from this starting point, according to the concrete situation of children, rather than being assumed in advance" (Christensen & Prout, 2002 p.482). Through the concept of symmetry, childhood can be reframed through the understanding that though children are not "active in the ways in which adults are active" (James & Prout, 1990 p.4), they are still active

citizens. As such, the concept of symmetry is not a basis for assuming that children are less than competent in contributing to our knowledge of the world (Oakley, 1994). The concept of symmetry instead suggests that a strength-based approach to research and understandings with and of children, rather than the deficit approaches that characterises the current child wellbeing research landscape, is a means for allowing any differences in conducting research with young children to emerge during the process, rather than working from pre-conceived ideas of what they can or cannot contribute.

Another key concept identified by Prout (2011) is the concept of relationality, which works against the current overarching and persistent construct of 'generational order' or generational relations' which permeate childhood discourses. Such discourses view children as marginalised in an adult-centred society, who experience unequal power relations which results in a lack of control of their lives through limitations imposed by adults (Punch, 2002). Alanen (2001), has sought to re-examine this stance and establish a generational order which instead focuses on the pattern of the relationship system between adults and children. This allows for the detection of the "invisible relations through which children are firmly embedded in the structured sets of social relations that are larger than their very immediate local relations, potentially extending as far as the global system" (Alanen, 2001 p.142). Prout (2011), however, calls for the need to continue question the arbitrary separation of children from adults in current conceptualisations of generational ordering through keeping the concept of generational order open-ended, where multiple 'generational ordering' are possible. Moving form generational ordering to relationality may equip us with ability to see how "different versions of child or adult emerge from the complex interplay, networking and orchestration of different natural, discursive, collective and hybrid materials" (Prout, 2011 p.12).

3.6 Impacts of Childhood Discourses on Child Wellbeing

This brief foray into the history of children and childhood from multidisciplinary perspectives elucidates the malleability and socially contextualised nature of the construction of a child and childhood. Modern, developmental understandings of have constructed childhood as a timeless category, "waiting in the wings of history to be discovered" (Jordanova, 1989 p.10) through the use of reason and intellectualism leading to a progressively more complete understanding of children (Cannella, 2002). However, constructivist and critical theorists, alongside child's rights, ECEC discourses and the New Sociology of Childhood have continued to challenge this construction. Despite the challenges to the ways in which current developmental and positivist views construct childhood (as evidence by the previous chapter's review of the literature on children's health and wellbeing) the majority of the researched uncovered in the systematic review positioned the child as a subject to be

tested and examined from adultist perspectives so that experiences and treatment can be prescribed and provided for them. The positioning of current knowledge about children and childhood as completer and more accurate than ever before is potentially problematic in that it eschews the possibility that current social constructions may serve to limit and control the lives of children rather than support their wellbeing and well-becoming.

3.7 Challenges to Including Young Children's Voices in Child Wellbeing

As discussed in relation to the findings of the systematic review in chapter 2, one of the greatest hurdles to redressing the lack of young children's voices within current conceptualisations of child wellbeing is that young children's experiences and understandings are frequently viewed as unnecessary. Until recently, there has been a general assumption in the child wellbeing literature "that children's social engagement is irrelevant, or that they lack agency" (Fattore et al. 2007, p. 9), and therefore could not be, or did not need to be included in the discussion of their own wellbeing. This epistemological belief that adults can speak as proxies for children is often justified through rhetoric such as children's experiences and understandings are difficult to obtain via standard wellbeing research methods/instruments, or unimportant due to a deficit view of children's cognitive capacity. These very real barriers continue to exclude children's active and meaningful participation within childhood research under the guise of adult know best. In response to these perceived barriers, Biggeri, Ballet & Comin (2011), argue that when we consider children, especially young children, it is essential to understand that they have qualitatively difference capabilities from adults, and that children do require assistance and support from adults on a daily basis. This, however, does not exclude them from participating in research and matters that affect them. Rather, it demonstrates that children and their experiences are different to those of adults and are therefore not simply a 'small scale model' of an adult (White, 2002). This fundamentally dictates that adults cannot speak for children, only about children, which is something different entirely. White (2002), asserts that adults speaking for children remains a significant tension in the current field of childhood studies where even the best intentioned (outsider) adults determining what is best for (insider) children is an assumption of "superior understanding on the part of the self-styled benefactors" (p. 1101).

Within these tensions, even for a researcher who acknowledges, and values children's voices and wants to conduct research *with* children rather than research *on* children, the 'how to' remains far from straightforward and continues to pose theoretical and methodological challenges for researchers (Clark, 2011; Fraser, 2004; Punch, 2002). MacDougall and Darbyshire (2016) assert that qualitative researchers are indeed well-placed to initiate and drive change within childhood research.

Increasingly, within health-based research, participatory research is understood as a research paradigm, rather than a specific research method (International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research (ICPHR), 2013). When seen as a research method, participatory research means that "people are involved in health research in specific ways in order to improve the quality of the research…[rather than] the set of underlying assumptions about the world [and] how it should be studied" (ICPHR, 2013, p.5-6). According to Oetzel, Wallerstein, Duran, Sanchez-Youngman, and Nguyen et al. (2018), a participatory orientation to health research is a critical approach to improving health and health equity for vulnerable populations. An approach that may also strengthen relationships between health researchers and specific populations and increase decision makers' and service providers' ability to identify and procure resources, improve policies, and enhance professional practice (Jagosh, Macaulay, Pluye, Salsberg, Bush et al., 2012). The development of including children and youth in participatory health research, as argued by Panter-Brick (2002), "hinged upon the realization that children have social agency and competency and are capable of making informed decisions about their lives and expressing views and aspirations that may differ from the views held by adults" (p. 156). This realization positions children as the knowers and framers of knowledge within a participatory research design, rather than objects of scrutiny, and may offer new and critical approaches to increasing our knowledge of child wellbeing and how best to support children and families. However, of equal importance is acceptance of the belief that children are experts in their own experiences and understandings, who know things about childhood and children's social worlds because adults can never be, understand, or experience like children again (Fine and Sandström 1988). A participatory research approach can "produce forms of knowledge and action which make a unique and important contribution to health" (ICPHR, 2013), different to those of non-participatory approaches. While different is not 'better', more types of knowledge from broader segments of society offer richer contributions to current knowledge.

A participatory research paradigm can guide research with young children and set the tone for working through theoretical and methodological challenges to ensure that children are active participants in the research process in elements such as study design and data collection, through to analysis and presentation of the data (Wilkinson & Wilkinson, 2017). Generally, in participatory research with children, children not only assumes an active role throughout the research process, they also ideally act on issues and problems that arise (Pain & Francis, 2003). It is for this reason, that participatory research gives children and young people greater opportunities to influence decisions that impact upon them and their lives (Grasser, Shunko, Vogl, 2016; Wilkinson & Wilkinson, 2017; Crivello, Camfield & Woodhead, 2009). However, how this can or should be done, specifically with young, pre-

literate children, poses many difficult questions for a researcher, with few easy answers. From reviewing the literature surrounding ethical and participatory research with children, it became clear that to undertake emancipatory and meaningful research with young children a number of key questions must be considered by the researcher, particularly surrounding methodology (Lipponen, Rajala, Hilppö, & Paananen, 2016; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Fraser, 2004; Christensen, & Prout, (2002). Questions such as:

- What aspects of the research process are children included in (i.e., design, data collection, analysis)?
- Are children positioned as active or passive participants in the research process?
- Are children's voices weighted equally with adult voices in the research process?
- Are children speaking for themselves, or are they being spoken for?
- Will the researcher be able to interpret children's voices with credibility and veracity?
- Does the researcher have the necessary background knowledge and experience to work with children in a child-centered research design?

Due to the challenges of engaging three-to-five-year old children in the full research process (specifically in elements such as study design, analysis, presentation of the data and action on the issues arise) the 'pockets of co-production' model for engaging children and young people, developed by Frank (2011), was used. Frank (2011) asserts that when it is not possible to include children and young people in the design and writing of proposals and analysis and dissemination of research findings, an alternative is to create 'pockets' of participation where participants can take ownership during the research process. Given that young children have been excluded from wellbeing research due to their preliterate status, findings pockets for their meaningful inclusion and participation in the research process is an important start to including their voices, even if it falls short of full participatory research. However, Frank (2011) also argues that total participation in participatory research, from the conceptualisation of research to action on the findings is likely a false goal for any research (not just research with children), given the way funding, ethics, and other research processes are currently constructed. As such, using a 'pockets of participation' approach which supports meaningful participation from groups (such as young children) that would otherwise be excluded from participating in a fully participatory research method design is a valid method for conducting research with children and young people.

Even with considered thought as to where and now children can be meaningfully engaged in the research process, designing a research study that allows space for children to be co-creators of

knowledge is not without significant challenges in regard to the selection of research methods. Researchers working in childhood research need to be careful to select methods which are "in tune with children's ways of seeing and relating to their world" (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998, p. 337). Punch (2002), cautions against the concept of selecting 'child friendly' methods, as their use may run contrary to the argument that children are competent social actors and participants in research. Punch (2002) explores the tension between conducting research with children without thought to the appropriateness of the method and, in contrast, choosing 'child-friendly' methods assuming they are appropriate for research. She argues that research with children can too easily fall into either extreme, the epistemological stance of considering children as virtually indistinguishable from adults or to perceive children as wholly separate from adults. Punch (2002) argues that these stances are equally problematic and instead identifies a middle ground, or third way between the two extremes. This third way is the use of innovative or adapted research techniques, most often employing visual oriented methods such as drawings, photos, mapping/webbing, and video (Clark, 2010; Einarsdottir, 2014), techniques which recognise that children are neither completely separate from adults, nor the same. Lipponen et al. (2016) also discuss these tensions and underscores the need to critically examine innovative and adaptive methods beyond simply their "child-friendliness".

Innovative and adapted research methods for use with children in childhood research should be critically examined to explore whether they may be enabling or limiting for children. While there is now significant scholarship in the area of visual methods for co-constructing research with children and how visual methods may work to minimize adults "voicing over children's perspectives and experiences" (Luttrell, 2010), visual methods, like any research methods, are not neutral tools. However, they can reasonably be assumed useful for research purposes because children are familiar with them or be used because they are new and exciting such as digital and social media (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2016). Conducting meaningful, responsible, and ethical wellbeing research *with* children requires making very deliberate choices both in the guiding theoretical perspective informing the research process, and the methodology employed. These choices directly impact the positioning of children within the study, and the space created for them as active participants in the process. Giving careful thought to these choices helps to work through tensions over the development and abilities of the child (such as is the child pre-literate? Literate? Can the task they have been given be completed independently? Or is support needed?). They also support the belief that children are experts in their own experiences through the act of being children, and as such are innately capable in engaging in the research process as experts in their own right.

The choice to clearly outline a theoretical perspective in a research study on young children's wellbeing in a largely atheoretical research area is deliberate one. This choice was made not to simply add some theoretical fodder to an atheoretical field, but rather to challenge the idea that research with children can be atheoretical. Critically examining the overwhelming positivist standpoint of child wellbeing literature (as evidence by the systematic review) which largely did not identify or justify the theoretical perspective employed within the research is telling, and indeed indicates that most researchers in this field have chosen a theoretical framework, one where developmentalism makes the exclusion of young children from research normalized.

In this thesis, I make the assertion that young children are capable and necessary partners in research about their wellbeing explicitly. This assertion situates me as the researchers as someone who is on a reflexive journey, working through questions of how knowledge can be co-constructed within social structures and social environments that frequently create power imbalances between adults and children. It also requires my engagement with challenges surrounding methodological tools which largely privilege the ways in which adults engage and experience the world. The following section outlines the deliberate choices I have made in conceptualizing, conducting, analyzing, and reporting research with young children, and the way in which my belief in children's innate capacity to participate in the social world and matters that affect them was the driving force in completing this research.

3.8 A Way Forward – a Theoretical Approach for Research *with* Children building from Citizen-child Theory

So far, this chapter has sought to explore historical perspectives of children and childhood and how these perspectives have shaped current understandings, practices, and discourses of childhood and childhood research. The purpose of this work has been to situate the research study within diverse theoretical and discipline specific understandings of childhood, and how these differing understandings and conceptualisations of children and childhood pose a challenge in selecting a theoretical framework that upholds an interdisciplinary view of 'a child' as capable and necessary co-creators of knowledge and active participants within the research process.

To respond to this challenge, I employ a 'citizen-child' theoretical approach to conducting this research study, an approach that recognises children's right and capacity to contribute to knowledge and decisions that affect their lives (Morrow, 2002). Despite the different understandings and conceptualisations of children between health and education sectors, in Australia, citizenship is a

concept central to educational policy and curriculum, health policy, empowerment agendas within public health, and social policy; even though these policies and agendas rarely focus on citizenship in relation to young children (see for example Ailwood, Brownlee, Johansson, Cobb-Moore, Walker, et al., 2011; Wearing, 2011; Nakata, 2015; Nutbeam 2000). Given that the concept and language of citizenship is present within the disciplines of health, education, and social policy, and is embedded within current health, educational, and policy outcomes, citizen-child theory offers a way forward within interdisciplinary wellbeing research by drawing on shared understandings of 'a child' and childhood to argue for and delineate an understanding of children that supports their engagement within childhood research.

Citizen-child theory recognises and seeks to problematise and work to reduce power relationships between child and the researcher, as well as address power dynamics between the child and wider social structures and research traditions (Gibbs, Mutch, O'Connor, & MacDougall, 2013; MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2016). In engaging with a citizen-child theoretical perspective, a key consideration is in defining the term citizen and how this understanding impacts the conceptualisation of a citizen-child. Westheimer and Kahne (2004), identify and discuss three distinct conceptions of a citizen. The first is the personally responsible citizen, a citizen who contributes to society, obeys laws, pays taxes, and helps others when needed. The second is a participatory citizen, a citizen who actively participates in civic affairs and social life at all levels. To differentiate the two, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) use the example of a personally responsible citizen donating food to a food drive, while the participatory citizen is the one who initiated and ran the food drive. The third is the justice-oriented citizen, one who critically assess social, political, and economic structures, explores collective strategies to promote change, and when possible, identify and address the root causes of problems. While there continues to be debate over which model of citizenship a democratic society should aspire to, instrumental writers and theorists in education such as John Dewey and Paolo Freire have emphasized the importance of social critique and structural change as a key component of citizenship (Shyman, 2011). Right's based and participatory discourses also highlight the need for children to be actively involved in decision-making in relation to matters that affect them (Jans, 2004). As an alternative perspective on citizenship van der Venn (2001, as cited in Jans, 2004), suggests that a life-world perspective of citizenship may be the most useful model in linking children with the concept of citizenship in a meaningful way. Using a life-world perspective, citizenship becomes a learning process rather than a predetermined learning outcome (Stroobants et al., 2001). This perspective follows current trends in educational theory and practice that uphold the value of life long and everyday learning across the life course rather than institutionalised outcome focused education

(Vandenabeele &Wildemeersch, 1997). This view of education and learning blurs the distinction between adults and children or adult citizens and children citizens who can then become peers in constructing and giving meaning to social participation and citizenship (Jans, 2004).

The concept of citizenship as it applies to children can be defined and understood is many ways. However, as evidenced in the above discussion, concepts in relation to participation, advocacy, learning, and critique are core tenets. From these core tenets, a citizen-child theory takes a child-centred approach in upholding the rights of children to exercise agency in their own lives and affords children opportunities to become participatory citizens and consider their role as social justice advocates through participation in research (Gibbs et al. 2013). In this way, childhood research can offer children active and meaningful participation in matters that affect their lives, and opportunities to exercise their rights as citizens and deepen their engagement and citizenship in the social world.

3.9 Chapter Summary

Building from a citizen-child theoretical approach, I strived to navigate between interdisciplinary understandings and discourses of 'a child' and childhood and blur the distinction between adult researcher and child participant through the understanding that both are on a journey of learning and discovery. Recognizing the power imbalance between researcher and child (as well as power imbalances between adults and between children themselves) is essential in challenging this distinction and upholding a view of citizenship that leaves space for all children to be co-constructors of knowledge. In doing so I, the researcher, am required to think through my views and understanding of children and how their abilities, experiences, and interests can inform current understandings of child wellbeing. Additionally, I also consider how methodological and procedural choices in the design of the study can serve to elicit or silence children's voices and participation. These questions, stemming from the use of a citizen-child theoretical framework, formed the basis for a search for a methods that would support a rights-based, child-centred, participatory research study with young children. As child-centred participatory wellbeing research from a social indicators perspective had not been conducted with young children before, the study design necessitated innovation in regard to methodological choices. Chapter 4 explores the methodological challenges encountered in designing this research study, and how an innovative visual research method was trialled and developed in a multi-stage study design to inform the study's longitudinal stage and subsequent data collection cycles.

CHAPTER 4 - Methods

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods I used to conduct a multi-stage research study exploring how young children understand and experience wellbeing during the transition to school. As outlined in Chapter 1, this research was conducted in two distinct stages. Stage 1[5] trialled a new method for conducting rights-based, participatory wellbeing research with young children. Stage 2 was a longitudinal study which investigated child-identified aspects of wellbeing (uncovered in Stage 1) across the transition to formal schooling.

4.0.1 Research Timeline
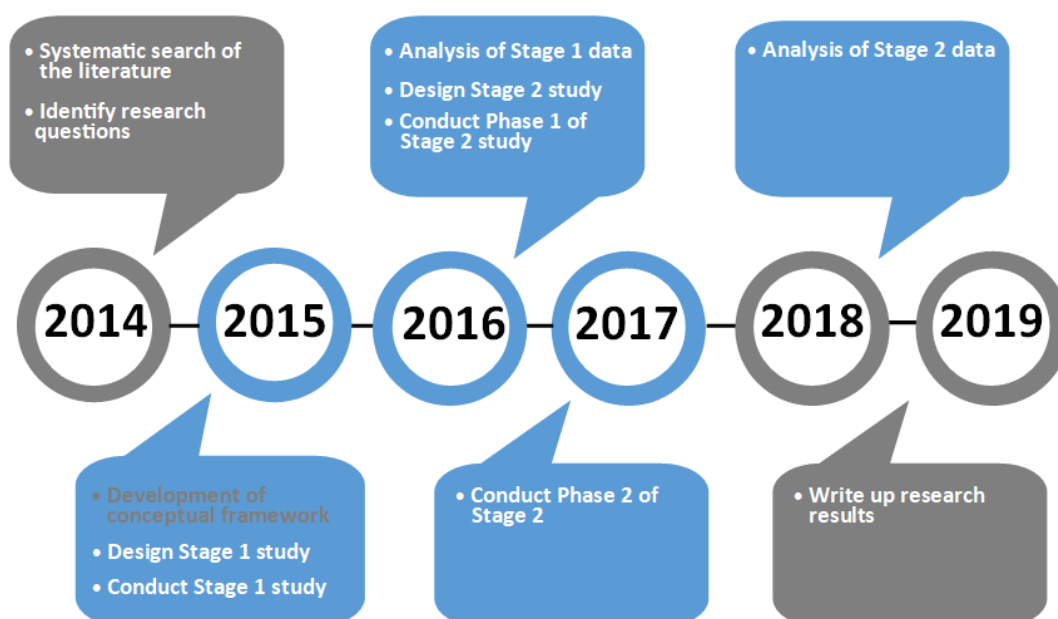
Figure 6. Research timeline – Chapter 4

4.0.2 The Research Process: A Conceptual Diagram

A conceptual diagram is offered for this chapter to signpost the sequencing of the research study design. The study contained two distinct stages, both requiring their own unique protocols and analysis procedures. The diagram below elucidates the multi-stage design of the study and demonstrates the relationship between the two stages of the study.
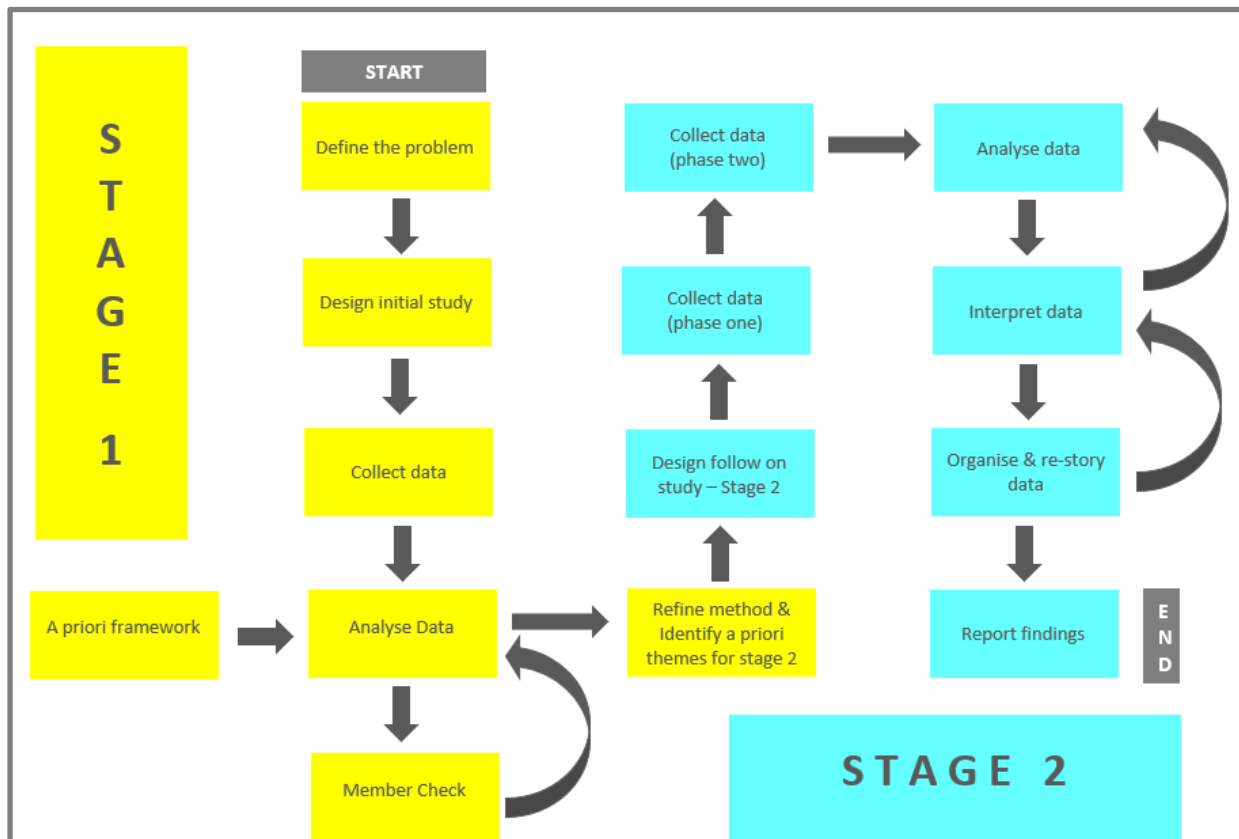
Figure 7. Conceptual diagram of the research process

4.1 Research Methodology – An Overview

To redress the exclusion of young children's voices in current conceptualisations and operationalisations of child wellbeing, this study is guided by citizen-child theoretical perspective to investigate how young children understand and experience wellbeing. Developing child informed indicators of wellbeing derived from young children's experiences and understandings was the second aim of this study. However, it is important to highlight that the types of indicators that I sought to identify through the co-construction of knowledge *with* young children differ from the adult derived quantitative indicators which have been developed for the measurement and assessment of children's

wellbeing. Quantitative adult derived wellbeing indicators have been essential in developing population based assessments that can create "targets (to be aimed for) or base-lines (to be moved on from" (Scerri, Kames, Humphrey & Mulligan, 2009, p. 2) and to inform policy and practice alike. Yet, some phenomena, such as the wellbeing, can also benefit from qualitative data derived from narratives and group discussions to develop, refine, and select indicators (Camfield, 2016). Camfield (2016), argues that quantifying qualitative data as a way to inform wellbeing measures is a way of 'making sense' of the information and ideas uncovered using qualitative methods, allowing it to become 'externally visible' and more translatable for use as policy objective. As such, the inclusion and visibility of qualitative data in wellbeing research can "potentially extend the capacity of quantitative measures to capture experienced changes" (Camfield, 2016, p. 48) of a population's wellbeing.

Stage 1 of the study was designed to trial the creation of an innovative visual research method and uncover children's experiences and understandings of wellbeing in relation to adult derived wellbeing indicators. Analysis of the Stage 1 data was then used to inform the design of Stage 2, a longitudinal qualitative research (LLQR) study. The findings from Stage 1 informed the Stage 2 study in two key ways. The first was through the identification of child-identified indicators of wellbeing, delineated through analysis of children's accounts of wellbeing in Stage 1. The second was in the development and use of the research method trialled in Stage 1, identified (through analysis of Stage 1 data) as a valuable tool for conducting participatory child-centred research with young children. The use of a multi-stage study to redress the current lack of knowledge of young children's accounts of their own wellbeing was a key element of designing a rights-based, child-centred participatory research study in which children were partners, rather than subjects in the research process. Without the knowledge uncovered in Stage 1 about how children understood and experienced wellbeing, Stage 2 would have potentially sought to answer a question or uncover information that was not of key importance to children's experiences of wellbeing, negating the purpose of research from a citizen-child theoretical perspective.

As young children in this age group are generally pre-literate, a data collection method that did not rely or privilege the written word, such as a survey, questionnaire, or structured interview with pre-determined questions, was required. In response to this methodological challenge, I designed and trialled emoji as an innovative research method with young children. Analysis of the findings of Stage 1 validated its use as powerful research tool in wellbeing research with children (Fane, MacDougall, Jovanovic, & Redmond, 2016), and supported the use of emoji as a valuable method for conducting research with young children in Stage 2. The longitudinal phase of the study adapted the emoji for use

in investigating the novel child-identified aspects of wellbeing uncovered in analysis of Stage 1 data. The same emoji protocol was used in both phases of Stage 2, with phase one taking place during children's final semester of pre-school, and phase two in the second semester of their first year of school. Detailed accounts of the method, study design, sampling procedure, participants, and analysis of both research stages are described below.

4.1.1 Methods

In this research study I piloted the use of emoji as a visual research method for conducting rights based, child-centred participatory wellbeing research with young children. The use of emoji in this study was adapted from a research project with school aged children by researchers at the Jack Brockhoff Child Health and Wellbeing Research Program in Victoria, Australia (2017). In this research study, a photo ordering method was used to engage children in discussion and conversation about children's playspaces. Seventeen photos printed on A4 paper were chosen for this research project, consisting of objects and environments children might engage with during play, and a selection of emoji faces. The findings concluded that the emoji photos significantly changed the dynamic of the research focus group, from children engaging one on one with the researcher to children generating animated discussion and debate amongst themselves. These finding suggest that emoji could be a powerful tool for creating a research climate with children in which knowledge is co-constructed. Schwandt (1997) asserts that authentic research requires interviews to become a tool for co-construction, so that the meanings of questions and responses are "contextually grounded and jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent[s]" (pg. 79). The use of emoji supported the process of co-constructing knowledge during child focus groups and interviews by moving from a process of children simply responding to the researcher's questions, to children engaging in dialogue with the researcher and peers about what they, the co-researchers, are thinking about or interested in.

Building on these findings, I decided to pilot the use of emoji as the sole data collection tool by adapting it for use with young children. The trialling of emoji as a visual research method served two purposes. The first to explore the capacity of emoji to support child-centred participatory research with young children and its potential contribution to the suite of visual research tools currently in use in childhood research. The second was to explore young children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing.

4.1.2 Rational for Method

Young children have been largely excluded from research due to their positioning as 'pre-literate' via traditional definitions of literacy, which largely restrict its conceptualization to the ability to read and write (Irwin, Moore, Tornatore, & Fowler, 2012; Justice, Skibbe & Canning, 2005). As a result, there is currently considerable debate amongst childhood researchers surrounding methodological considerations which move from framing young children as pre-literate 'becomings' with limited capacity to participate, to 'beings' who through being children, are experts of their own lived experiences (Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Pyle & Danniels, 2015). Due to the potential of visual research methods to move beyond a reliance on reading and writing within the research process, visual methods (such as drawing, photographs, video observations, modeling clay, puppets, and manipulatives) have become widely used in child-centred research with young children (Clark, 2011; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Lomax, 2012).

This research recognises that is important to test the assumption that visual methods are a natural or best method for engaging young children within the research process (Christensen & James, 2008; Punch, 2002), even though the highly participatory and practical nature of visual methods seems to support their use with young children in child-centred research designs (Cook & Hess, 2007; Gray & Winter, 2011; Harcourt, 2011). Visual methods may be seen to mimic activities children may do in the home or ECEC settings, however, there is also a tradition of visual methods from the sub-discipline of visual sociology: the study of visible domains in social life, including the visual languages and sign systems through which we communicate (Emmison & Smith, 2000). One of the core tenets of visual sociology asserts that the habitual activities of social life reveal what may be hidden or taken for granted in the inner mechanisms of ordinary life (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004). As technology and media become an increasing part of young children's everyday experiences and lifeworlds (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), visual methods offer a potentially fruitful avenue for the examination of how methodology can react or respond to technological and social change.

4.1.3 Visual Sociology and Visual Research Methods

The sub-discipline of visual sociology developed as a cognate to visual anthropology in the 1960s, building on the instrumental work of Bateson and Mead (1942), *Balinese character: A photographic analysis* (Harper, 2012; Pink, 2003, 2006). While both traditions have focused largely on photographs, the study of the visual has come to include other forms of visual artifacts such as film/video,

documentaries, and semiotics (sign/symbol systems). Indeed, the increased breadth of visual materials included in research processes has been a response to the ubiquitous, complex, and evolving use of visual materials in societies (Emmison & Smith, 2000; Harper, 2012; Harrison, 2002). As cogently expressed by Pauwels (2010), visual sociology is **"grounded in the idea that valid scientific insight can be (2010) acquired by observing, analysing, and theorizing its visual manifestations"** (p. 546). Additionally, Pauwels suggests that these visual manifestations can be used in a variety of research designs to increase our knowledge of social actors and the social world. Glaw, Inder, Kable & Hazelton (2017) assert that visual methods "enhance the richness of data by discovering additional layers of meaning, adding validity and depth, and creating knowledge" (pg. 1).

Visual materials and their use in social science research have been evidenced in a variety of ways. Chaplin**'s** (1994, p. 8) work defines two approaches to working with the visual in social science. The first is to take existing visual artifacts and investigate their production, use, and interpretation. The second is to manufacture visual artifacts as part of the process of doing research. Drew and Guillemin (2014) offer another way of classifying visual approaches which focuses not only on the product, but also on who produces the visual material. They also define two approaches. The first is classified as researcher-generated visual methods, where a pre-existing image is provided and asks for participants for their interpretation of the image. The second is participant-generated visual methods, where the participant provides the image and, depending on the design, their interpretation as well.

The use of pre-existing societal images and visual artifacts is what Pauwels (2010) names **'found'** materials. Found materials are visual materials that are not created or produced with a researcher**'s** purpose in mind. Yet, to the extent of their purposeful selection, **"they become capable of providing valid answers to specific research questions"** (Pauwels, 2010, p. 567). This approach, however, relies heavily on the knowledge and ability of the informants (participants) to conceptualise the visuals presented (Pauwels, 2010). As such, the purposeful selection of visual materials for use as visual research methods requires thought to how the visual material will be interpreted. Rose (2012) refers to this process as audiencing, building from the concept identified by Fiske (1994), as a process through which a **"visual image has its meanings renegotiated, or even rejected, by particular audiences watching in specific circumstances"** (p. 190). As the interpretation of the visual materials relies heavily on the participant**'s** process of audiencing, the use of visual methods supports the positioning of young children as the knowers and framers of knowledge who are capable and necessary contributors in childhood research. While visual methods such as engaging children in drawing or artwork have been used heavily in research, these were generally understood as a process to create data which would

then require adult projective techniques to 'make meaning' of children's mental states in traditions such as psychology (MacDougal & Darbyshire, 2018). MacDougall and Darbyshire argue that this approach to visual sociology with children has been largely replaced with more child-centred approaches which engage children not only in the making of visual materials, but also in their interpretation. This use of visual methods, where children are active participants in meaning making from visual materials has been relatively uncommon in public health research, however, there is a growing body of research which suggests that they can offer a unique insight into how children understand their experiences and understandings of the world (Alexander et al., 2014).

4.1.4 Emoji as a Visual Research Method

Visual research has a strong link with technology, with new technologies contributing to, and informing our knowledge about social worlds and actors (Cipriani & Del Re, 2012). Emerging technologies have the potential to produce 'new, innovative, reflexive, and theoretically informed' research (Pink, 2003, p. 191), through their ability to accommodate different audiences and purposes. However, purposeful selection of visual materials requires careful attention to the visual material's likely impact on the intended audience (Jewitt & Van Leeuwen, 2001). As the exploration and engagement with technologies and digital literacies become increasingly commonplace in early education and care environments, these literacies, known as multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), offer fertile grounds for new visual methods for research with young children. The concept of multiliteracies extends traditional concepts of reading, writing, speaking, and listening to include symbols, icons, logos, and multiple sign systems such as video clips (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2006).

Semiotic theory, or the study of signs, acknowledges that symbols are visual sign systems through which reality is represented and meaning is made. Contemporary sign symbols found in electronic and digital mediums may be relatively new, but their role and use in conveying knowledge are indeed the oldest form of literacy (Chandler, 2007). Emoji are a type of graphic symbol, originating from Japan, which express concepts and ideas pervasively used in mobile communication and social media (Novak, Smailović, Sluban & Mozetič, 2015, Danesi, 2016). Emoji are the descendent of the emoticon, a shorthand form of facial expressions created using a standard keyboard, (e.g. :-)). Rather than keyboard shorthand, an emoji is an ideogram which can be used to represent a facial expression. However, they have also been more widely co-opted to represent feelings, gestures, objects, animals, food and drink, and activities (Novak et al., 2015). Due to the pervasive use of emoji in social media

and personal communication, alongside the increased use of emoji in marketing and promotion of products and services (Leung & Chan, 2017), even very young children are likely to be familiar with emoji. Additionally, the increased focus on multiliteracies and technology within curriculum and designs for learning in early childhood education (Marsh, 2005) supports the use of emoji as a research method for engaging young children in how they understand and make meaning of their world. Given current trends of engaging young children in multiliteracies, emoji offer both a practical and an insightful approach to eliciting young children's voices in childhood research.

4.2 Stage 1 Aims and Objectives

The aim of Stage 1 was to design a study which offers opportunities for young children to share their experiences and understandings of their own wellbeing through participatory research. This aim was identified during the analysis of the systematic review (Chapter 2) as the exclusion of children's voices in current conceptualisations of child wellbeing has led to uncertainty of whether current adult derived measures are appropriate and applicable to the population they are designed for. Stage 1 had two key objectives. The first was to test the method developed for conducting participatory wellbeing research with young children. The second was to uncover children's accounts of their own wellbeing, to determine whether they accorded or differed from adult derived conceptualisations.

4.2.1 Stage 1 Design

In Australia, 95% of preschool age children (ages four-to-five years) are enrolled in pre-school education in an ECEC service (ABS, 2017). Due to this high level of population-based enrollment, ECEC services (ECECS) were identified as key sites and partners for conducting participatory research with young children. The below section outlines the diversity and complexity of the South Australian ECEC landscape, including considerations and challenges for conducting research with diverse young children across a range of contexts and environments.

4.2.2 South Australian Early Childhood Landscape

In South Australia, preschool education is offered in a range of settings. This means that children transition to formal schooling from a variety of different ECEC settings. The diverse landscape of preschool service providers in South Australia can be broadly defined under the headings Government

managed, non-government managed, or Long Day Care (ABS, 2014) (see table 1 below for descriptions).

Table 1: Description of Preschool Service models in South Australia

Government Managed Preschools	The Department for Education manages most preschool programs. There are two models of preschool operations in the government managed sector: • stand-alone or integrated centre-based programs where the main service activity type is preschool. • school-based programs attached to South Australian public schools.
Non-government Managed Preschools	There are generally two types of non-government managed preschools in South Australia: • Independent schools who offer an early years/preschool program • Private Religious schools (in South Australia generally Catholic or Lutheran) who offer an early years/preschool program
Long Day Care Centres Preschool Programming	Some Long Day Care service providers in South Australia offer a preschool program for preschool aged children who attend the day care service. Long Day Care services in South Australia are categorised into three categories: • Private for-profit: Private for-profit managed LDCs are those provided by for-profit corporations or entities. • Private not-for-profit: Private not-for-profit managed LDCs are those provided by not-for-profit corporations or entities. • Community managed: Community managed LDCs include those that are managed by parents, a church or a co-operative.

For this research study, ECECS were identified as an ideal setting to access a diverse cross section of young children in South Australia. Throughout Australia, there is a fusion between early years health and education in both national and state level policy and regulatory frameworks. For example, publicly funded health services (Medicare), curriculum (birth to year 10), and regulatory frameworks for the early years (such as the National Quality Framework) are determined at a national level. However, the structure and implementation of health and education services are governed at the state level. In South Australia, health and education and care are governed by SA Health, Child and Family Health Service, the Department for Education, and the Education Standards Board. As of 2009, the Australian National Quality Framework subjects all ECECS to common regulations, standards, and quality assurance processes, which require all ECECS to be led by a degree qualified early child professional[6] (Tayler, Cloney & Niklas, 2015).

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6 It is noted that there was a grace period allotted for lead early childhood educators currently working in ECECS to upgrade their qualifications.

In South Australia there are a variety of early learning and care services for children aged birth-to-five-years including Government Preschools, Non-government preschools, Long Day Care, Integrated Centres, and Family Day Care (see table 1). Increasing access to early learning is a key focus in South Australia, as in other states and territories across Australia. In 2013, South Australia entered an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Commonwealth of Australia to secure funding for the implementation of the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education Program, which would allow for every South Australian child to have access to a free preschool program in the 12 months prior to full-time schooling (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). This is part of a national partnership between all states and the national government which seeks to "improve the supply and integration of early childhood services… [in recognition of] comprehensive research that shows that experiences children have in the early years of life set neurological and biological pathways that can have life-long impacts on health, learning and behaviour" (Council of Australian Governments, 2009). This national partnership acknowledges the longstanding fragmentation of the Australian ECECS and the problems this causes for many families who have difficulty in accessing and navigating highly fragmented health and education services. It also evidences the need to make early childhood health and education service more accessible for children and families.

In South Australia, 2013 brought a substantive shift to the transition to school landscape with an announcement from Department for Education about changes to school intake for children transitioning to school. Prior to 2014, children entered reception (the name for the first year of school in South Australia) at one of four points during the school year dependant on when the child turned five years of age, a process called continuous intake. As of 2014, the Department has moved to a 'same first day' policy, where all children who turn five-years of age before the cut-off date will start school at the beginning of term one, and those after the cut-off date will wait until the following year (Department for Education, 2012). While some independent schools continue to offer a mid-year intake, most South Australian children now start school at the start of the school year. These changes had and continue to have a 'flow through effect' for preschools, long day cares, integrated services, and primary schools alike, who have experienced significant change and upheaval in relation to this policy along with children and families. As revealed above, Integrated Services are one of a range of services in the early years landscape in South Australia in addition to more traditional and common models such as standalone preschools and long day care services. As investigating the impact of Service Integration on children's wellbeing during the transition to school is a key aim of this research study, the following section offers an overview of service integration in early childhood education and

care services (ECECS) as contextual understanding for the design of the present research study and subsequent analysis of the findings explored in Chapter 6.

4.2.3 Changing the Landscape – The Movement Towards Service Integration

In the Starting Strong (2001) and Starting Strong II (2006) reports, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reported on the social, economic, conceptual and research factors that influence early childhood policy in 20 OECD countries. In both reports, significant emphasis was placed on the need for the increased integration of ECECS, specifically in relation to the divide between birth-to-five education and care settings (such as standalone preschools and long day care services), and the first years of formal schooling (Cleveland & Colley, 2013). This divide has been referred to as 'split systems', which in many countries (including Australia) developed from different traditions, the former being a welfare measure for working-class families and the latter as preparation for formal schooling (Kaga, Bennett & Moss, 2010). There has been longstanding international critique of split systems in ECECS since the 1970s, resulted in enduring equity challenges in many countries in the areas such as access, regulation, funding, and continuity for children and families (Bennett, 2011). The national coordination of ECECS and the integration of ECECS at a more localised level has been identified as a key policy approach in many OECD countries to support ECECS in becoming more sensitive and contextualised to the needs of children and families (OECD, 2006). As reported in Chapter 2, these recommendations have informed policy internationally, with examples of service integration internationally such as Early Excellence and the Sure Start Centres in the UK, Head Start in the US, and Toronto First Duty in Canada (Cleveland & Colley, 2013; Corter et al., 2008; Kagan & Kauerz, 2007).

In their review of the literature on the integration of early years provision in Australia, Press et al. (2010), noted that annual state and national government reports and the websites of the relevant departments reflected a widely held belief that further service integration is important and beneficial for Australia. Macfarlane, Nolan and Cartmel (2016) also assert that service integration in the early years has been privileged in Australia policy documents since 2009. This privileging has been demonstrated by attempts to increase integration for national and state programs (for example, via National Partnerships in the early years through the Council of Australian Governments), as well as efforts to integrate service delivery for children and families across state government departments (Press et al., 2010). The rationale behind this shift is that the integration, or 'joining up' of services creates a more comprehensive and cohesive system of support for children and families (Dockett,

Perry, Kearney, Hampshire, Mason, & Schmied, 2011). The call for increased early years service integration (IEYS) in Australia is not specifically about the transition to school, rather its focus is "provid[ing] access to multiple services to children and families in a cohesive and holistic way...through respectful, collaborative relationships [that] actively seek to maximise the impact of different disciplinary expertise in a shared intent to respond to family and community contexts" (Press et al., 2010, p.53). However, because the transition to school does involve children moving between services and sectors, the creation of integrated services does impact children's transition to school. Yet, despite the privileging to IEYS in Australia, the findings of the systematic review evidenced the almost complete lack of empirical evidence to support the service integration policy focus in Australia (Harris, Cartmel & MacFarlane, 2015; Wong and Sumsion, 2013; Kaehne & Catheral, 2013; Nichols, & Jurvansuu, 2008). This finding forms the basis for aim 4 of this research study, an investigation into the impacts of service integration on children's experiences of wellbeing during the transition to school.

While there are a variety of different definitions of service integration, and what it entails, it is generally considered to constitute services that are connected in ways that create a comprehensive and cohesive system of support for children and families (Dockett et al., 2011; Corter et al., 2012). There have also be more rigorous definitions put forward as to what is required for service integration. Moore and Skinner (2010) state that service integration requires local integration of planning and service delivery and an integration of teams and professional roles, and that in reality, the breadth of what is often referred to as service integration is instead a continuum of services from co-existence to cooperation, coordination, collaboration, and true service integration. Due to the continued complexity and diversity of the service integration landscape in Australia, ECECS in metropolitan Adelaide run the gamut from what Moore and Skinner (2010) refer to as the continuum from 'co-existence to true service integration'.

Throughout South Australia, there is a growing number of public IEYS, which are defined as services comprising of two or more early learning, childcare, early development, health, or family services (Government of South Australia, 2017). Increasingly, integrated services include the integration of childcare (birth-to-five years of age) with a preschool and/or primary school by co-locating them on the same site (Wright, 2005), with some schools even combining pre-school and reception (first year of school) aged children together in an extended early years setting (South Australian Government Schools, n.d.). Many independent schools in South Australia also offer an integration of services, by housing an early years learning centre within the school, or on the same site.

For the purpose of this study, integration categories were created to map the continuum of South Australia's ECEC service integration using three broad categories identified from the literature on Australia early years services as presented earlier in this chapter. Table 2 outlines the three integration categories identified. These categories represent the breadth of service integration in metropolitan Adelaide ECECS and was used to guide study recruitment to ensure representation of the diversity in ECECS and schools in South Australia. Through this process, the design of the research study allows for an investigation into how service integration may or may not influence child wellbeing during the transition to school, and if so, in what ways.

Table 2: Integration categories

Integration Category	Category Description
1 **Low level of integration**	- Sites located outside of residential communities, such as a university grounds or business parks. - Children attending were from a variety of different neighbourhoods, some a significant geographical distance due to parent's employment. - Little integration with other education or health services as children transition to a variety of different schools and regional health services.
2 **Moderate level of integration**	- Sites located in residential neighbourhoods. - Most children transitioned to one of a few neighbourhood schools. - Sites had relationships with local primary schools and health services. Some had practices and policies to help children transition between these services
3 **High level of integration**	- Sites were integrated services (co-located with a primary school and/or other health/education services) - A significant portion of the children attending these sites continued to the co-located primary school. - These sites have well established, in house, transition processes to support children in making the transition from childcare to the first year of school.

4.2.4 Stage 1 Recruitment

Twelve metro-Adelaide ECECS offering a preschool program as part of an independent school or long day care centre were approached to participate in the research study. These twelve services were selected to represent a theoretical sample of the diversity of South Australian early ECECS for preschool aged children. Diversity in relation to this theoretical sample was assessed in two ways. The first was in relation to socio-economic status (SES) (Australian Government Commonwealth Grants Commission, 2012). In Australia, SES categories range from one-to-seven, with one being the least advantaged, and seven being the most. The second marker of diversity was in relation to service type and its level of integration with other education and health services. As the 12 initially selected ECECS

were diverse in their organizational structure, a way of determining their diversity in relation to service integration was devised. Table 2 outlines the three integration categories identified from the literature. The 12 ECECS initially selected to participate were mapped across the three categories to ensure the selection was a robust diverse sample.

Because one of the key aims of this study is to investigate the impact of service integration, participants needed to attend a range of services including services with little or no service integration all the way to highly integrated services.

Eight of the twelve services initially contacted chose to participate in the research study. To ensure that the eight participating services were still representative of the diversity of South Australian preschool services, the eight participating services were mapped in relation to both SES (level of advantage) and level of integration (table 2). Figure 9 (below) maps the diversity of the eight participating services by their SES and integration categories.
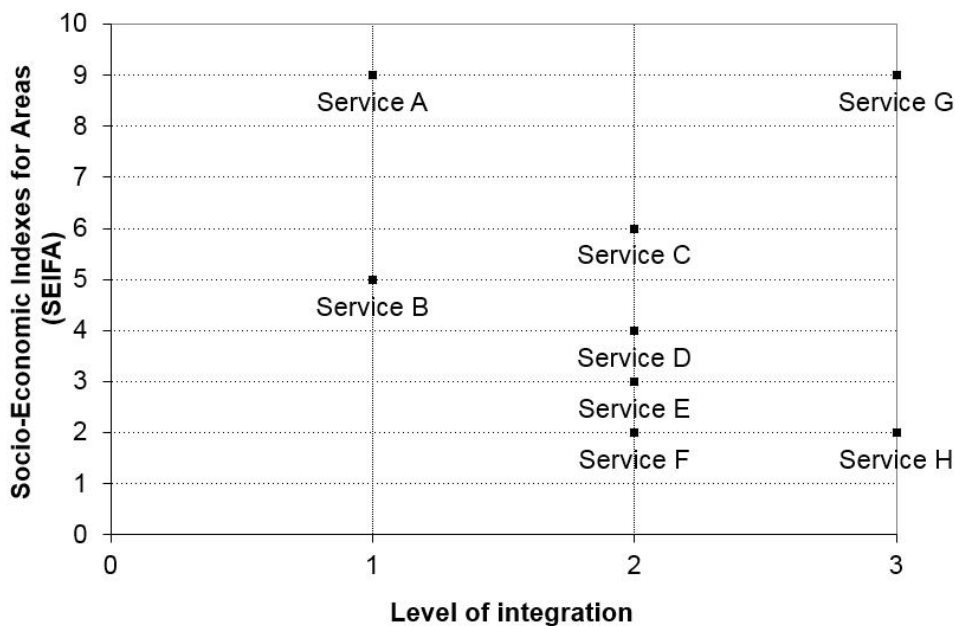
Figure 8. Distribution of Services by SES and Integration

4.2.5 Stage 1 Participants

Participants were 78 children (49 boys and 29 girls) aged 3-to-5 years who were enrolled in the eight participating ECECS recruited for this study. Children aged three-to-five-years were identified as the target population as seven of the eight ECECS organised their preschool room by this age grouping. Participating children attended their centre on either a part-time of full-time basis. The number of focus groups per site was determined by the site size, ranging from one to three. Table 2 outlines the

number of focus groups per site, number of participating children in each (including boy/girl ratio) and length of each focus group.

Table 3: Stage 1 focus groups participant information

Site Number	Number of Children	Boys to Girls ratio	Length of interview
Service A	7	6:1	11:33:29
Service B	9	6:3	17:52:16
Service C (1)	7	3:4	13:27:10
Service C (2)	7	5:2	12:22:07
Service D (1)	6	3:3	14:58:26
Service D (2)	5	4:1	14:08:25
Service E	4	4:0	12:40:13
Service F	4	3:1	20:44:17
Service G (1)	6	4:2	17:05:15
Service G (2)	6	4:2	17:44:21
Service G (3)	6	2:4	14:35:08
Service H (1)	7	4:3	14:53:18
Service H (2)	4	1:3	12:28:48

4.2.6 Ethical Considerations

Conducting ethical research with young children requires a multi-step procedure for ensuring that the both the research design and protocols are suitable, reasonable, and prioritise the safety, security, and rights of child participants. Additionally, from a citizen-child theoretical approach, ethical questions about children's opportunities to assent (or withdraw assent) throughout the research process come to the fore, rather than solely parent/guardian's consent for their child's participation.

To ensure that this research was conducted ethically for all participants, a four-stage ethics protocol was followed. First, ethics approval for the study was sought and granted by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University. Second, written consent to conduct research within ECECS was obtained from each service director. Third, parents of children attending the eight participating sites whose children were eligible for the research study were given written information about the study and asked to return a signed a consent form if they gave permission for their child to

participate in either phase of the study. Lastly, on the day of data collection (for both Stage 1 and both phases of Stage 2), children whose parents had signed a consent form were asked to give their assent to participate and have their ideas recorded.

When asking for children's assent I clearly explained what the research activity would entail and considered both verbal and non-verbal cues from each child to ensure that every child had the opportunity to give, or not give their assent, and have any questions about the process answered. Following the protocol outlined by Fornosinho and Barros Araújo (2006), the research activity was concluded if the child indicated that they were experiencing stress or angst. Children were also explicitly told that they could chose to end their participation at any time during the research process. Also, in line with Fornosinho and Barros Araújo's protocol (2006), children were thanked for their contribution at the end of the activity, to recognise the important contribution they had made to the research process.

In both stages of the research study, there were children with parental consent that did not assent on the day of data collection. These children's were thanked for considering participating in the research activity. Conversely, there were also children who indicated that they wished to participate but did not have parental consent to join in the research process. For these children, I supplied identical study materials to an educator at the service who completed a similar activity with the child(ren) so that their right to be involved in matters that interest and impact them, and have their voices heard was upheld. The final step in ensuring children's rights were respected during the research process was ensuring that the data was reported anonymously (Flewitt, 2005). To accomplish this, all children and ECECS are referred to by pseudonyms, both in this thesis and in all publications which draw on the data.

4.2.7 Stage 1 Procedure

Child-centred research that aims to understand the views and experiences of children requires building relationships that value children's knowledge and creates sensitivity, proximity, and analytic distance from the phenomena under study (Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2015). In this study, I endeavoured to build mutual trust and respect through repeated visits and interactions with all child participants. The first visit to each of the eight ECECS entailed meeting with the director, staff, and touring the centre to familiarise myself with the centre layout, age grouping, routines, and service foci/priority areas. During the second visit, I led a group activity with assenting children involving brainstorming, identifying, and acting out different types of feelings using drama, song, and

manipulatives (large hula hoops and cut-outs of eyes, mouths, tears, tongues) to create large emoji faces. One service (Service G) had many part-time children, so an additional visit was necessary to meet and engage with all participants prior to data collection. On the secondary visit to this service, I brought a different activity, emoji memory game that I had created for children to explore. These visits allowed me as a researcher to build relationships with the ECEC service and children through play, exploration, and in the communication of ideas. The types of activities and structure of my visit were purposefully planned to set the tone for the upcoming data collection, and to support the development of mutual trust and respect that would be necessary for creating a research environment that offered opportunities for children to become co-researchers, rather than simply participants. The use of activities that elicited children's ideas through song, drama, and manipulatives, rather than asking structured questions, also supported by citizen-child theory.

Child focus groups were used to engage young children in the study based on Lewis' (1992) rationale for using this technique with children.

1. to test a specific research question about consensus beliefs
2. to obtain a greater depth and breadth of responses than occurs in individual interviews,
3. to verify research plans or findings, and
4. to enhance the reliability of interview responses (p.414).

Focus groups have a unique ability to facilitate and encourage group interaction, yielding further insight and supporting children in trying out new ways of thinking (Ronen, Rosenbaum, Law, & Streiner, 2001). Additionally, group time is a familiar learning format for young children attending ECECS, and using structures which children feel comfortable in facilitates children's involvement and make it easier for children to express uncertainty, seek clarification, or question the researcher (Lewis, 1992).

In this study, each of the 13 focus groups contained me, the researcher and a qualified early childhood teacher and between four-to-nine children. The number of participants per group depended on the number of children aged three-to-five at each service who had parental consent and assented to participate on the day. Larger sites had two to three focus groups per site (see table 2). The length of the focus group varied from 12 - 21 minutes, dependent on children's participation, comfort, and interest. During the interviews, the children and researcher were seated on the floor in a circle in either a quiet corner of the three-to-five-year old room, or a separate quiet space within the service. Some focus groups had an early childhood educator join, dependent on the service's preference or

children's preference/needs. All interviews were audio recorded and detailed field notes were recorded by the researcher at the end of each interview.

The intentional physical positioning of me, the researcher, in the same space as the child participants (the floor), was intentional as it worked to decrease generational power dynamics between researcher and children. An emoji protocol was developed to elicit children's ideas and experiences without the need to use leading or structured/semi structured interview techniques. This was done to minimise the transmission of implicit or explicit instructions or ideas about what the researcher wanted during the interviews. I explained to children at the beginning of each focus group that they are experts at being children, and that adults need children to explain what children know about feelings and emotions, and that these important ideas will be used to teach adults. Together, these elements worked towards challenging and dismantling the hierarchical arrangements that elevate the views and understandings of adults over children and acknowledge and position the child participants as authoritative sources of knowledge (Fattore et al., 2009).

4.2.8 Stage 1 Emoji Protocol

I adapted the emoji for use with young children by enlarging them to 10cm by 10cm and laminating them so they could be easily manipulated. Triplicates of each emoji were used within focus groups to mitigate potential sharing issues and facilitate children's engagement with their emoji of choice. I began by giving child participants five different emoji representing feelings through facial expressions (emoji 1-5 in figure 2). Children were first asked to identify the feeling or emotion being portrayed by the 5 faces. Next, children were asked to pick one of the emoji, and tell a story about why someone might feel that way. The idea of storytelling was used to give children opportunities to share a personal feeling without having to identify themselves as the person feeling the emotion, or to be able to try out or express new ideas. Next, I gave each group 13 other emoji pictures, chosen to represent common objects, environments, activities, or iconography that young children would be familiar with (emoji 6-18 in figure 2). Once child participants had the opportunity to explore the new emoji, they were asked to pick one and tell a story about it. I engaged with every child's response throughout the interview, asking clarifying questions if I did not understand the response, and repeating the child's idea or story back to ensure I had correctly understood. I concluded the focus groups once all child participants had finished telling me and the group what they wanted to share.

Figure 9. Emoji used in Stage 1 study

4.3 Stage 1 Analysis

A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development, developed by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), was employed to analyse the data. This approach combines the data-driven inductive approach of Boyatis (1998), with a deductive a priori template analytic technique pioneered by Crabtree and Miller (1999). This approach demonstrates transparency in how the thematic analysis is conducted through clearly outlining the development of themes and the coding procedure through a step by step process. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) describe their hybrid approach to qualitative methods of thematic analysis as the integration of the data-driven inductive approach of Boyatis (1998) with the deductive a priori template analytic technique pioneered by Crabtree and Miller (1999). The hybrid approach is conducted through a series of six steps:

1. Developing the codebook
2. Testing the reliability of the codes
3. Summarising data and identifying themes
4. Applying template of codes and additional coding
5. Connecting the codes and identifying themes
6. Corroborating and legitimizing coded themes

The process of thematic analysis for Stage 1 data will be described using the six-step format outlined by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006).

4.3.1 Step 1 - Developing the Codebook

Crabtree and Miller (1999) suggest that researchers wishing to confirm or expand upon an already well-defined hypothesis or phenomenon may benefit from using a structured approach, such as that provided by an a priori codebook as a template for the coding process. Following this approach, data generated from focus group transcripts were analysed in relation to an a priori codebook developed from relevant literature and research. The a priori codebook was developed in response to three key findings highlighted in the systematic review (Chapter 2). The first was the sheer volume of instruments and assessment tools, (87 in total), that covered at least one aspect of early childhood health and wellbeing. The second, was that the overwhelming majority of the instruments, surveys, and frameworks uncovered used social indicators, or domains to assess child health and/or wellbeing. The third key finding was that all of the instruments, surveys, and domains and social indicators for young children's wellbeing (under eight years of age) uncovered in the systematic review were created by adults (adult centric) and did not include children's voices or understandings of wellbeing.

The sustained interest in measuring child wellbeing through social indicators is also attributable to the "movement toward accountability-based public policy" (Ben-Arieh, 2005, p. 573) which necessitates the collection of data to provide reports of children's lives and experiences, as well as the outcomes of deliberative efforts to ameliorate child wellbeing (Land & Miachalos, 2018). As there has yet to be research done on the creation of a comprehensive suite of child indicators for young children that have included young children's voices, adult identified social indicators of child wellbeing uncovered in the systematic review were identified for the development of the a priori codebook. The choice to use adult identified indicators was a considered one, made so that the findings of this research would be more transferable to indicator based child wellbeing research, both theoretically and methodologically. The a priori code book was developed from five relevant frameworks/instruments/conceptualisations which identify or use social indicators for assessing child wellbeing. They are briefly described below.

The first is a Report Card on the wellbeing of young Australians by the Australia Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) (2013). The purpose of this report card was to offer a set of base line indicators, guided by "what wellbeing looks like" for children and youth in Australia which could be used to provide a snapshot of child and youth wellbeing (ARACY, 2013, p. 2). The second is a report on the first nationally representative longitudinal study of child development by the Australian Institute of Family Studies entitled Growing Up in Australia (AIFS, 2014). The purpose of this study was to provide data to enable a comprehensive understanding of children's development and research-based information on child and family wellbeing. The report identifies key indicators and domains of

child wellbeing which they found to be associated with positive child development outcomes. The third is the Early Development Instrument (EDI), which was developed for national use in Australia as the Australia Early Development Census (Guhn, Zumbo, Janus, & Hertzman, 2011; Goldfeld, Sayers, Brinkman, Silburn, & Oberklaid, 2009). This instrument is comprised of five child wellbeing indicators and is used nationally every three years in Australia to capture a snapshot on the early development of all Australian children entering school. The fourth is a report by UNICEF on an overview of child wellbeing in rich countries (2007). The report identifies six dimension of child wellbeing which can be used to monitor child wellbeing, compare child wellbeing between populations, and promote the creation of policies to improve the life of children. The fifth and final framework/instrument/conceptualisation that formed the a priori codebook was the Child and Youth Wellbeing Index (Land, Lamb, Meadows, & Taylor, 2007). This index is comprised of seven quality-of-life domains and designed to measure and assess changes in child and youth wellbeing over time. These five frameworks/instruments/conceptualisations identified in the systematic review were chosen to capture a snapshot of what indicators have been identified by adults as important for measuring child wellbeing. Table 1 lists each framework/instrument/conceptualisation and the social indicators they employ to express child wellbeing.

After identifying key adult conceptualised social indicators in current and recent use for measuring child wellbeing (as reported in table 4), these indicators of child wellbeing underwent a process of review, sorting, and further abstraction. This process resulted in the creation of six codes which represent the current state of the literature of social indicator use for young children's wellbeing and formed an a priori codebook used for data analysis following the hybrid approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This process is reported in table 5. This codebook became the starting point for an a priori thematic analysis of the data which would then be revised and expanded upon for use with raw data collected from the child focus groups.

Table 4 – Child wellbeing frameworks and domains of child wellbeing identified through the systematic review of child health and wellbeing during the transition to school literature

Source	Definition
1) Report Card: The Wellbeing of young Australians (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2013)	Wellbeing is expressed as 'the good life', defined by the successful attainment of positive outcomes in the five key result areas: feeling loved and safe, being healthy, opportunities for learning, material basics, and community participation
2) Australian Institute of Family Studies – Growing up in Australia Longitudinal study (Australian Institue of Family Studies, 2014)	Wellbeing is appraised through the vehicle of how children spend their time, stating that "children's construction and use of time and participation in positive activities are indicators of health's positive development…particularly in the attainment and development of skills"
3) Early Development Instrument (EDI) /Australian Early Development Instrument (AEDI) / Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) (Guhn, Zumbo, Janus, & Hertzman, 2001; Goldfeld, Sayers, Brinkman, Silburn, & Oberklaid, 2009).	The instrument provides information on the five domains of children's early development: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), and communication skills and general knowledge.
4) UNICEF - Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries (UNICEF, 2007)	Wellbeing is measured and assessed under six different headings or dimensions: material well-being, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks, and young people's own subjective sense of well-being
5) CWI – Child and Youth Well-being Index (Land, Lamb, Meadows, & Taylor, 2007)	Wellbeing expressed as 7 Quality of life domains; family economic wellbeing; health; safety/behavioural concerns; educational attainment (productive activity); community connectedness (participation in schooling or work institutions); social relationships (with family and peers); and emotional/spiritual wellbeing

Table 5 – Key domains of child wellbeing identified from child wellbeing frameworks (see table 1), used to create an a priori codebook for data analysis

1) (ARACY, 2013)	Loved and safe	Being healthy	Opportunities for learning	Material basics	Community participation	
2) (AIFS, 2014)	Social and emotional wellbeing		Development of skills Construction and use of time		Participation in positive activities	
3) (Guhn et al., 2009)		Physical health and wellbeing	Language and cognitive skills		Social competence	Emotional maturity; communication skills
4) (UNICEF, 2007)	Subjective wellbeing & behaviours and risks	Health and safety	Education	Material wellbeing		Peer and family relationships
5) (Land et al., 2007)	Emotional & spiritual wellbeing. Safety & behavioural concerns	Health	Educational attainment	Family economic well-being	Community connectedness	Social relationships
Domains delineated for the a priori codebook used for analysis of data	**1) Feeling Happy, Loved & Safe**	**2) Being Physically Healthy**	**3) Opportunities for Learning**	**4) Material Wellbeing**	**5) Social Participation**	**6) Relationships**

The next step was to develop a template for analysis to determine the applicability of the codebook to the raw information (Boyatzis, 1998). Once the initial a priori codebook had been established, I further developed the template to delineate clear criteria for coding raw data from the focus groups. Following the hybrid method, codes were refined using Boytazis' (1998) three step process:

1. the code label or name,
2. define what the theme concerns, and
3. describe how to know when the theme occurs.

A label, definition, and description were developed for each a priori code to demonstrate the transparency and rigor of the template for coding the raw data of young children's experiences and understandings of their own wellbeing.

Table 4: Refinement of codes using Boyatzis's three step process

Code 1	
Label	Feeling happy, loved, and safe
Definition	Subjective feelings and experiences of happiness, love, and personal safety
Description	Children sharing ideas and experiences about what makes them happy (or inversely sad or angry), when they feel loved (or unloved) and what makes them feel safe and taken care of.
Code 2	
Label	Being physically healthy
Definition	Subjective feelings surrounding their own physical health, and the processes they undertake and the services they interact with that relate to their physical health.
Description	Children sharing ideas, experiences, and information about how they keep themselves healthy
Code 3	
Label	Learning and Development
Definition	Subjective feelings about their own learning and development and where this occurs
Description	Children sharing information and knowledge that demonstrates their learning, development, and how they understand these concepts, including the spaces and places they identify as important for these processes
Code 4	
Label	Material wellbeing
Definition	Objective statements of resources, materials, and objects that children own, use, or would like to have, as well as subjective feelings and experiences about the role or purpose of these items and their contribution to wellbeing.
Description	Children sharing information and ideas about the objects, materials, and resources that are important to them and how they make them feel.
Code 5	
Label	Social participation
Definition	Subjective feelings and information surrounding children's opportunities and experiences of engaging socially with the world around them.
Description	Children sharing their opportunities and experiences of interacting with community members and being a part of their community, and how this makes them feel.
Code 6	
Label	Relationships
Definition	Subjective feelings and experiences of being in and developing relationships with family, and friends, and caregivers/educators
Description	Children sharing experiences and understandings of their relationships with family, friends, peers, and caregivers/educators, and how these relationships and interactions make them feel.

Once labels, definitions, and description were created for each code category, the initial codebook was complete and ready for testing.

4.3.2 Step 2 – Testing the Reliability of the Codebook

Following development of an initial codebook, my interdisciplinary supervisory team, composed of academics working with the areas of public health, education, and social policy were asked to independently review the codebook. The review was intended to evaluate the initial codes against the a priori frameworks, as well as the labels, definitions, and descriptions applied to the six a priori codes for analysing focus group transcripts. The results from the three independent reviews were compared, and no modifications to the codebook were required.

4.3.3 Step 3 – Summarising Data and Identifying Initial Themes

The third stage of the hybrid approach engages with data. The first step in this stage is to paraphrase or summarise each piece of data as a way of beginning to unpack and process the information. I summarised each transcript separately by outlining key points and ideas that emerged. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) are explicit that this step is not the same as a content analysis, where frequency of ideas or themes is a significant finding. Rather, at this stage, a single comment or idea is considered as important as one repeated in or across focus groups. During this stage, the summary for each focus group provided the opportunity for me to reflect on the current codes and a time to take note of potential themes emerging in the raw data. I took notes identifying and describing potential themes and added them to the summary of each transcript.

4.3.4 Step 4 – Applying Template of Codes and Additional Coding

Using the template analytic technique as outlined by Crabtree & Miller (1999), the next phase of the hybrid approach is to apply the codes from the codebook to the raw data. The intent of this phase is to identify meaningful units of text. I completed this coding process manually by organising segments of the transcripts under the six codes identified a priori using the guidance of the code labels, definitions, and descriptions.

During stage four, analysis of the transcripts was guided, but not confined, by the initial codes. As per the hybrid approach, information or ideas contained within the transcripts which did not fit within

initially defined codes were assigned with inductive codes that described a new theme emerging in the text as per Boyatzis' (1998) coding process. When coding each transcript, segments of data that fit within an existing code were organised in a table under the corresponding code heading. While some sections of text could have possibly been coded with multiple codes, using the descriptions and definitions of codes outlined in table six as a guide, segments of the transcripts were coded as to the key idea or concept that children were expressing. Segments of data that did not fit within an existing code were placed in an undefined section of the table and labelled with a descriptive code. Table seven (below) gives an example of how I coded a portion of text from a single transcript.

Table 5: Example of applying codebook to a transcript

Code 1 – Happy, loved, and safe	Researcher: Jonas, which one do you have? Jonas: Happy Researcher: Happy. Can you tell me a story about feeling happy? Jonas: When someone found his pet bunny. Researcher: Someone found their pet bunny. Was the bunny lost? Jonas: Yes
Code 2 – Being physically healthy	Researcher: Sadie, you have one there, what picture did you pick? Sadie: A heart Interviewer: A heart. And why did you pick a heart? Sadie: Because um my heart hurt, and then I had to go to the doctors. Interviewer: Oh, your heart hurt, and you had to go to the doctor. And what did the doctor do? Sadie: He fixed my heart. Interviewer: He fixed your heart. And how did that make you feel. Sadie: Happy
Code 3 – Learning and development	
Code 4 – Material wellbeing	Researcher: Sasha, which picture did you pick? Sasha: Um, a house Researcher: A house, and why did you pick that one? Sasha: So, the rain doesn't go on my head Researcher: When you're in your house the rain doesn't go on your head. How do you feel at your house? Sasha: Um, good Researcher: You feel good? Sasha: With my brother
Code 5 – Social participation	
Code 6 – Relationships	Researcher: Thomas, you look like you are using an emoji to do something, what are you doing? Thomas: Hm, the phone Researcher: The phone, and what are you doing with the phone? Thomas: Hmmm, ringing someone. Researcher: You're ringing someone. Do you use a phone sometimes? Thomas: Yes Researcher: And who do you ring?

	Thomas: My nanny and poppy Researcher: Your nanny and poppy. Your grandparents, yes? [Henry nods] And why do you do that? Thomas: Because I love them. Researcher: Because you love them. And you like to talk to them? Thomas: Yes
Undefined	Researcher: June, you've been waiting so patiently. What emoji did you pick? June: Um a sun Researcher: A sun. And why did you pick a sun June: Cause.... uh Louis: You like suns? June: Cause I like suns Researcher: What do you do when it's sunny? June: I play outside in my backyard Researcher: How does that make you feel? June: Happy Louis: Do you have a pool to play in Astrid? June: [indicates no] Researcher: How do you play in your backyard? Louis: You could use a slip and slide! June: I always go in the sprinkler sometimes Descriptive code: Outdoor play

4.3.5 Step 5 – Connecting the Codes and Identifying Themes

After the initial coding of the raw data, the next stage of the hybrid approach is to connect the codes. To do this, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) suggest employing Crabtree and Miller's (1999) process of discovering themes and patterns in the data. Doing this required looking across the 13 coded transcripts to find similarities and differences between separate groups of data that were emerging from the initial coding. These areas of similarities and differences are important as they indicate areas of consensus of how young children understand and experience being well, as well as areas of potential conflict. At this stage, I began to cluster themes across the transcripts with children's experiences and understandings of wellbeing largely aligning within the six pre-determined a priori codes. However, there were also some key themes emerging from the undefined segments across the 13 transcripts, coded under terms such as play, outdoor play, agency, and control.

4.3.6 Step 6 – Corroborating and Legitimating Coded Themes

The final stage of the hybrid approach entails the further clustering the themes that were previously identified from the coded text. This phase also engages in the use of corroboration, the process of confirming the findings uncovered during the coding process. During this process, Crabtree and Miller (1999) warn that fabricating evidence can be a common problem in the process of interpreting data.

This can be due to the often entirely unintentional "seeing" of data that the researchers expect to find (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 1999).

To guard against this process, the previous five stages of the analysis process were closely scrutinized to ensure that the identified themes were representative of the initial data analysis and assigned codes. This involved me re-reading and re-analysing the transcripts, and several iterations of coding before the analysis proceeded to an interpretive phase where I clustered, identified, and delineated additional themes. Additionally, as part of the corroboration of the analysis process, I devised a strategy for involving young children in member checking. As child participants in this study were pre-literate, I engaged 3-to-5 year old children at each of the eight ECECS in a member checking process by creating a story book that explained the key themes identified in the data. The storybook used for member checking can be found in Appendix 10. After reading the story to children, I asked them if their ideas were understood correctly and if anything was missing. The children from all eight service corroborated the themes, thus supporting the legitimacy of the coded themes.

Findings from the analysis of Stage 1 data are reported in Chapter 5. During analysis, key concepts of child wellbeing (child-identified indicators) emerged from children's accounts that were not uncovered in the adult derived wellbeing conceptualisations uncovered in the systematic review. These concepts are also explored in Chapter 5, in relation to children's accounts and wider literature.

4.4 Stage 2 Aims and Objectives

Findings from Stage 1 (reported in Chapter 5) uncovered two wellbeing indicators present in children's accounts that were not found in current adult derived frameworks: o. Stage 2 focuses on an investigation of the two child-identified indicators because they are the only indicators (out of the eight that were present in the participant's accounts) that were not in current or previous use. As reported in Chapter 5, the six adult derived indicators forming the a priori codebook have been widely validated, substantively theorised, and profoundly explored within the child wellbeing literature (see for example Mishra, Ray & Risse, 2018; Cho, 2015; Heshmati, Tausch & Bajalan, 2008; Casas, 2011; Pollard & Lee, 2003; Land, Lamb, & Kahler Mustillo, 2001). Because of this, while these two novel child-identified indicators are no more important that the other six adult identified indicators, they are the focus of Stage 2 because we do not yet know how young children experience and understand these indicators from their own perspectives. The aim of pportunities for play and children's agency and control the Stage 2 study was to uncover children's understandings and experiences of play and agency during their transition to school. The research aims of Stage 2 were

two-fold. The first was to design a child-centred, participatory qualitative longitudinal research study that would allow for children to be co-constructors of knowledge and share their accounts of the two child-identified indicators uncovered in Stage 1. The second was to observe and document the ways in which children asserted agency and control within the research process.

4.4.1 Stage 2 Design

The concept of play is well understood by young child, and a term that they hear and use in everyday life. As such, this concept and word was used verbatim in conversation with participants. The abstract concept of agency, on the other hand, is not something four-to-five year old children would easily understand or be able to respond to. To ensure that the research process and questions were accessible to young children, the concept of agency was broken down into two distinct yet interrelated terms that participants could be asked to give an account of or observed. The first concept was rules, developed from Hochschild's (1978) classical concept of feeling rules where he purports that "by focusing on the pinch between 'what I do feel' and 'what I should feel'" (1983, p. 57) we can understand how children perceive their agency in relation to generational and social norms and bounds. The concept of rules has been used in previous participatory research on children's agency with older children, such as Haugen's (2010) study with eight and nine year old children, Bjerke's (2011) research with two cohorts of children aged eight-to-nine and fourteen-to-fifteen, and Thornberg's (2008) study with two cohorts of children aged six and eight years. As the concept of rules is one that is familiar to children even as young as three (as evidenced in Stage 1), it was determined that asking young children about their understandings and experiences of rules at their ECEC service and school would support the research process in exploring children's level of agency in relation to their environment, relationships, and the structural and socio-cultural processes within it. The second concept was children's enactment of agency within the research process, which could be observed through the ways that children shared and exerted their own interests, wants, and needs. These three concepts: play, rules, and children's agency within the research process formed the basis of the Stage 2 study design.

The transition to school is in many ways a yearlong (or longer) process which begins in children's final year of childcare/preschool and continues into their first year in school. Given that the transition to school process is highly bound by time, change, geography, and socio-cultural processes; qualitative longitudinal research (QLLR) methods were identified as the most appropriate methodology for the study. While the collection of information from a longitudinal perspective is relatively uncommon in qualitative studies on children and youth wellbeing, a longitudinal design

can be useful when working with groups for whom age differences across data points can yield unexpected results (Gonzalez-Carrasco, Vaque, Malo, Crous, Casas & Figuer, 2019). Another benefit to this approach is that QLLR can provide a realistic causality of how "resources, timing, agency, circumstance and 'intangible' aspects of social, cultural, and contextual processes interact in specific instances to explain differences between individual outcomes" (Holland, Thomson, & Henderson, 2006, p.19). Holland, Thomson, and Henderson (2006) additionally assert that QLLR methods can be "particularly useful when attempting to understand the interaction between temporal and geographic movement … privileg[ing] the subjective, context, and complexity and pay[ing] attention to questions of duration, momentum, and timing" (p. 19). As participants in the study were all going through a similar process (transitioning to school) within a diverse range of geographical, structural, and socio-cultural settings, a QLLR design which allowed me to access children's accounts of play and agency before and after their transitions to and from diverse settings was chosen. As participant's experiences of wellbeing and the systems they interact with occur over time, a deep and nuanced understanding of the longitudinal experience "may provide insight and direction that differs from that of cross-sectional data" (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016, p. 1).

Within the literature, there are a variety of definitions of what constitutes rigorous QLLR, however, it can generally be surmised as "multiple waves over a substantial calendar time" (Kelly & McGrath, 1988, p. 135) which are distinguished by the "deliberate way in which temporality is designed into the research process making change a central focus of analytic attention" (Thomas et al. 2003, p.185). Saldaña (2003) asserts that a central focus for designing and undertaking QLLR research is to acknowledge that each study is context-specific and driven by its own goals, research questions, conceptual framework and methodology. Saldaña (2003) additionally delineates the three foundational principles of QLLR as duration, time, and change, with an emphasis on the importance of time and change processes as contextual. According to Epstein (2002) there are three unique types of QLLR:

> continuous research in the same small society over a number of years; periodic restudies at regular or irregular intervals; return after a lengthy interval of time has elapsed since the original research (p. 64).

The Stage 2 study of this research project is characterised as Type 2 using Epstein's (2002) categories as the data collection visits were restudies as two pre-defined regular intervals. During both data collection points the participants accounts of their own experiences and understandings formed the core of the data collected. However, their accounts were supplemented by "contextual data on

wider relationships, environments, and resources" (Holland et al. 2006, p. 21) gathered prior to and during the research process such as: the transition processes employed by participant's ECECS and schools, and my observations while co-constructing the research process with children.

A key facet of QLLR data generation is that it is iterative, allowing for a nuanced understanding of what has changed or evolved to tell a story over time (McLeod and Thomson, 2009; Carduff, Murray & Kendall, 2015). The use of a QLLR methodology allowed for Stage 1 data to inform and guide the longitudinal study and investigate the child-identified indicators of wellbeing across the transition to school. The following sections explain and describe the design of the Stage 2 study and the analysis of the data generated from the two data collection points.

4.4.2 Stage 2 Recruitment

Participants in the longitudinal phase of the study were recruited through the eight ECECS that participated in the Stage 1 study. Recruiting participants from each of the eight services replicated a similar sample diversity in regard to SES advantage and service integration of Stage 1. To recruit participants, the Centre director from each of the eight ECECS sent home an information package about the study that included a consent form. This packaged was distributed to the families of all children attending the eight ECECS who would be starting their first year of school in January 2017.

4.4.3 Stage 2 Participants

The parents of 31 children starting school in January 2017 responded to the information package and elected to have their child participate in the Stage 2 research study. Parents additionally completed a form asking about their child's age, how many days a week and for how long their children had attended their ECEC service, and what primary school their child would be attending in January 2017. Table 8 shows the distribution of participating children across the eight ECECS. At the time of the first data collection phase, 2 children did not assent to participate (one from Service E and one from Service G). In total, 29 children formed the initial Stage 2 cohort.

Table 6: Demographics of children participating in Phase 1 of Stage 2

Service	Overall number of children	Girl to Boy ratio
Service A	9	3:6
Service B	4	1:3
Service C	2	1:1
Service D	2	1:1
Service E	1	1:0
Service F	4	2:2
Service G	4	2:2
Service H	3	1:2
Total	**29**	**12:17**

The second phase of data collection took place between April and May 2017, once participants had transitioned to school. Parents of the 29 children who participated in the first phase of Stage 2 data collection were contacted in February or March 2017 to schedule a time and place to conduct phase two of Stage 2 via their preferred method of contact (email of telephone). Of the 29 families contacted, 20 responded and scheduled a time for their child to complete the secondary phase of data collection. Parents were given the choice between having the interview conducted at their home, their child's previous ECEC service, or at a public library. Additionally, one child asked to complete the activity at their favourite park. The second data collection phase was conducted individually, with all 20 children assenting to participate. Table nine shows the distribution of participating children across the eight ECECS for phase two. Only data from the 20 children who completed both phases of the Stage 2 study was included in the analysis of Stage 2 data.

Table 7: Demographics of children participating in Phase 2 of Stage 2

Service	Overall number of children	Girl to Boy ratio
Service A	6	3:3
Service B	3	0:3
Service C	1	1:0
Service D	2	1:1
Service E	1	1:0
Service F	3	1:2
Service G	3	2:1
Service H	1	0:1
Total	**20**	**9:11**

4.4.4 Ethical Protocols

See section 4.2.5 for ethical protocols which were identical for both stages of the research study.

4.4.5 Stage 2 Procedure – Initial Phase

The first phase of data collection was completed in the children's final term of preschool (term four) at their ECEC service. Term four was chosen as the ideal time to conduct the first phase of the Stage 2 study as many of the participants were taking part in transition to school activities and preparing for the transition to school.

As most of the children participating in Stage 2 did not participate in Stage 1 of the study (as many of the Stage 1 participants had transitioned to school in 2016), I organised an initial visit at each of the eight ECECS to introduce myself to Stage 2 participants to build familiarity and trust with children before asking them to participate in the research activity. As with Stage 1, my initial visit entailed bringing in an active, unstructured activity using hula-hoops and cut outs of facial features to make large emoji. Song and drama were also incorporated into this activity. This visit created opportunities for children to talk about feelings and emotions with me, and establish that their ideas, understandings, and ways of using and interpreting materials were important and valuable. In some ECECS I conducted this activity with only the children who were participating in the Stage 2 study. In others services, I conducted this activity with all preschool children depending on the ECEC service's preference.

The purpose of my second visit to each service was to conduct the first phase of data collection for Stage 2. Some services required multiple visits depending on the days in which children attended. Each participant was paired with another participating child from the same childcare centre for this phase. Working with children in pairs was used as a strategy to help children feel more confident in working with a researcher, as having a peer complete the activity with them is generally less intimidating for children (Huang, O'Connor, Ke, & Lee, 2016). Pairing children, rather than working with small groups (such as in Stage 1) offered children more opportunities for input due to less waiting time required to share their ideas. Additionally, from a researcher view, pairing children (rather than using focus groups) made following the ebb-and-flow of contributions from each child easier to respond to and distinguish, resulting in richer conversations. The children and I completed the research activity in either a quiet room/space away from other children, or in a quiet(ish) corner of their preschool room. In most centres, an educator sat in on the research activity but did not participate.

The research activity was a modified version of the emoji protocol used in Stage 1. For Stage 2, each child was seated at a table and given a large piece of paper. Next, I placed the five face emoji (see emoji 1-5 in figure 3), face down on the piece of paper in front of each child. Children were invited to turn over each emoji and describe what feeling they saw. After each child had turned over and identified a feeling(s) for each emoji, I asked them if they would like to tell me a story about why someone might be feeling that way. Before moving onto the next task, I asked children if I could take a photograph of their paper. With the permission of the child, I took a photo of all the pictures children made throughout the research activity. The purpose of photographing children's stories was to support the analysis of data in case the transcripts were unclear or required supplementation.

As one of the purposes of the Stage 2 study was to investigate the three themes delineated from the two child-identified indicators of wellbeing, I purposefully selected emoji that might offer opportunities for children to engage with the concepts of play and rules. For play, I selected emoji that were representative of items or objects that children would encounter at school or at home, as well as natural objects (see emoji 6-12 in figure 13). For rules, I selected emoji that were representative of commands, people, and relationships between children and adults (see emoji 13-19 in figure 13) as children will often enact agency within their day to day lives through choosing, or not, to follow rules set out be adults (Markström & Halldén 2008). Additionally, field notes, photographs of children's stories, and research transcripts would be used to document and identify ways in which children enacted agency within the research process.

Once children had finished telling stories or interacting with the face emoji, I ask them to push these initial emoji to the side of their paper to be ready for the next group of emoji pictures. I then gave each child a set of 'play' emoji and asked them if they would like to make me a picture of how they like to play. I also suggested that they could use the face emoji as well in their pictures if they liked. Once children had made their picture using the emoji, I asked them to tell me about their picture. After children had explained their picture, I asked further clarifying questions to ensure I fully understood there picture and stories. I then asked additional questions about their play depending on what the children had shared. Such as *Is there any other way you like to play?* Or *How do you play at childcare?* I then asked if children would like to make another picture about play. If so, they were given the opportunity to do so and to explain and share their new picture with me. If they indicated they had finished, we moved on to the final portion of the research activity which was engaging children in their understandings and experiences of agency through the concept of rules. To do this, I asked children to help me pack up the play emoji, and I then handed them the emoji chosen in relation to rules. Once children had the rule emoji, I asked them to make me a picture of a rule. They

were also reminded that they could choose to use the face emoji in their rule picture as well. When children had completed their picture, I asked them to explain it to me. Following their explanation, I then asked further questions about the child's understandings and experiences of rules such as *What other rules can you think of?, Do you have rules at home?, Who makes the rules at home?, Do you have rules at childcare?, Who makes the rules at childcare?,* and *Why are there rules? Should there be rules? Should children get to make rules?*

To end the research activity, I asked children if there were any other pictures they would like to make (some children chose to make more pictures) and when done, if there was anything else they would like to tell me, or that I should know. When children indicated that they were finished (at any point in the research activity), I thanked them for their participation and told them how much I appreciated all the important information they told me. I let them know that I hoped I would see them again once they had transitioned to school, and that I was excited to hear about their new school. After the children had returned to their previous activities, I took detailed field notes from the research activity before leaving the ECEC service.

Figure 10. Emoji used in longitudinal study

4.4.6 Stage 2 Procedure – Secondary Phase

Term two was identified as an ideal time to conduct the secondary phase of data collection in the Stage 2 study. This decision was informed by literature uncovered in the systematic review which suggests that waiting until term two gives children adequate time to settle into their new

environment while still remembering the transition process (Janus & Offord, 2007). As a primary goal of the Stage 2 was to assess the impact of the transition to school on children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing, the procedures used during the two data collection phases were kept as similar as possible. However, there were two marked differences. The first was that for the secondary data collection phase, children completed the research activity in a one-on-one setting, rather than in pairs. This decision was made due to the 20 child participants transitioning to sixteen different schools, making finding outside of school times to conduct the research activity for children from different schools unfeasible for parents.

The second difference was that while the same emoji and emoji order were used, additional questions were asked to children during the second phase to give insight into children's experiences of transition between their previous to current environments. In addition to the questions asked in phase one, questions such as *Was there more play at childcare, or at school? Are there more rules at childcare or school?* and *Do you think the rules at school are good rules?* Otherwise, the planned procedure remained unchanged. However, as most of the secondary data collection phase took place in children's homes or environments of their choosing, many children expressed interest in, or asked to show me artifacts from school (such as workbooks), special toys and books, or rooms in their house. To uphold children's role as co-researchers in this process, and to ensure that they had the time and materials allotted to them to share what they felt was important, children's requests to engage with extraneous materials or move to a different areas was adapted into the research activity. These conversations were included in the verbatim transcripts and coded during data analysis. After completing the activity at the child's home or preferred location, I took detailed field notes from each research activity in my car before leaving.

4.5 Stage 2 Analysis

During the course of Stage 2, the data collected included two transcripts and two sets of field notes for each child (one from each data collection point), and background information from parents on children's ECEC service attendance and future primary school. According to Saldaña (2003) the challenge for researchers completing QLLR is to "rigorously analyse and interpret primarily language-based data records to describe reliably, vividly, and persuasively for readers, through appropriate narrative, the processes of participant change through time" (p. 46). From their review of QLLR literature, Grossoehme and Lipstein (2016) argue that there are two primary approaches to analysing longitudinal qualitative data: recurrent cross-sectional analysis and trajectory analysis. According to their findings, a recurrent cross-sectional analysis is the preferred method if the

researcher's primary interest is comparing two time points for an entire study sample. The trajectory approach focuses on changes over time and is preferred when the researcher's purpose is to understand individual's experiences overtime and how structural processes impact upon it. As the research question and aims of the study (outlined in Chapter 1) are around children's experiences of their own wellbeing across the transition to school, the structured approach to trajectory analysis developed by Grossoehme and Lipstein (2016) was applied to the Stage 2 data. Distinctive aspects of this approach are its focus on how processes or experiences change over time. Because the same cohort is maintained throughout the study, the level of data analysis can be individuals or sub groups (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016).

Following this approach, I considered both the research question and aims and the theoretical approach of the study design before analysing data. This is of key importance when analysing QLLR data as this a priori decision making will "ensure that data is collected, coded and structured in a manner consistent with the research plan (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016, p.3). Analysis of the data was supported by the use of Saldaña's (2003) 16 questions for analysing qualitative longitudinal data. Saldaña (2003) purports the use of questions to help structure the analytic process. Additionally, the use of analytic questions supports the researcher in developing deeper levels of analysis and interpretation (Holland, 2007), especially when founded on an explicit theoretical perspective (Calman et al. 2013). The 16 question set created by Saldaña (2003) is organised into three groups: framing questions, descriptive questions, and analytic or interpretive questions. He refers to these questions as "fundamental and necessary starting points for analysis" (p. 65). While underscoring the importance of using guiding questions as tools for analysis, he also specifies that not all 16 questions may be needed for a particular study, and that that there may be additional questions identified by a researcher. While these questions are a tool for guiding rigorous analysis, Saldaña (2003) emphasises that there are no prescriptive or universal formulas for doing this work and that each study and methodology are "context-specific and rely on the creative artistry of the analyst to make sense of it all" (p.62). To enhance the rigour of this study and demonstrate transparency in the analytic process, the questions developed for analysing Stage 2 data are listed below in table 10.

Table 8: Application of Saldaña's 16 questions for longitudinal research analysis

16 Questions for Qualitative Research (Saldaña, 2003, p.63-64)	How the questions framed the analysis of the study's longitudinal data
Framing Questions (5)	**Framing Questions (4)**
1) What is different from one pond or pool of data through the next?	How did children's accounts differ between data collection rounds (pools)? How did children's accounts differ between different childcare/early learning services (ponds)? How did children's accounts differ between schools (ponds)? How did children's accounts differ between service integration models (ponds)? How did individual children's accounts differ (ponds)?
2) When do changes occur through time?	Discrete-time data strategy (Willet, Singer, Martin, 1998, p. 401). Data collected in fourth term of pre-school and second term of reception. How will codes change between data collection rounds to reflect these differences?
3) What contextual and intervening conditions appear to influence and affect participant changes through time?	Does service integration influence or affect children's accounts? Do transition strategies influence or affect children's accounts? Does transitioning with or without peers influence or affect children's accounts?
4) What are the dynamics of participant changes through time?	How can I as the researcher be sensitive to each individual's attitudes, values, and beliefs about their own experiences and understandings when analysing children's accounts?
5) What preliminary assertions about participant changes can be made as data analysis progresses?	Not applicable – the structured trajectory method (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016) requires waiting until all data is collected as the focus is on individual trajectories.
Descriptive Questions (7)	**Descriptive Questions (7)**
1) What increases or emerges over time?	Are there trends in the ways that children describe their understandings and experiences of play and rules that emerge across data collection rounds? Are there trends in the way in which children enact agency in the research process that emerge across data collection rounds?
2) What is cumulative over time?	How does children's development across the transition impact on their accounts?
3) What kind of surges or epiphanies occur over time?	Do children's accounts include any critical instances? Does this critical incidence produce relatively sudden chances or subsequent actions?
4) What decreases or ceases through time?	Are there aspects of children's accounts in data collection round one that are decreased or absent in round two? Are the ways in which children enact agency within the research process decreased or ceased across transition?

5) What remains constant or consistent through time	What aspects of children's accounts remain consistent across transition? What aspects of children's agency within the research process remain unchanged?
6) What is idiosyncratic through time	Are there aspects of children's accounts that appear erratic or to fluctuate? How might this set limits on the transferability of the findings to other contexts?
7) What is missing through time?	If something appears to be missing from children's accounts (form my perspective) is there something else present? Or vice-versa?
Analytic and Interpretive Questions (4)	**Analytic and Interpretive Questions (4)**
1) Which changes interrelate through time	Is there interrelation in the accounts of children from the same service integration groups across the transition to school?
2) Which changes through time oppose or harmonize with natural human development or constructed social processes?	What is surprising or unexpected in children's accounts given the children's ongoing development and the constructed social processes they encounter across transition?
3) What are participant or conceptual rhythms through time?	Does the transition to school mark an important or decisive stage or phase for participants?
4) What is the through-line of the study	How will the data be summarised and organised to enable more extended and complex storytelling?

Using the study specific questions developed from Saldaña's 16 questions, the data underwent the following 10 step analysis process guided by the structured trajectory approach. As per the structured trajectory approach all data from both data collection points was collected before data analysis was commenced (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016).

Table 9: Stage 2 data analysis process

Step One: Transcripts from the first data collection round were read and colour coded to separate each child's individual account in the case of dual/multi-child focus groups.

Step Two: Initial coding (by hand) of phase one transcripts for each participant using the a priori themes of play, rules, and agency within the research process.

Step Three: Initial coding (by hand) of the round two transcripts for each participant using the a priori themes of play, rules, and agency within the research process.

Step Four: Re-coding (by hand) of round one transcripts to further delineate themes within the three a priori categories.

Step Five: Re-coding (by hand) of round two transcripts to further delineate themes within the three a priori categories.

Step Six: Final coding (by hand) of all transcripts using finalised codes developed in step four and five

Step Seven: A time-ordered story was developed for each child where key ideas, understandings, and experiences identified in the initial and subsequent coding rounds were recorded to emphasise each child's individual trajectory during their transition experience.

Step Eight: Field notes for each participant from both data collections rounds were coded in relation to the theme of children's agency within the research process and added into the time-ordered story for each child.

Step Nine: A participant narrative was developed for each child using data included in the time-ordered stories and background information on the child to clearly delineate each child's unique experiences and understandings during their transition to school.

Step Ten: Time-structured matrices were developed for each of a prior themes summarising key points of similarities and differences in children's experiences, understandings, and enactment of agency in the research process for each data collection round. The ways in which children's accounts changed (or did not change) between the two rounds was also highlighted within the matrices.

Given the complexity of analysing the phase one and phase two transcripts, many of which included multiple young children's accounts in a variety of busy and dynamic settings, coding by hand was chosen as a more effective and innately intuitive process than the use of coding software. This choice was supported by the findings of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who also report that they "have not found computerised programs particularly useful in inquires with massive amounts of fields of text of different kinds" (p. 131) in their QLLR studies. Additionally, Lister, Smith, Middleton, and Cox (2002, as cited in Saldaña 2003) also conclude from their review of QLLR literature that very few QLLR studies include reports of using specific software programs for analysis, and generally do not include commentary on its utility or success. Coding the transcripts and field notes in this study by hand allowed for a detailed and nuanced analysis of the data given the challenges and constraints of QLLR.

To present the data, a storytelling model was chosen to explore children's transition to school and represent children's experiences and understandings over time. Storytelling models provide a way of both organising and re-storying the master narrative of a study's data (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). A time-ordered story was created for each participant phase one and two transcripts and fieldnotes. As stories traditionally unfold with a beginning, middle, and end; analysing a participant's data across a transition chronologically is a useful technique for analysing and presenting QLLR data (Saldaña, 2003). From the time-ordered stories, a narrative was written supplemented by background information to account for the "nature of conditions and causes" (Dey, 1990, p.180) that influenced and affected children's accounts, and the context of the environments that children transitioned within. In this study, the detailed participant narrative written for each child further emphasise each individual's unique trajectory, and ensured that participant's voice, understandings, experiences and choices during the research activities were at the fore front of the data analysis process.

The use of time-sequenced matrices is also an important part of the trajectory approach, and wider QLLR approaches as this process helps to preserve "chronological flow" (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and support a deeper understanding of 'what led to what' (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016). While the focus remains on individual trajectories, analysing differences between participants within pools and ponds (sub groups) demonstrates variations and dynamics within the data. Within QLLR, places where a majority or minority of participants have similar responses, terms such as "most, some, or a few" (Saldaña, 2003, p.73) were used as a preferable substitute to quantitative proportions (such as percentages or numbers of respondents). These terms are used throughout the time-sequenced matrices to demonstrate trends and outliers in the data.

Together, the use of the structured trajectory approach to analysis and the addition of participant narratives demonstrate a rigorous approach to data analysis which upholds the theoretical underpinnings of this research. The data and subsequent analyses for Stage 2 is presented in Chapter Six.

4.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter four outlines the key considerations for conducting child centred participatory research with young children on their understandings and experiences of wellbeing. This includes discussion of the methodology used in the design, procedures, and analysis of the research reported in this thesis. Due to the multi-stage design of the research study, the chapter explicitly details the design, procedures, and analysis for each stage separately, as well as describing how Stage 1 provided the opportunity to refine the method and identify the a priori foci that formed the basis of Stage 2. The following chapter explores and reports on the findings from the Stage 1 data described within the first half of this chapter. Findings from Stage 2 of the research study are reported in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 5 - Results & Discussion: Stage 1

5.0 Introduction

Chapter 5 reports the findings from Stage 1[7] of the research study. The purpose of Stage 1 was twofold. The first was to uncover how young children's accounts of wellbeing accorded with or diverged from current adult derived conceptualisations. The second was to trial emoji as a child-centred participatory visual research method for conducting wellbeing research *with* young children. The chapter begins with a brief summary of key points of the data analysis process and represents the Stage 1 findings using a detailed data table. The subsequent section reports on key findings from the analysis through exploration of the data in relation to relevant theoretical constructs and empirical research. The final section engages in reflexive discussion about the utility of emoji as a visual research method for conducting participatory wellbeing research with young children, which lead to the development and refinement of the method for Stage 2 of the research process.

5.0.1 Research Timeline
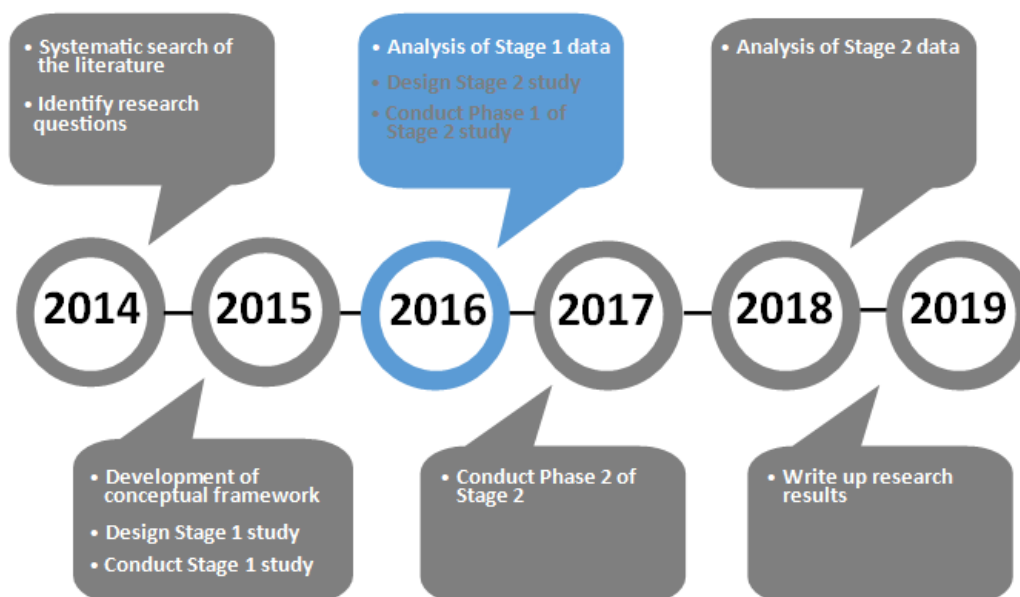
Figure 11. Research timeline – Chapter 5

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[7] The research findings from Stage 1 have also been published in a peer-reviewed journal. Please see entry eight under the heading 'Publications Arising from this Thesis' on page 13.

5.1 Stage 1 Findings

As per the emoji method used in Stage 1, I purposefully did not use or introduce language from social indicators frameworks or child wellbeing literature. Child participants were given carefully selected emoji, and asked questions such as "what feeling do you think that is?" and "can you pick an emoji and tell me a story about it?". The choice to avoid adult derived language and concepts found in the wellbeing and social indicator literature was a considered one, as a key aim of Stage 1 was to uncover whether children's accounts of their own wellbeing accorded or differed with adult derived indicators. By using open ended questions with emoji manipulatives, children were given opportunities to determine what was important to them, and what they wanted to share without being unduly influenced by adult language or constructions of wellbeing.

Using the hybrid approach to data analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), outlined in Chapter 4, I collected data from Stage 1 which I analysed against an a priori codebook I created from current, widely used adult derived indicators of child wellbeing (see table 5). The a priori codebook included adult derived child wellbeing indicators uncovered in the systematic searching of child wellbeing literature (see table 4). Six indicators of child wellbeing formed the a priori codebook: (1) Feeling happy, loved, and safe, (2) Being healthy, (3) Opportunities for learning, (4) Material basics, (5) Social participation, (6) Family relationships.

Coding of the data demonstrated that children's accounts of wellbeing engaged with all six adult derived wellbeing indicators that formed the a priori codebook. Analysis of the data revealed that children's accounts accorded with adult derived social indicators, despite not being asked specific questions about the indicators, nor the indicators being named or mentioned by the researcher. This strongly suggests that the adult derived indicators are meaningful and applicable to children's lived experiences and wellbeing. The findings of Stage 1 also provided validation of the emoji method through facilitating robust and in depth accounts of children's wellbeing.

Crucially for this thesis, children's accounts also uncovered substantive new idea and themes that did not accord with the adult derived indicators. From this, key themes emerged during the initial and subsequent coding rounds from the undefined data segments. I initially coded these under the headings play, outdoor play, agency, and control. In the final coding stage, themes were corroborated and legitimised, as per the hybrid approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), and two additional child derived indicators were delineated: opportunities for play, and children's agency.

Table 12 demonstrates the ways in which young children's accounts accorded with the adult derived indicators by reporting on the frequency for each of the adult and child derived indicators, key themes

that emerged in the data, and excerpts that elucidate the ways in which children understood and experienced the indicators. The six adult derived indicators forming the a priori codebook have been widely validated, substantively theorised, and profoundly explored within the child wellbeing literature (see for example Mishra, Ray & Risse, 2018; Cho, 2015; Heshmati, Tausch & Bajalan, 2008; Casas, 2011; Pollard & Lee, 2003; Land, Lamb, & Kahler Mustillo, 2001). In addition, O'Hare and Gutierrez (2012) conducted a comprehensive composite index of child wellbeing which identified 19 key studies combining social indicators or domains of wellbeing into indices. This review demonstrated that using social indicators to measure wellbeing is a "widely accepted practice" (O'Hare and Gutierrez, 2012, p. 623) and that there is a wealth of theoretical and empirical research evidencing that child wellbeing can be measured at a population level through these indicators. However, a key finding of their review was that children's voices continued to be excluded in these constructions. To explain this ongoing exclusion, Baum (2016) draws our attention to some of the problematic traditions in public health research that have viewed those who are the focus of research as passive subjects who are studied and reported on. She argues that this is problematic as it a positivist standpoint which "assumes an objective and verifiable truth" (p.1). This tradition has been, and continues to be questioned, both with respect to the extent that research can be objective and how it objectifies and de-powers groups of people, such as young children (Baum, 2016). O'Hare and Gutierrez (2012), argue that given the substantive evidence and literature on the efficacy of adult derived indicators, what is needed now is research that includes children's voices in relation to their own wellbeing, because we cannot assume that the adult identified indicators are objective and verifiable truths. As argued by O'Hare and Gutierrez (2012), children's voices are an important addition, not as a means to contradict or dismiss the work previously done in identifying, developing, and validating wellbeing indicators, but to further our understanding of child wellbeing and the indicators used to assess it. Adding weight to the arguments made by Baum (2016) and O'Hare and Gutierrez (2012), the UNCRC (as discussed in Chapter 3) declares the right for children to have a voice in matters that affect them (1989). As one of the guiding principles of the convention is children's capacity to form their own views, express them freely, and for their views to carry weight in matters affecting them; from a rights based or citizen-child perspective, young children's voices must be included in our understandings if we are to uphold their human rights.

In relation to the current state of the literature on adult-derived conceptualisations of wellbeing, this chapter will focus on reporting the novel findings of the Stage 1 study, the two child-identified indicators uncovered through young children's accounts of their own wellbeing. This focus fits with current calls for further research in the child wellbeing literature where it has been argued that the

political and academic agenda needs to move away from a focus on adult perspectives and move towards children's self-characterisation and child perspectives of wellbeing (Ben-Arieh, 2008, 2010). It is important to highlight that these two indicators are not the objects of focus in Stage 2 because they are more important than the adult identified wellbeing indicators currently in use, rather they are the object of focus because they emerged in Stage 1 from the inclusion of young children's voices in wellbeing research and have not yet been empirically investigated. The two child-identified indicators of play and agency have not been previously theorised in this thesis as they were concepts that emerged through analysis of the Stage 1 data. As such, after reporting the data (table 12), I engage in a brief review of the literature in relation to the concepts of play and agency, and how they relate to child wellbeing research. Subsequently, I explore children's accounts of the two child-identified indicators in relation to the wider literature.

Table 10: Child wellbeing indicators identified in the Stage 1 analysis process

Wellbeing indicators	# of children who identified the indicator	# of focus groups in which this indicator was identified	Themes identified by children for this indicator	Example excerpts from focus groups
Feeling happy, loved, and safe	25	9	• Feeling loved and supported by parents and friends • Being protected • Physical safety (not being lost or alone, not being hurt) • Following the rules • Having pets	**Interviewer:** Which picture did you pick? **Child:** Happy **Interviewer:** Happy Can you tell me a story about why someone might feel happy? **Child:** Because...someone helped him **Interviewer**: Can anyone think of a sad story? **Child:** Um, a sad, um when, um, when the happy friend went out with his mum and dad and he went the wrong way and he didn't know where his mum was, or dad was, or brother, and he was lost. And he was so sad. **Child:** Mummy and daddy will get the monster and you'll not be sad **Interviewer:** They will protect you from a monster? **Child:** Yes, and then you won't be sad **Interviewer:** Which picture did you pick? **Child 1**: Um, a heart. **Interviewer:** A heart. And why did you pick that one? **Child 1:** Because sometimes I feel happy **Interviewer:** Sometimes you feel happy? **Child 2:** When you're in love **Interviewer:** If you love someone you might feel happy? Don't we? What, who do you love Henry? **Child 1:** I love [name of child at the childcare centre] **Interviewer:** Is that one of your friends? [child 1 nods] **Interviewer:** What did you want to tell me? **Child:** Um I got angry **Interviewer:** You have an angry picture? **Child:** And sad **Interviewer:** And a sad. Why is, why might somebody feel angry and sad? **Child:** Cause, they got smacked in the face?

Being Physically Healthy	9	6	• Medical care • Health promoting behaviours • Receiving help to stay healthy	**Interviewer:** What picture did you pick? **Child:** A heart **Interviewer:** A heart. And why did you pick a heart? **Child:** Because um my heart hurt, and then I had to go to the doctors. **Interviewer:** Your heart hurt and you had to go to the doctor. And what did the doctor do? **Child:** He fixed my heart. **Interviewer:** He fixed your heart. And how did that make you feel. **Child:** Happy **Interviewer:** What did you pick? **Child:** Fork and spoon **Interviewer:** What do might you do with those? **Child:** We eat **Interviewer:** We eat. And how do you feel after you've eaten? **Child:** Healthier **Child:** I chose a sun! **Interviewer:** And how do you feel when you see the sun **Child:** Use your sunglasses **Interviewer:** You might wear sunglasses **Child:** Use, ah your sunblock, wear your hat, like this [points to head] **Interviewer:** Why would you wear sunscreen, why would you put on sunscreen and a hat? **Child:** Sun! Sunburn! Don't get burned! **Interviewer:** Can you tell me a story about feeling sad? **Child:** I tell me mum **Interviewer:** You tell your mum if you are feeling sad? What does she do if you tell her that? **Child:** Gives me medicine **Interviewer:** Gives you medicine, so if you're sick? **Child:** Yes

Opportunities for Learning	6	3	• Skills currently being learned • Resources that support learning • Knowledge recently acquired	**Interviewer**: What picture did you chose? **Child 1:** A bike **Interviewer**: A bike. Do you have a bicycle? **Child 1:** Yep! **Interviewer:** How do you feel when you're using it? **Child 1:** Um good and it has four wheels, training wheels so I can learn to ride! **Interviewer:** It has training wheels to help you ride? **Child 2:** Mine has no wheels, it's a balance bike. **Interviewer:** You have a balance bike? **Child 2:** I do, and I started and I was riding, sometimes I ride on my balance bike when I go super-fast I put my legs up and I don't fall off. **Child 1:** I balance, I balance on my four wheels sometimes but sometimes I don't **Interviewer:** Which picture did you choose? **Child:** A house **Interviewer:** A house. Why did you pick that one? **Child:** Cause it's from a Doctor Seuss book called Hop on Pop! **Interviewer:** Is that a book you have you read that book? **Child:** Yeah, lots of times **Interviewer:** What did you like about that book? **Child:** It's cause it's for children's learning **Child 1:** [in response to another child telling a story about playing football] Excuse me, actually in soccer you're not allowed to touch this ball. **Interviewer:** Are you not allowed to touch the ball with any part of your body? **Child 2:** You're feet! Interviewer: Did you learn that playing soccer? **Child 1:** I did! I remember on the team!
Material Wellbeing	11	7	• Having access to basic needs • Material possessions	**Interviewer:** Which picture did you pick? **Child:** A house **Interviewer:** A house, and why did you pick that one? **Child:** So the rain doesn't go on my head **Interviewer:** When you're in your house the rain doesn't go on your head. And how do you feel at your house? **Child:** Um, good, with my brother

				Interviewer: What face did you pick? **Child:** A happy face. **Interviewer:** Happy. And why might somebody feel happy? Can you tell me a story? **Child:** Cause it ate all of its lunch. **Interviewer:** Oh, the face ate all of its lunch! And said hmmm, how do you think they might be feeling? **Multiple children answer:** Happy! Full! **Interviewer:** Full? **Child:** Yeah **Interviewer:** Yes, is that why they're feeling happy? **Child:** Yeah **Interviewer:** Why might that face look like that? What feeling is that showing? **Child:** Angry **Interviewer:** Angry, and why might someone feel angry? **Child:** Cause someone taking a toy, or they broke or lose their toy or chuck it up into the tree **Interviewer:** Which pictures did you chose? **Child:** A phone and a happy face **Interviewer:** Why did you pick those two? **Child:** Cause the person got a new phone
Social Participation	21	9	• Peer relationships • Friendships • Celebrations	**Interviewer:** Which picture would you like to tell me about? **Child 1**: [makes a scary noise] **Interviewer:** Oh! Which ones that? **Child:** Angry **Interviewer:** Angry. And might somebody feel angry? **Child 1:** Because they weren't allowed to play **Child 2:** I picked angry too Interviewer: You picked angry too. Can you tell me a story about why someone might feel angry? **Child 2:** Angry cause somebody likes them, but they like someone else. **Interviewer:** So if you liked somebody, but they liked somebody else you might feel angry? **Child 2:** Yeah **Interviewer:** Which picture did you chose? **Child:** Sad. **Interviewer:** Sad. And why might somebody be feeling sad?

					Child: Well that's because someone is sick, and they didn't get to come to their party Interviewer: Crying? Could you tell me a story about why someone might cry? Child: Because someone splashed water at him Interviewer: Someone splashed water at him? Child: And he splashed water back
Family Relationships	23	9		• Communication and interaction with family members • Loving others • Protection and support • Being reprimanded	Interviewer: Which picture are you holding? Child: The phone Interviewer: The phone? And what are you doing with the phone? Child: Hmmm, ringing someone. Interviewer: You're ringing someone. Do you use a phone sometimes? Child: Yes Interviewer: And who do you ring? Child: My nanny and poppy Interviewer: Your nanny and poppy. And why do you do that? Child: Because I love them Interviewer: Which picture did you want to tell me about first? [child had chosen two different face] Child: A sad one. Interviewer: A sad one. And why might someone be feeling sad? Child: Cause, cause it's missing its mum Interviewer: Oh, missing its mum. And what about this one? How is this person feeling? [pointing to the happy emoji the child also chose] Child: Happy, the mum is here Interviewer: You were playing with your brother and your daddy had to rescue you? Out of the neighbour's garden? Child: Yeah and then mummy said 'what were you doing boys?' Interviewer: How do you think your mummy was feeling? Child: A bit angry and we told the truth. We were playing in my bedroom and after that I went outside and then [my brother] followed me and bumped into me then we climbed over the fence. Interviewer: How does it feel when your mum is angry at you? Child: Um a bit sad Child: Mummy and daddy will get the monster and you'll not be sad Interviewer: They will protect you from a monster?

				Child: Yes, and then you won't be sad **Interviewer:** Which picture did you pick? **Child:** Cross. **Interviewer:** Cross. And what might make someone feel cross? **Child:** When mummy tells me off.	
Opportunities for play	32	11	• Indoor play • Outdoor play • Play with friends • Technology	**Interviewer:** Would anyone want to tell me a story about one of the pictures they chose? **Child:** I chose a phone **Interviewer:** Why did you chose a phone? **Child:** I have a phone in my locker **Interviewer:** what do you do with it? **Child:** I can play games on it but it's not real, it's just old and it can't work anymore. **Interviewer:** So you like to pretend? **Child:** Yeah **Child:** I chose happy cause I'm so excited. **Interviewer:** what are you excited about? **Child:** I've got a football, and a football oval, I've got two football ovals. I've got one without the school and one with the school. **Interviewer**: So are you excited to play on the sport fields when you get to school? **Child:** Yeah, and I very want to tackle **Interviewer:** Would you like to tell me about the picture you chose? [the child had chosen the phone/tablet emoji] **Child:** My mummy lets me play on her phone and my sister snatches it off me. **Interviewer:** How does that make you feel if your sister snatches the phone off you? **Child:** Sad and angry **Interviewer:** Would you like to tell me a story about the picture you chose? **Child 1:** Sunny. And when it was sunny one day it was so hot, we had to stay inside for a long time and I didn't want to I just wanted to go outside and play **Child 2:** Or go in the pool? **Child 1:** Well we were running around the sprinkler on the sunny day. And I got a bee sting so I couldn't keep running around the sprinkler, it hurt!	

| Children's Agency | 15 | 7 | • Agency within family relationships
• Enacting agency in difficult situations
• Being reprimanded
• Rules and control | **Interviewer:** What feeling did you chose?
Child: An angry face about his mum or dad didn't give him chocolate when he ate all his lunch or fruit. Now he's feeling angry.
Interviewer: Ah, so he ate all his lunch and all his fruit like he was supposed to, but his mum or dad didn't give him chocolate after?
Child: Yes

Child 1: I chose sad. When the happy friend went out with his mum and dad and he went the wrong way and he didn't know where his mum was, or dad was, or brother, and he was lost. And he was so sad.
Child 2: I got lost at the shop, but I didn't worry about it, I looked around to see if I could find a mummy and daddy and I did find mummy, so I felt happy
Child 3: You should ask for help at the shopping
Child 2: I didn't get to ask it cause lots of people were in the way at the shopping
Child 3: You should ask the shopping man and you can say, um 'where's my mum or dad gone', and then he will say 'it's gone that way'
Interviewer: So you could ask a grown up you could trust for help? To help you find your mum or dad
Child 3: Yep
Child 2: I didn't do
Interviewer: You were able to find your mum all on your own?
Child 2: Yeah

Interviewer: Could anyone tell me a story about this picture [house emoji]
Multiple children: A house!
Interviewer: Can anyone tell me a story about how someone might be feeling if they were in their house?
Multiple children: Happy
Child 1: To run away
Interviewer: You might want to run away. Why might someone want to run away from their house?
Child 1: Cause I was cross with my family |
| | | | | |

5.2 Opportunities for play

Despite its absence in current child wellbeing frameworks, play and its centrality to the lives and experiences of children has been long recognised and privileged in early childhood education (Samuelsson & Fleer, 2008). The section below gives a brief history of play, and how the concept is currently understood in early childhood education, public health, and human development literature.

5.2.1 Play – a Brief Review

Play and its centrality to the lives of children has been a recognised part of early childhood programs since the work of Frobel (1887) and has been integrated into early childhood curriculum since the late 19th century with the work of Montessori (1914). Play has also been a heavily theorised concept since the 19th century, and subsequent theories of play are generally categorised into two types of play theories: classical (19th century and early 20th century) and modern theories (post 1920) (Mellon 1994; Saracho & Spodek, 1998). Classical theories strove to explain why play exists and understood play to be about largely energy regulation and instincts (Gillmore 1971; Ellis, 1973). Classical play theories are now understood to be 'armchair theories', grounded in philosophical understandings of children in the 19th century, rather than empirical research (Saracho & Spodek, 1998). However, despite the "profound deficiencies" (Rubin, 1982) in classical play theories, these theories have provided the foundation for modern theories of play which inform current understandings. Rather than seek to understand why children play, modern theories of play have accepted that children do play, and instead seek to understand the influence of play on children's development and learning (Spodek & Saracho, 1994). Early theorisation of play included the development of the psychodynamic theory of play by Freud (1973), the constructivist theory of play by Piaget (1962), and the work of Vygotsky (1967) whose sociocultural approaches to child development position play as a process that gives children more control than they would have in reality, serving to build mental structures and support development. The second half of the 20th century continued to see significant theoretical developments in the concept of play by theorists Ellis (1973), White (1959), and Singer (1973). Saracho and Spodek, 1998 suggest that an integration of modern theories supports us in understanding the multi-dimensional functions of play, which they understand to be

> A natural activity [which] assists individuals in understandings and depicting their world, at both thinking and feeling levels…provid[ing] individuals with a sense of mastery or control over some facets of their world. (p. 8)

Play continues to be understood as a vast and varied concept, especially across disciplines which, according to Gordon (2009), have come to different conclusions about the nature of play. Göncü and

Gaskins (2007) assert that because play is such a complex phenomenon, it has been difficult to integrate its multiple perspectives into a cohesive theoretical concept. They describe the current play literature as being composed of four major strands of play theory which have influenced present views of theoretical meaning of play:

1. Defining the characteristics of the behaviour called play
2. Examining aspects of animal play and its meaning
3. Examining the role of play as a socio-cultural phenomenon and adaptive life quality throughout the lifespan
4. Focusing on the role of various types of play in fostering children's development and education. (Göncü & Gaskins, 2007, p. 9)

The concept of play in disciplines such as education and health draw heavily on the fourth strand or understanding of play as a vehicle for child development. Because of this grounding, play is frequently described and understood within education and health discourses as an individual developmental phenomenon, through which children ostensibly progress in systematic ways (Brooker, Blaise, and Edwards 2014). In fact, play and development have become so intricately connected in early childhood discourses that they are commonly described partners in the early years (Grinheim & Ødegaard, 2013), with the understanding that play is 'the basis of learning' (Morrison, 2011). Due to the perception that child development is linear and systematic, within developmental discourses, play is often perceived as a form of assessment which can be used to gauge normal child development (Bergen, 1998). However, there is increasing criticism of the conceptualisation of play as an indicator of positive developmental outcomes, or a way of benchmarking the development of children.

Sutton-Smith (2009) suggests that the rhetoric of play as progress "appears to serve adult needs rather than the needs of children" (p. 41). While Sutton-Smith acknowledges correlation between play and development, and that it is an 'easy mistake' to assume that the prime function of children's play is to contribute to development, he asks the question of whether play "need have a function apart from the job of playing, the associated joy of living, the increase in enjoying one's own play skills, and the play interests and association that naturally follows" (p. 45). Sutton-Smith additionally argues that when children are asked about the purpose of their play, there is little or no emphasis on development and growth, rather their accounts are similar to those adopted by adults in which play is a kind of "valued personal experience" (2009, p. 50), not a developmental tool.

In recent years, there has been a substantive shift in the discipline of early childhood education to reconceptualised play, moving away from the view of play as a developmental trajectory (strand four)

and instead refocusing it as a socio-cultural phenomenon (strand three) which develops in non-linear and unpredictable ways through children's focused interactions within their physical and social environments (Fromberg, 2002). From this perspective, play is understood as voluntary, enjoyable, and pleasurable to children (Saracho & Spodeck, 1998) and is grounded in the cultures and contexts in which it is constructed (Göncü, Mistry, & Mosier, 2000). This understanding of play accords with article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children have the right to leisure, play and culture in the societies in which they live (United Nations, 1989).

From a public health perspective, physical activity and recreation are often labeled as 'play', framing play as socially-acceptable behaviours which support societally-beneficial outcomes such as a reduction of sedentary behaviour and obesity (Cosco, 2017; Frolich, Alexander & Fusco, 2012, Alexander, Frolich, Fusco, 2012; Alexander, Fusco, Frolich, 2015). Interest in children's play from the discipline of public health has intensified in the past two decades, stemming from the call to action from the WHO (2002), on what they have termed a global childhood obesity epidemic (Alexander et al., 2014). This view, argues Alexander, Frolich & Fusco (2014), positions play as a "means to achieve an urgent health end" (p. 1189). However, there are calls within public health literature for a more critical examination of public health discourses on play, one that acknowledges that the focus on play as health may reshape the understanding and meanings children attribute to play, as well as their possibilities for play in ways that have negative or unintended consequences (Alexander et al. 2012; Frolich, Alexander & Fusco, 2012).

The concern of negative or unintended consequences in this framing of play is intensified by the fact that only active play (play engages the player in moderate to vigorous physical activity) is valued (Herrington & Brussoni, 2015; Frolich et al., 2012). As such, outdoor and nature play have been a particular focus in the public health literature, as research has evidenced that children are more physical active outdoors (Schaefer, Plotnikoff, Majumdar, Mollard, Woo, et al., 2014; Wheeler, Cooper, Page & Jago, 2010). However, despite the potential health benefits of outdoor and nature play for children, there have also been heightened perceptions of outdoor play as 'risky' and concerns for child safety and the need for increased parental surveillance and safety precautions that have also dominated public health and health promotion literature (Brockman, Jago & Fox, 2011; Sandester & Kennair, 2011). Concerns about children's safety outside of the home (strangers, traffic etc.) are widely understood to have contributed to a decline in outdoor play for children and a reduction in their independent mobility (Ergler, Kearns & Witten, (2013). There is a growing body of literature challenging the idea of nature and outdoor play as simply a 'means to an end' for physical activity and the need to restrict potentially risky outdoor play over perceived safety concerns (Brussoni, Gibbons,

Gray, Ishikawaw, Sadester et al. 2015; Wyver, Tranter, Naughton, Little, Sandseter & Bundy; 2009). This is a concern to public health researchers, as not only does this impact on children's physical activity, but, as argued by Ergler et al. (2013) children learn to understand their own environments and context as well as develop their own identities through outdoor play, both independently and with peers. Ergler et al., (2013) research suggests that unstructured, child-led play is not only important for their physical health but is also an essential aspect of their wellbeing.

Alexander et al. (2014) caution that what remains unacknowledged in public health discourses is that the desire and efforts to advance play to improve child health may be "reshaping children's relationships with their play…and neglecting children's complex experiences of and preferences for diverse forms of play" (p. 1331). Veitch, Arundell, Hume, and Ball (2013) suggest that an important avenue for better understanding the connection between play and children's physical activity is to ask children themselves. Their research, which involved children aged seven-to-thirteen-years and their parents/caregivers offers key understandings of the barriers and enablers to physical activity. However, they did not attempt to untangle the children's understandings of play, other than why children may choose sedentary play over moderate to vigorous outdoor play. Given these present discourses, further efforts are needed to bring more critical and nuanced understandings of children and their play into public health and health promotion research and literature (Alexander et al., 2014; Frolich et al., 2012).

Play has also been situated within theories of human development from a lifespan perspective which suggest that there is a relationship between play in childhood and leisure in adulthood, and that this relationship is dynamic and multi-directional (Freysinger, 2015). Hurd, Anderson, Beggs & Garrahy (2011) also assert that there is a relationship between leisure and play. However, they state that the primary difference between the two concepts is that leisure is concerned with particular outcomes, unlike play which is a means to its own end. The understanding of leisure, but not play, as having particular and measurable outcomes may be the reason why there is a large body of literature that recognises leisure as an integral component of adult wellbeing (Andrews & Withey, 2012; Diener, 2000; Spiers & Walker, 2008). Yet, despite the recognition of leisure as a component of adult wellbeing, play, or in fact any equivalency or proximity of leisure, is largely missing from child social indicator research. A notable exception to this is the work of Addabbo, Di Tommaso, and Maccagnan (2014), whose research on the wellbeing of Italian children, aged six-to-ten years, investigated the use of two wellbeing indicators (developed by Nussbaum (2003)) for assessing child wellbeing. These two indicators were: (1) the capability of the senses, imagination, and thought, and (2) the capability of play (Nussbaum, 2003). These two indicators were explored using data from a National 'Daily Life'

Survey completed by a sample of Italian households. The authors found these two indicators to be of significant value for investigating child wellbeing, and suggests that further research investigating these two indicators, within a more complex framework including other child wellbeing indicators, is warranted. While there is contention in the literature on the level of comparability between play in childhood and leisure in adulthood, they share many similar dimensions such as: voluntariness, freedom of choice, personal expression, and pleasure (Freysinger, 2015) and are both classified as enjoyable behaviours done for their own sake (Cosco, 2017).

The nexus between play as a voluntary, pleasurable, and personal expression and play as a learning opportunity is referred to as the play-pedagogy interface (Wood, 2014). Wood describes the play-pedagogy interface as having three distinct modes of play: Mode A – child initiated, Mode B – adult guided, and Mode C – technicist/policy driven (p. 147). Mode A - child-initiated play is closest to the ideological tradition of free play, based on the belief that children should be able to choose and control their activities in order to develop independence, autonomy and ownership (Wood, 2014). It is generally associated with a sense of wonder, creativity, inventiveness and harmony between the child and the natural world (Berger and Lahad, 2010). In the play-pedagogy interface, Mode A is referred to as child-initiated rather than free play to acknowledge that children's play is almost always shaped and constrained by culture, rules, practices, environments, and resources generally defined by adults (Wood 2014). Mode B is described by Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness & Trew (2011) as playful structure, where the goals of play are framed in relation to curricular goals by adults yet remaining responsive to children. As such Mode B assumes that children's activities are intrinsically valuable for their learning and development (Hughes, 2010), and that play can be structured, planned, resourced and managed by adults in ways that promote specific outcomes (Saracho, 2012 as cited in Wood, 2014). In Australia, and internationally, Mode B play is generally referred to as play-based learning, which has been identified in Australian ECEC reform initiatives as a priority, mandated under the National Quality Standard. It is also a key component of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the Australian national early years curriculum (Sumsion, Grieshaber, McArdle & Shield, 2014) and current area of focus for The Australian Research Council (2019). In Mode C the focus is on planned and purposeful play, where play is expected to promote specific ways of learning. In this view, play is used to identify children's progress through developmental checklists and curriculum goals (Wood, 2014). In the following section, Wood's play-pedagogy interface is used to explore how children conceptualised play in their accounts, and how this accorded and differed from the adult derived indicators.

5.2.2 Children's Accounts of Play

Analysis of Stage 1 data revealed that children's accounts of play included both child-initiated play (Mode A) and adult/teacher-guided play (Mode B). The most frequent was child-initiated, where children described the ways they like to play. Below, Walter shares a story of a time he lost his dog, inspired by the paw print emoji. His account centres on the ways he and his brother like to play, and how their play led them to their missing dog.

Focus Group 1

> **Researcher:** Walter, what did you pick?
>
> **Walter:** Doggy tracks
>
> **Researcher:** Doggy tracks. And why did you pick that one?
>
> **Walter:** My dog got lost and I was in my bedroom with my little brother Neddy, he's about three now because he had his birthday,
>
> **Researcher:** What did you do?
>
> **Walter:** We were making a wall in my bedroom and after that I went outside to have a little run outside and get my energy out and I found the tracks, and they were doggy tracks.
>
> **Researcher:** Doggy tracks. Where did they go?
>
> **Walter:** They lead up to the fence. Ned comes out and he followed the doggy tracks and he bumped into me and then we both, we both like lion and tigers, Ned was the tiger and I was the lion. I climbed up the fence and then we went into our neighbour's garden and then mummy and daddy had to climb over the fence and daddy had to get his ladder and go into the neighbour's garden to get my dog.

Gregory's story also features the centrality of child-initiated play to children. After choosing the phone/tablet emoji, he talks about the ways he likes to use a phone to play. While Gregory and many other children's accounts expressed pleasure in playing with technology, it is clear from the way Gregory describes his play that playing imaginary games on an obsolete phone also constitutes engaging play.

Focus Group 10

Researcher: Gregory would you like to tell me a story about the pictures you picked?

> **Gregory:** A phone

Researcher: A phone. And have you used a phone before?

> **Gregory:** Ah, yeah. I have a phone in my locker

Researcher: In your locker and what do you do with it?

> **Gregory:** I can play games on it but it's not real, it's just old and it can't work anymore.

Researcher: You like to pretend you're playing games on the phone?

> **Gregory:** Yeah

Children's accounts of child-initiated play also included instances of learning and adult/teacher-guided play across many of the focus groups. Here, adult/teacher-guided play overlaps between the child-identified indicator of 'opportunities for play' and the adult derived indicator of 'opportunities for learning'. Despite these descriptions of play being highly mediated by socio-cultural norms, rules, and adult developed activities; children's accounts of Mode B play are described in ways that indicate that found this play enjoyable or engaging. Chase and Aidan's accounts of learning to play soccer both illustrate their experiences of participating in an adult developed/guided activity and how they enjoy or take pride in their ability to participate, even when explicit adult-guided learning is involved.

Focus Group 7

Researcher: Wow, lots of great ideas. Would anyone like to tell me a story about any of these pictures [emojis 6-18]

Chase: Jennifer? [name of the lead researcher]

Researcher: Yes Chase?

Chase: [holding the soccer ball emoji] Actually in soccer you're not allowed to touch this ball.

Researcher: You're not allowed to touch the ball at all?

Multiple voices: No! Feet!

Researcher: Oh, so you're allowed to touch the ball with your feet?

Chase: Yes, but not hands

Researcher: No hands?

Carter: I did!

Researcher: Interesting, there are a lot of rules to soccer, aren't there?

Chase: I did! I remember on the team!

Focus Group 1

Researcher: I'm going to put some new emojis out now [lays out emojis 6-18 in the middle of the circle] Would you like to pick a picture and tell me a story about it?

Multiple voices: [murmurs of agreement, children are busy looking at and touching the emojis]

Researcher: Would anyone like to tell me about the picture they have picked? Does anyone have a story they would like to tell me about the emoji you picked? Or how it might make you feel?

Aiden: What about soccer?!?

Researcher: Well, can you tell me a story about soccer?

Aiden: Umm, cause they have goals and I like that type of sport.

Researcher: You like soccer? Thanks Aiden. Can you tell me how you might feel when you're playing sport?

Aiden: Um very good.

Researcher: Very good. What do you like about it?

Aiden: Cause you tackle and try and get the ball off people

One child's account also included elements of Mode C play, where Eden identified a book she has had read to her that is "for children's learning". However, her account of this book did not use the word play, nor did she speak about 'liking' the book or being proud of knowledge or skills she had acquired from the book that children's accounts of Mode A and B play included. Rather, she was sharing a connection she made between an emoji and a learning experience. No children's accounts identified Mode C play as 'play' in their words, affirming that while this type of play may be useful for adults in tracking child's development and attainment of curricular goals, children may not recognise this as play, or not experience it in the same way as other modes of play.

> **Focus Group 12**
>
> **Researcher:** Eden, would you like to tell me about the picture you picked?
> > **Eden:** A house
> **Researcher:** A house. Why did you pick that one?
> > **Eden:** Cause it's from a Doctor Seuss book called Hop on Pop
> **Researcher:** Oh, it looks like a house from the Dr Seuss book Hop on Pop?
> > **Eden:** Yeah
> **Researcher:** Neat. Have you read that book?
> > **Eden:** Yeah
> **Researcher:** What do you like about that book?
> > **Eden:** It's cause it's for children's learning

Opportunities for play was the only wellbeing indicator (both adult or child informed) evidenced across all 13 child focus groups and was present in more children's accounts than any other indicator. Additionally, it generated by far the greatest amount of discussion between participants. Due to the frequency in which play featured in children's accounts, and the centrality of leisure in adult conceptualisations of wellbeing, the exclusion of play in current conceptualisation of child wellbeing is a surprising omission requiring further investigation.

5.3 Agency

Agency is an essential component or dimension of wellbeing (Alkire, 2005; Bandura, 1994; Smith et al., 2000), receiving significant interest within the wellbeing literature for older children and adults in relation to understanding how individuals' exercise agency to 'be well' (Taylor, 2011). Yet, despite a well-established link between agency and the wellbeing of adults, the role of agency in child wellbeing is not reflected in current child wellbeing frameworks as an indicator or dimension of wellbeing. A notable exception to the lack of discussion surrounding children's agency and wellbeing in the social indicator literature is the work of Ballet, Biggeri, and Comim (2011) and Biggeri and Santi (2012) whose

work, drawing on Sen's capability approach (Sen, 1990, 1997, 1999), has questioned whether agency can be an appropriate measure of wellbeing for children. This question has also been a specific challenge in relation to young children whose agency is overwhelmingly impacted by generational and hierarchical adult-child relationships. Relationships which position children in society as a 'distinct', and often marginalised group of people who must have decisions made for them - often without recognition of their wants, needs, or opinions (Cannella, 2002). The following section offers a brief overview of historical and current conceptualisations of agency, and how the field of childhood studies has taken up the challenge of situating agency within childhood.

5.3.1 Agency – a Brief Review

Despite centuries of theoretical debate, agency continues to be a contentious concept that has been theorised and operationalised in many varied, and often oppositional, ways. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) claim that current tensions within the literature can be traced back to Enlightenment, in which debates between rationalism and philosophical individualism clashed against moral and norm-based action. In the late 20th century, social theorists began to develop more complex and nuanced conceptualisations of agency. Giddens's (1984) structuration theory proposed a critique of binary and deterministic models of agency and structure that dominated prior to the 1980s (Skattebol, Redmond, and Zizzo, 2017). In his work on agency, Giddens's is committed to the concept of ontological dualism, wanting to preserve both structure and agency within the theory of structuration (King, 2004). His critique of simplistic models of agency and structure rests on three key arguments, summarised by valentine (2011), as:

> (1) individual agents create and re-create the social institutions in which they live, by acting and making   choices within the constraints they face.
> (2) these choices are often routine and habitual: neither wholly formed by social forces, nor wholly determined by unconscious or subterranean psychological forces, nor freely and explicitly made in all circumstances.
> (3) competent agents monitor reflexively their own actions and the actions of others. Individuals may not always be able to accurately describe their motivations, but they can generally give an account of why they act as they do, and this will be made in the context of their relationship to others (p. 350).

While Giddens's (1984) work has been instrumental in developing and redefining current conceptualisation of agency, his theory of structuration has also been criticised for its reliance on conscious, rational and self-interested practice, neglecting non-rational and self-defeating aspects of agency (Ferguson, 2003).

Other social theorists, such as Alexander (1988) and Coleman (1990) have also attempted to bridge the gap between binary approaches of agency through considering how agency is impacted by social influences, interacts with its structural contexts, and is temporally located. Building on this work, Emirbayer and Miche (1998) wrote an influential paper on a [then] current construction of agency which they defined as

> the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations. (p.970)

Continuing the development of theoretical work on the concept of agency in the 1980's and 1990's, Hoggett (2001), offers a further critique of rationalist approaches to defining agency which had excluded non-reflexive action. He argues instead that humans do act involuntarily against their better judgement and argues that the link between agency and choice suggests erroneously that individuals are freely choosing actors who are somehow disembedded from the social relations and networks they are immersed in (Hoggett, 2001, p.52). Hoggett's work also engages in a critique of portions of Giddens's theoretical work on agency in relation to its focus on reflexivity. Specifically, he argues that individual's decisions are often situation contingent, where our own and other's needs and values encroach, resulting in much reflexivity occurring 'post hoc' (Skattebol et al., 2017). Hoggett's construction of agency positions agency and reflexivity as two intersecting continuums, consisting of four quadrants: reflexive agency, non-reflexive agency, self as non-reflexive subject, and self as reflexive subject (Hoggett, 2001, p. 48). The focus of his work is capturing and elucidating the ways in which individuals can position themselves and respond or 'take up' in different situations, rather than characterising individuals as having a specific type of agency (Greener, 2002, pp. 689).

The discourses and contestations on the conceptual framing of agency taking place in the 1980s and 1990s was centred on adult agency, with little to no attention paid to how or if the concept of agency is applicable or useful to children. However, alongside the above agency debate and the broader emancipatory social movements happening in the late 20th century, the focus of an adult only perspective of agency began to shift with the New Sociology of Childhood movement and the creation of 'Childhood Studies' as a distinct field of scholarly interest (Esser, Baader, Betz & Hungerland, 2016). James and James (2012), state that without question, "agency is a key, if not the key concept of childhood studies, and the original aspiration of this area of research" (p. 3). This is evidenced in the seminal work of James and Prout (1990), who argue that "children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them, and of

the societies in which they live [as] children are not just passive subjects of social structures and processes" (p. 8).

The belief that children are social actors formed the core of the development of a new paradigm in the study of children (James & James, 2012). In the late 1990's, James, Jenks, and Prout (1998) coined the term 'childhood agency', establishing it as distinct from adult conceptualisations. Esser et al. (2016) assert that agency is central to the field of childhood both in critiquing and pushing back against the tradition in many disciplines of reducing childhood to a transitory phase of life. In a dominant ontological view of childhood as transitory, the child is positioned as either a "deficient being", "developmental being", or a "vulnerable being" (Baader, 2015, p. 271). Children and childhood operate within generational power structures, and because of this children are structurally disadvantaged, making many adult derived definitions of agency exclusionary of children on the basis of them being children (Esser et al., 2016). Recently, however, increasing scholarship in the field of childhood studies has been devoted to theoretically interrogating contentious and ambiguous perspectives of agency in relation to children which have tended to be limited and oversimplified (Tisdall & Punch, 2012; Hartung, 2017).

Mayall (2002) argues that the assertion that children do have agency, and that children are social actors who contribute to wider processes of social and cultural reproduction, is what solidified children as a key focus of sociology. James (2009) cites the theoretical developments in childhood studies of children being viewed as social actors as a monumental shift in reconceptualising childhood. Shifting the view of childhood from a period where children "waited in the wings of adulthood" (p. 39) as passive subjects of social structures and processes to a view of children whose relationships and culture are "worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspective and concerns of adults (James & Prout, 1990, 8). Despite 25 years of widespread recognition that children are social actors who enact agency within their day to day lives, young children have continued to be excluded from child social indicator research, and children's agency has been historically absent from child wellbeing frameworks, as evidenced at the beginning of this section.

The past decade has also witnessed a renewed interest in the integration of the individual within Social Determinants of Health (SDH) frameworks, making a case for further engagement with the role of human agency in health equity and public health discourses (Abel & Frolich, 2012; Blacksher, 2010; Forde & Raine, 2008). This agenda gained interest following the publication of the WHO's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health report (Blacksher & Lovasi, 2012), where inclusion, agency, and control are identified as essential for human development, health, and wellbeing (WHO, 2008). While

the concept of the SDH is invaluable to moving past the focus of individual risk factors for disease and instead looking for the "causes of causes" (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2005, p. 2), Frolich, Corin & Potvin (2001), argue that we need to look further that simply trying to identify the contexts that produce health inequalities and instead seek to understand the "relationship between agency (the ability for people to deploy a range of causal powers), practice (the activities that makes and transform the world we live in) and social structure (the rules and resources in society)" (p. 776). However, despite the case made for the importance of individual agency in public health and health promotion literature, it is often dismissed through discourses that limit the discussion of individuals to behaviours directly linked to health risks (Abel & Frolich, 2012). Abel and Frolich (2012) assert that to move beyond these limiting discourses of individuals as only the sum of their health behaviours, the discipline of public health needs to be 'solidly rooted' in a structure-agency perspective, and that the capability approach model, developed by Sen (1992) is a way to move forward.

In his development of the capability approach, Amartya Sen (1992), seminal theorist and researcher in the area of wellbeing indices, identified agency and wellbeing as central tenets of human flourishing. Given the prominent recognition of agency to the wellbeing of humans, its absence in the discussion of child wellbeing, and children's exclusion in the process is puzzling. Especially given that the need to recognise the agency of children is also mirrored in public health discourses, specifically in relation to health and wellbeing. This is evidenced in the explicit statement made by the Commission on the SDH stating that

> while environments strongly influence ECD [early child development], children are social actors who shaper and are shaped by, their environment (EDDKN, 2007b). The appreciation of the relational nature of the child and the environment has implications for action and research, with the need to recognize the important of giving children greater voice and agency (Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Children's Rights, 2007, as cited in WHO, 2008, p. 51).

This absence of widespread engagement with the concept of children's agency was clearly evidenced in the social indicator frameworks that formed the a priori codebook for the Stage 1 study. Not only was the concept of children's agency not included in any of the a priori frameworks, but children's voices (and thus their agency in informing research and practices that impact upon them) where both implicitly and explicitly excluded. Implicitly through a lack of transparency or justification about why they are excluded, and explicitly through claims such as "children's limited cognitive and language skills and attention spans" (Hymel, LeMare, McKee, 2011, p. 267). Darbyshire and MacDougall (2018)

argue that approaches to research with children that have sought to go against developmental approaches have frequently been met with "scepticism, silence or denial" (pg.629) about children's biological and cognitive development and how this may unduly influence data or the design of the research study. Statements like these are common in developmental discourses, where liberal norms of rationality position children as biologically precluded from participation on the grounds that "the subject is either responsible for their actions or they are not, they have either chosen to act or they have not" (Hoggett, 2001, p.52-53).

This form of exclusion based on liberal norms is not dissimilar to claims that were used for other marginalised groups such as women, people of colour etc. (Freeman, 2007). In response, there has been a growing literature which demonstrates children's agency, especially regarding their competence and knowledge (Haugen, 2010; Markström, & Halldén, 2008; Fattore et al., 2009; Pugh, 2011). However, some scholars in the field of childhood studies feel that further theoretical work must be done to establish a 'theory of agency' that includes children (valentine, 2011) and further critique current conceptualisations of agency to complicate 'simple claims' of children's enactment of agency within complex process and structures (Skattebol et al., 2017).

In her work of theorising childhood agency, valentine (2011) asks the question of whether childhood studies need a theory of agency. In response, she offers possible answers to this question. She argues that if the answer is no, it signals that there is one single meaning of agency to which everyone agrees – which she attests is incorrect. Or alternatively, if the answer is no because a theory is held to not be necessary in advocating for children's rights and participation - she points out that current tensions and contradictions in the growing literature makes this position difficult to sustain. She considers still a third response, that a theory of agency may be interesting for theoreticians, but of little interest or use for those advocating for children – which she believes is misguided (p. 347). In response to the litany of possible answers explored above, valentine argues that childhood studies' needs a robust and carefully conceptualised understanding of agency that goes beyond simply asserting children's competence, awareness, participation, and rights. This careful framing would work to navigate overly simplistic claims that children either do, or do not have agency, and instead more fully develop our understanding of how, when, and in what ways children are enabled and constrained in enacting agency within contexts and relationships. She argues that critical and social models of agency have much to offer childhood studies in recognising and accommodating "the specificity of different children's lives", including "what is shared between children", and "what is universal to children and

adults" (p. 347). valentine (2011) additionally attests that this understanding of agency will require the inclusion of "non-cognitive and embodied dimensions such as emotion, class, race, disability, language and the physical environment; as well as the rationality and reflexivity promoted by Giddens, [while' acknowledge[ing] the difference between children [and] children and adults" (p. 348).

Skattebol et al. (2017) agree with valenitine's (2011) assertion that continued critique of simplistic claims of children's agency is needed in childhood studies. They argue that there is a need to "better account for the complex processes that underpin people's actions and so-called choices" (p. 3). The authors draw on Hoggett's (2001) notion of agency which encompasses "the multiplicity of contexts that individuals inhabit and the constraints and value orders which structure different contexts" (p. 6) to explores the ways in which young people's agency is temporally and environmentally contingent. They emphasise the value of Hoggett's framework in recognising that some young people's agency may "in part operate below the level of consciousness and be in service to their familial and community obligations rather than aimed at more overt projects-of-self" (Skattebol et al. 2017, p. 20). Hartas, (2008) also asserts that the concept of agency cannot be accepted uncritically as a positive thing and that childhood agency should be scrutinised rather than taken-for-granted, unproblematised, or assumed to be inherently positive and desired by all children and young people. valentine (2011) refers to these concerns and further challenges, such as children participating in what may be perceived as self-defeating behaviour, as "uncomfortable dimensions of agency" (p. 354), which she claims are rarely taken up in childhood studies.

A further challenge that bears discussing in relation to childhood agency is the tension between the positioning of children as 'human beings' or 'human becomings'. Uprichard (2008) suggests that this positioning has significant implications on the notion of children as social actors and active agents which impact upon our current understandings of childhood agency. She suggests that these two constructions are often viewed as oppositional, with the 'being' child viewed as a social actor in their own right, and the 'becoming' child as an adult in the making, deficit in the skills and knowledge of the adult they will become (p. 304). However, she argues that children and childhood are "always and necessarily being and becoming" (p. 303), drawing on the work of Prigogine (1980) who suggests that the "dynamics of time in the physical and social world are themselves seen as 'being and becoming'" (as cited in Uprichard, 2008, p. 303). Uprichard argues that while focussing on children as 'becomings' is problematic from temporal and ethical perspectives, it is just as problematic to not consider a 'being' child as one who will become an adult. Rather than a binary, which decreases children's agency within a problematic and artificial distinction, she suggests that perceiving children as both being and

becoming increases their agency, as agency is an embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past yet also oriented towards the future and the present (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

This framing of agency allows for the conceptualisation of the agent as perceptive, critical, and deliberate in their interaction with the social and built environment, which lays a conceptual foundation for considering how to ameliorate health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities through population based measures (Blacksher & Lovasi, 2012), a primary goal of public health. This nuanced understanding of an agent can support our understanding of children's agency within public health paradigms, though it is vital to recognise that within this paradigm, children are generally understood as a vulnerable population (Landrigan, Kimmel, Correa & Eskenazi, 2004). As such, children are a population vulnerable to the 'inequality paradox', a paradox that refers to the phenomenon that even though vulnerable groups are generally the target of population based measures and interventions (such as early years intervention), these efforts often reproduce inequalities and reinforce marginalisation as they do not take into account the resources, opportunities, and values that the vulnerable group hold in relation to the health or education initiative (Frolich & Potvin, 2008). Blacksher and Lovasi (2012) assert that to address this paradox, strategies and policies need to target and tailor to the needs and circumstances of vulnerable populations, and that investigating the agents' own perception and interpretations is a way to move forward in addressing the needs of these populations.

Despite continued scholarly efforts in defining and redefining a conceptualisation of children's agency which moves past simplistic or binary models, child agency continues to be a highly contested concept even within Childhood studies (Hanson, Abebe, Atiken, Balagopalan, & Punch, 2018; Hammersley, 2016; Spyrou, 2018). While dominant discourses in Childhood studies frequently position agency as a means to emphasise children's capacity to "choose to do things" (Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi, 2013, p. 363), Abebe (2019) argues that this positioning has produced problematic assumptions about children's agency, specifically in relation to agency being a universal experience. Instead, Abebe (2019) posits that child agency is inherently dynamic, situational, and contextual, not an "innate capacity that is lost nor the rejection of social structures" (p. 11). To engage with a dynamic, situational, and contextual understanding of child agency, Durham (2011) claims that the questions we need to consider should move away from the current focus on children's competency in relation to their biological age or whether they can or do exercise agency. This is because, as argued by Durham (2011), it is clear from the contributions that children make to their family and community that they do. Building from this position, Abebe (2019) suggests that scholarly focus should turn its attention to currently under-theorised questions relating to the spatial, political, and materials factors that shape the lives of

children, the 'choices' children confront, and the ways in which children's agency is negotiated and renegotiated with those they interact with in different contexts and at different times. MacDougall and Darbyshire (2018) argue that given the complexities and challenges posed in moving away from developmental understandings of children's agency (or lack thereof), that the citizenship approach to investigating these under-theorised questions relating to children's agency "invites us to match the development [of children] to methods and codify a hierarchy of conceptual understandings expected from children as they assume more sophisticated citizenship roles" (p. 629). This is the approach that guides the exploration of children's accounts and enactment of agency presented below, including reflections on the method and its use in co-creating knowledge about child wellbeing with young children.

5.3.2 Children's Accounts of Agency

Analysis of the Stage 1 data demonstrated that agency was an important concept to young children, and the ways in which they spoke about their agency (or lack thereof) and enacted agency resonated with the more recent critical and nuanced critiques of childhood agency discussed in the previous section. This finding also aligns with findings from a study by Fattore, Mason and Watson (2009), which used a child-centred approach to investigate older children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing. Their study found that older children, aged 8-15 years, identified the opportunity to enact agency and exert influence as important to their wellbeing, even though their understandings and views of agency were different from those of adults. When older children voiced their desire to have some control and be able to exert influence, participants discussed agency within the boundaries and possibilities set by others, such as parents. When these boundaries were perceived as fair and mutually negotiated, children's accounts suggested they provided guidance and security.

Young children's accounts in this study echo Fattore et al. (2009) findings by evidencing that young children frequently frame their agency in relation to adults in their lives, especially their parents. As Esser et al. (2016) contests, liberal or rational conceptualisations of agency have excluded children because children and childhood operate within generational power structures, resulting in children being structurally disadvantaged. The findings in this study, however, demonstrate that young children do enact agency within generational relationships, and that the ability to be a social actor who makes choices and impacts the world around them is important to them. These findings accord with calls for the continued theoretical interrogation of over simplified and binary views of childhood agency (Esser et al., 2016; Durham, 2011).

Excerpts from focus groups demonstrate that young children enact agency in a variety of different ways, yet their enactments of agency remain highly relational to the adults around them. This finding is in line with Abebe's (2019) assertion that children negotiate and renegotiate their agency in relation to different contexts and their relationships with different adults within those contexts. In focus group 6, Gemma and Harry talk about what they would do if they became separated from their parents in a shop. Gemma shares how she was able to find her mother on her own by looking for her. When Harry shares the opinion that she should ask an adult for help, Gemma explains that she didn't do that. Not because she didn't need to, or did not want adult help, but because she was able to find her mum before she had the chance to ask for help. Harry enacts agency differently in his story, by sharing how he would approach a trusted adult to ask for help in finding his parents. Both accounts illustrate how Gemma and Harry did not view adult support or assistance as diminishing to their agency, rather adult help is framed as a supporting mechanism.

Focus Group 6

Gemma: I got, I got lost at the shop, but I didn't worry about it, I looked around to see if I could find my mummy and daddy and I did find mummy.

Harry: You should ask and an adult for help

Gemma: I didn't get to ask it cause lots of people were in the way at the shopping

Harry: Um, you should ask the shopping man and you can say, um 'where's my mum dad gone', and then he will say 'it's gone that way'

Researcher: So you could ask a grown up you could trust for help?

Harry: Yep

Gemma: I didn't do that

Researcher: You were able to find your mum and dad all on your own?

Gemma: Yeah

Parents and adults as a key source of support for children when enacting agency was also a topic of conversation in focus group 8, where several children joined into a conversation about what to do if someone were to hurt them.

Focus Group 8

Arlo: But if someone...if someone hurts me, I should tell my mum if someone hurts me and she will hurt them

Researcher: Does you mum say that? Are there other things we do if someone hurts us?

Arlo: Um, you can say stop I don't like it.

Theo: And you could say sorry

Researcher: Oh, if you hurt someone you could say sorry?

Theo: Yes

Arlo: You can ask you mum or dad to help you

Alison: Or a teacher

The children's conversation, resulting from a question posed by the researcher, demonstrates how adult support is integral to children's understanding of agency in relation to their own safety. This conversation also evidences that even young children are highly aware of several strategies they can use to keep themselves safe, and how they would use their agency to decide which one to choose. This enactment of agency fits within James's (2009) conceptualisation of children's agency as one that is bound within a relational social order.

However, not all of children's accounts of their experiences in hierarchical relationships were framed in positive terms. For example, child participants frequently used examples of where something was 'unfair' within a parent/child exchange to 'tell a story' about feeling disappointed, angry, cross, or being interrupted. Interestingly, two children in two different focus groups (at two different ECECS) both told a story about not being given the chocolate they were promised by their parents as a way of explaining the feelings of disappointed and angry.

Focus Group 3

Researcher: Can anyone tell me what feeling this could be? [straightmouth emoji]
    Ruby: Disappointed
Researcher: Disappointed? That's a really interesting idea, Ruby. When might someone feel disappointed?
    Ruby: Hmmmmm
Lachlan: We do not know
    Researcher: Is that a tricky question? I think Ruby might have an idea. What makes you feel disappointed?
Ruby: When mummy says I can have some chocolate and she doesn't give it to me?

Focus Group 11

Researcher: Philip can you tell me what feeling you chose? And why someone might feel like that?
    Philip: Um, an angry face about.... his mum or dad didn't give him chocolate when he ate all his lunch or fruit. Now he's feeling angry.
Researcher: He ate all his lunch and all his fruit like he was supposed to but he, then his mum or dad didn't give him chocolate after, so he was angry?
    Philip: Yes

In these accounts, however, it was not the fact that limits are placed on their chocolate consumption that children spoke negatively about. Rather, it was that they had negotiated with their parents about when they could have chocolate, and their parents did not follow through with the agreement. These

examples speak strongly to children's agency within familial relationships (the act of negotiation) and how negotiating with parents does not negatively impact their experiences of agency, unless the terms are not upheld. Hoggett's (2001) construction of agency (agency and reflexivity as two intersecting continuums) is useful in unpacking how children position themselves and take up agency in different ways according to different situations, contexts, or relationships. It can also support our understanding of how children enact agency and make choices in relation to the choices available to them, which as argued by Greener (2002) is much more valuable than attempting to characterise children as having a specific type of agency. Here in Ruby's and Philip's descriptions of feeling disappointed and angry, we can see how these two children are experiencing what Hoggett (2001) labels as 'self as reflexive subject' – individuals aware of the forces constraining their situation but unable to act or effect change (p. 48). The experiences and feelings shared by these two children in relation to adult interactions are in sharp contrast to those shared Gemma and Harry about getting lost in a shop, where they described acting as 'reflexive agents' – individuals who are conscious shapers of their own history (Hoggett, 2001, p. 48).

The findings of this study were similar to a study conducted by Bjerke (2011) who found that children and young people think that they should be allowed to take part in decisions about "what and when to eat" (p. 96) within boundaries set by parents. In these accounts we can also see how children see themselves as both beings and becomings in that they are competent social actors who can participate in negotiations (beings), and that parents setting limits is a normalised part of their experiences as children (becomings). Mayall (2002) argues that this act of negotiation is further evidence of children's agency, stating that children are more than just social actors who might do something, rather they are agents who "negotiate with others with the effects that the interaction makes a difference to a relationship, decision, social assumptions, or constraint" (p, 21). These exchanges also demonstrate how recognition of this dualism when engaging with young children increases their agency (Uprichard, 2008).

In addition to sharing examples of situations which negatively impact their feelings of agency and control, some children also told stories where their actions and enactment of agency is what valentine (2011) describes as agency that would generally be perceived by adults as against children's 'best interests'.

Focus Group 13

Researcher: What about this one, can anyone tell me what this is a picture of?
       Multiple voices: A house!
Researcher: A house. How might you be feeling if you were in your house?

> **Multiple voices**: Happy
>
> **Sean**: To run away
>
> > **Researcher**: You might want to run away. Why might you want to run away?
>
> **Sean**: I'm cross with my family

Focus Group 2

> **Researcher:** Jonah, did you have a story you'd like to tell me about the emoji you chose?
>
> > **Jonah**: And I'm playing a video game, and someone called and then I smashed my phone on the ground
>
> **Researcher**: How did you feel if your phone was smashed on the ground?
>
> **Jonah**: Happy
>
> **Researcher:** You'd be happy that you broke your phone?
>
> **Jonah**: Yes, so no one would ring you again
>
> **Researcher**: Oh so no one would interrupt you playing your game?
>
> **Jonah:** Yes

In these accounts, Sean and Jonah talk about taking action (running away from home or breaking their belongings) when feeling unhappy with their family and constraints placed on their time. Using Hoggett's (2001) model, the actions that Sean and Jonah are describing would likely be categorised as 'non-reflexive agents' – individuals acting on impulses without thinking of being able to explain their actions in advance (p. 48). However, when comparing the accounts of the two children, it is clear that Jonah is able to rationalise his actions in a highly articulate way. This diversity in children's enactment (or desired enactment) of their agency corresponds to Bordano and Payne's (2012) assertion that the continued lack of conceptual clarity in the childhood agency literature, and understandings of child agency as 'fixed' and 'exaggerated' promote the expectation that children should show agency in 'expected forms'. Esser et al. (2016) agree that this lack of conceptual clarity, makes it difficult to allow room for any form of children's agency that runs counter to the adult perspectives and conceptualisations.

Additionally, Sean and Jonah's accounts can be seen as examples of how children imagine they would exercise agency if they were not constrained by social ordering, or within familial relationships, and that these two children may have told these stories knowing that these statements will not negatively impact their wellbeing as they are unlikely to enact them. These statements may also be a way for children to enact agency within the research process, by sharing stories that they think might surprise the researcher or disrupt the research process. Throughout the 13 focus groups, there were many examples of children enacting agency through processes that appeared to attempt to subvert the research process. Throughout the focus groups, many children used 'bathroom humour' and other

phrases or words intended to shock or disrupt in their enactment of agency. Humour, words, and phrases that may be perceived by adults as 'negative' or 'immaterial' to the research process.

Focus Group 5

Researcher: Ivy, which emoji did you pick?

    Ivy: The sad face is inside my belly [giggling]

Researcher: You are holding an emoji in your hand; can you tell me about it?

    Ivy: Paint

Researcher: Paint. And how would you feel if you were painting?

    Ivy: Ah, happy…No, no angry!

Researcher: Why would you feel angry?

    Ivy: Um, cause I'm putting my hands in the whole entire pot.

Researcher: Can you tell me why?

    Ivy: And then I, but I feel silly and I also feel happy and I also well I just stick my head down the toilet.

Focus Group 4

Researcher: Nathan, did you want to tell me about the emoji you chose?

    Nathan: Umm, silly face

Researcher: Why might someone be feeling silly?

    Nathan: Because somebody ate their two eyeballs

Researcher: Hmm, that would be very silly if someone ate their eyeballs [children giggling]

    Nathan: And then a football [soccer ball]

Researcher: And a football. And how would you feel if you were playing with the football?

    Nathan: I'll kick hundreds of goals, a hundred goals

Researcher: How would that make you feel?

    Nathan: I'll be proud of myself

Focus Group 11

Researcher: Sam you've been waiting so patiently, what emoji did you pick?

    Sam: Cheeky

Researcher: Cheeky. And why might somebody be feeling cheeky?

    Sam: Ummm, I don't know!

Researcher: You're not sure? Does anyone have an idea for Sam?

    Pheonix: Um maybe they steal some chocolate from the freezer.

Researcher: Ohhh, maybe when no one was looking? And you were, wanted some chocolate and you took some chocolate from the freezer?

    Annabella: Well you could get some strawberries from the freezer and put them in the toilet

Researcher: That would be a very cheeky thing to do. Wouldn't it? Is that something you have done?

    Annabella: No [giggling]

Simone: I haven't

    Researcher: Have you felt cheeky before?

Simone: One day I stealed chocolate from my mum's fridge

Sutton-Smith (2009) uses his framework of the seven rhetorics of play to explore the cultural significances of play in human life, and the power imbalances between children and adults in relation to play. The seven play rhetorics he proposes are: progress, fate, power, identity, imaginary, self, and frivolity (Sutton-Smith, 2009). The rhetoric of play as progress, or a product of child development, is one deeply held in early childhood education and care contexts, which has been explored above in the previous section. Of interest to the way children are asserting their agency in the quotes above, however, is the rhetoric of frivolity which Sutton-Smith (2009) refers to as a series of interruptions, inversions, and inconsistencies that effectively deflate the orderliness, hierarchy, and pretence of 'official' social structures (Sutton-Smith, 1997 as cited by Henricks, 2008, p. 175)? Sutton-Smith (2009) argues that frivolity is a 'responsive' rhetoric, or a nonhegemonic form of play often deemed as frivolous by adults. He observes that this type of play often manifests as "pranks, toilet play, telling dirty rhymes, taunting, giggling, goofing off, doodling, whispering, teasing, bugging, make mischief, playfighting, stealing and making faces" (p. 125). Types of play (or behaviours) that are frequently labelled by adults as 'disruptive' or 'off task'. Sutton-Smith (2009) argues, however, that the purpose of this play is most often situated in children's "traditional interests in movement and words, owing more to their common humanity than to their opposition with adult authority" (p. 126). In other words, children are exercising their agency to engage with words and concepts that they find enjoyable and humorous, even if not welcomed by the adult observer. Sutton-Smith views this enactment of agency or frivolous play, as children's attempts to define their own autonomous culture, "independent of adult cultural forms… through their own iterations, metacommunications, and framings" (p. 115). These seemingly discursive or frivolous comments and commentary in children's accounts also reinforce valentine's (2011) assertion that there is a need to conceptualise childhood agency in a way that can recognise and accommodate "what is shared between children" and "what is universal to children and adults" (p.347), rather this dismiss outright children's contributions that do not fit within liberal and rational notions of agency.

The final way in which children exerted agency in the research process was through suggesting ways in which the method or process could be improved or made more suitable to the ways in which they wanted to use the emoji or tell their stories. In Focus Group 8, Julia decided that emoji hats would have been helpful for her to communicate her stories about feelings. When hats were not available to her, she decided to create her own using other emoji.

Focus Group 8

Julia: Where's the hat of this? These two look the same oh and excuse me!

    Researcher: Yes?

Julia: Is there a hat of this? [points to an emoji face]

    Researcher: A hat? For the emoji?

Julia: Yeah

    Researcher: I didn't bring any hats, that would be an interesting idea though.

Felix: We have hats

    Researcher: Do you have hats in the kindy room? Because you have to wear a hat to go outside?

Multiple voices: Yeah

    Julia: Maybe, we pretend round things are the hat [makes a hat out of the paint emoji]

Seth and Maisie also decided that they did not want to participate in the researcher-established process of storytelling. Instead of choosing an emoji and telling a story about it, Seth decided to 'trick' the researcher by switching emoji halfway through his account, while Maisie decided she would keep the same emoji as she wanted to tell an additional story about the same emoji.

Focus Group 1

Researcher: Ok. Is anyone ready to tell me a story about the emoji they picked?

    Seth: Me!

Researcher: Seth, what feeling did you pick?

    Seth: Sad.

Researcher: Can you think of a reason why is that face feeling sad?

    Seth: I'm going to make this tricky. Ready? [Seth switches from a sad to happy face]

Researcher: OK, alright, why might the face be feeling happy?

    Seth: Um because it's laughing

Focus Group 2

Researcher: Who else can tell me a story about the face they chose? Maisie, which face did you pick now?

    Maisie: I didn't pick another one cause I had the bestest story ever

Throughout the 13 focus groups, child participants demonstrated agency in a variety of ways, in both their responses to the researcher, other participants, and the ways in which they participated in the research process. This was additionally evidenced by children frequently correcting the researcher, children leaving and re-joining the focus groups, and children discussing and disputing each other's accounts and responses.

Analysis of children's accounts and enactment of agency in Stage 1 suggests that Hoggett's (2001) notion of agency which recognises "the multiplicity of contexts that individuals inhabit and the constraints and value orders which structure different contexts" (p. 6), is a valuable starting point for investigating the ways in which young children experience agency in their day to day lives. However, the findings also align with the assertion made by Hartas (2007), that the concept of agency for children cannot be accepted uncritically or assumed to be inherently positive. In this study, many children's stories about agency (for example solving problems, negotiating boundaries, or expressing negative emotions when they felt that they did not have a high degree of agency) fit neatly within Hoggett's model. However, children's descriptions of enacting agency (whether experienced or what they would potentially like to do) also included what valentine (2011) refers to as the "uncomfortable dimensions of agency" (p. 354), which are frequently perceived by adults as self-defeating, or disruptive and 'off task' behaviour (Sutton-Smith, 2009). This finding fits with Abebe's (2019) claim that children's agency is not a universal experience, rather one that is inherently dynamic, situational, and contextual to each child. The stories and experiences children shared also align with the claim made by Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2013), that children's agency cannot be understood as simply an assessment of children's capacity "to choose to do things" (p. 363). Rather, discussion and theorisation of children's agency needs to engage with questions about how the spatial, political, and materials factors that shape the 'choices' children confront, and the settings and relationships they inhabit and are a part of. These findings suggest that current discourses in Childhood studies around children's agency (as discussed in this chapter) are indeed pertinent to considering the agency of young children, and how key questions identified in the literature can support the further conceptualisation of young children's agency.

5.4 Reflection on the Method

Stage 1 of this research study trialled the use of emoji as a research method for conducting child-centred participatory wellbeing research with young children. A key consideration in analysis of the Stage 1 data was an investigation of the utility of the method in supporting the research aims. This section engages in my reflexive critique of the method in relation to the wider literature around visual participatory research with children, a process that was essential for my ability to develop and refine the method for use in Stage 2 of the research study.

As explored in Chapter 4, the use of technology and media-based symbols as a visual research method for eliciting young children's voices in child-centred research has received little attention. This is despite increased and sustained exposure to these symbols in children's lives, both at home and in

ECEC contexts. Reflecting on a new method and its use in a multi-stage study is of importance both in analysis of the initial data, and in its use in the design of the following stage. As Christensen and James (2008) state, there are "no well tested recipes with formulas guaranteeing a successful result" (p. 1) in participatory research with children, nor in qualitative research as a whole. Rather, they suggest that it is critical that researchers in the field of childhood research understand the complexity of this work, and the epistemological and methodological questions that arise when conducting research with children.

Christensen and James (2008) argue that it is of key importance, when considering methods for child-led participatory research, to evaluate the method on its appropriateness for the participants and the social and cultural context in which it is being used; as well as the kinds of research questions being posed in the study. In this section, the emoji protocol used in Stage 1 of this research study will be discussed in relation to its appropriateness for use in conducting child-led participatory research with three-to-five year old children, its use in ECEC environments, and its ability to create space for children to share their understandings and experiences of wellbeing independent from adult perspectives. The following section presents data from Stage 1 to elucidate the capacity of emoji as a data collection tool in eliciting children's accounts of wellbeing.

5.4.1 Emoji as a Visual Research Method Revisited

The first point of reflection on the method is the utility of emoji as a means of supporting the limiting of researcher's voice in the making of meaning and generation of knowledge in participatory research. Using found visual materials (visual materials that are not created or produced with a researcher's purpose in mind) necessitates that the researcher chose the visual material carefully with both the research question and research participant in mind (Pauwels, 2010). However, as attested by Banks and Zeitlyn (2015), visual materials are not simply 'read' as if they contain an internal meaning that the viewer can 'listen to'. Instead, interpreting visual materials requires attending to both internal (the image's content) and external narratives (the social contexts and relations within which the image is embedded at any moment of viewing) (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015). While the researcher selects the visual material and thus its internal narrative or content, the interpretation or external narrative rests solely with the participant. As such, when working with young children in the research study, the use of emoji permitted the introduction of the research method with very limited instructions or ideas from myself. This is a marked difference from using open ended questions or prompt in interviews or focus groups. This approach supported me in limiting the influence that I (through my adult understandings

and experiences) would have on children's interpretation of the visual materials.

When given the five facial emoji (see Numbers 1-5 in Figure 12) and the verbal prompt "can you tell me what feelings you see?" at the beginning of the focus groups, participants generated 24 different feelings, emotions, and ideas (see Figure 2). Figure 2 illustrates the range of responses as to what feelings were generated by the children in response to emoji 1 through 5. Of interest was the volume and diversity of responses for the straight-mouthed emoji (emoji 5) that children shared. The straight-mouth emoji (number 5) also generated the most discussion between child participants. Additionally, in four focus groups, it generated disagreements and negotiations between children as to what feeling was being depicted. For example, the following excerpts from two separate focus groups highlight how children interpreted emoji differently and communicated their understandings to the researcher.

Focus Group 2

Researcher: [talking to Maisy who is holding the straight-mouth emoji] What is that feeling?

Maisy: Frustrated

Researcher: Oh frustrated, that's an interesting idea

Violet: No! That's bored!

Researcher: [speaking to the Violet] There are perhaps a lot of different emotions it could be, do you want to tell me a bored story in a minute? Right now I want to hear about Maisy's frustrated story. [turns to Maisy] When might you feel frustrated?

Maisy: When my friend got sick

Researcher: If your friend was sick. That would be frustrating. That's a really good idea, thank you. [turns to Violet] Violet did you want to tell me a story about feeling bored?

Violet: It's angry because, I changed my mind cause.... that boy pushed him, pushed him over

Researcher: Oh, somebody pushed someone, and that would make you feel angry?

Violet: Yes

Focus Group 3

Researcher: Does anyone have any ideas for what this feeling is? [holding up the straight-faced emoji]

Tom: Um straight

Researcher: The mouth is a straight mouth? Yes? [Tom nods], but how are they feeling?

David: Angry

Researcher: Maybe angry? That's a good idea.

Tom: No! Not angry! Because, because it hasn't got a sad face, look, upside down is a happy face [pointing to the emoji to indicate that the angry face has a downturned mouth and the happy face has an upturned mouth]

In addition to generating the most discussion and disagreement, the straight-mouthed emoji generated three to six times more feeling ideas than emoji 1 through 4 (see Figure 1 below). This suggests that while all the emoji allowed children opportunities to interpret the internal and external narratives of the symbols in a variety of ways with little adult/researcher input, the increased

ambiguity of the symbol resulted in a greater amount of ideas, disagreement, and negotiations generated. The limited need for researcher instructions and guidance in using and encouraging children to interact with the emoji as a visual research method supported the positioning of children as meaning makers and knowledge generators through the limiting of adult voices within the research process.
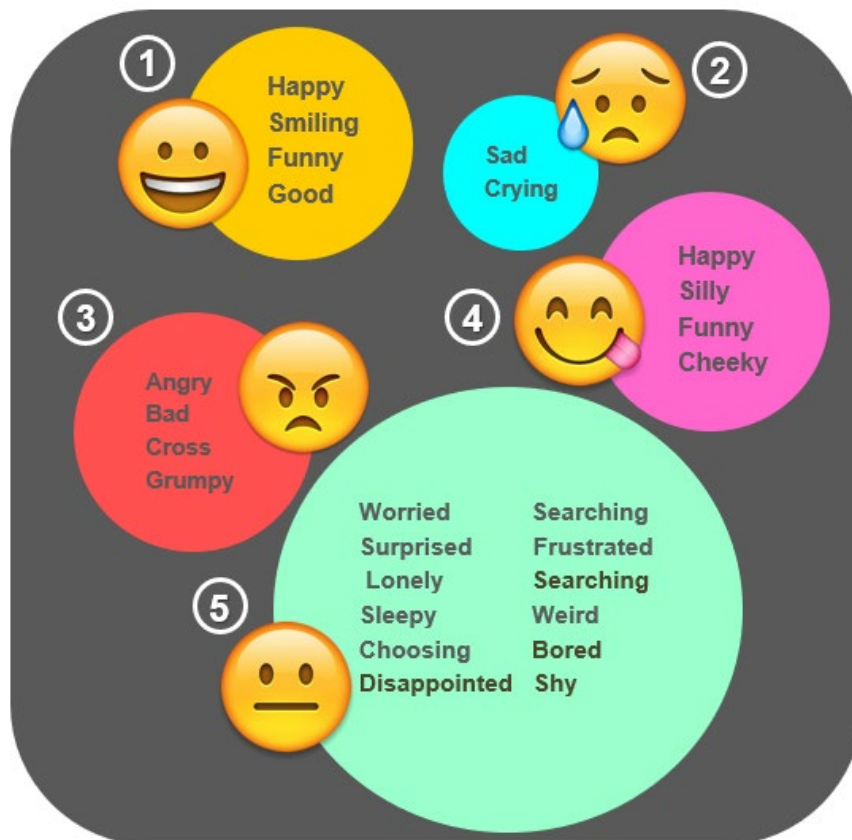
Figure 12. Ideas generated by three-to-five year old children using emoji

The second key point of reflection on the method is the way that the use of emoji supported a shift in power and control from the researcher to the child participants. Thomas and O'Kane (1998) assert that a core aspect of child-centred research with children is the breaking down of power imbalances that occur between adults and children in both society in general and within the research process. The process of breaking down power imbalances begins with shifting power from the researcher to the participants. This means giving children further control of the research agenda, the space and time to share what is important to them, and creating an environment in which answers are not right or wrong (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). An important question when evaluating the use of emoji as a visual research method is to analyse the ways in which the emoji and research procedure may have worked to support this shift of power and control from the researcher to children. Throughout the focus groups there

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were many instances where children built on from ideas shared by their peers. This was beneficial in terms of helping children for whom the concept of storytelling was unfamiliar, as they could use language modelled by their peers and add their own ideas to it. However groupthink, or the phenomenon where participants are reluctant to disagree of criticise their peer's ideas, can be a concern as this can lead to 'groupthink trap' where only the dominant voices are heard (Van Mechelen, Gielen, Laenen, & Zaman, 2014). Divergent views, where participants freely express disagreement with what their peers have shared, can add a wealth of information and knowledge to the phenomena understudy and allow for a wider range of voices and ideas to be heard. Two examples of divergent views within focus groups are included below to illustrate how differing voices were heard and negotiated within focus groups.

Focus Group 7

Researcher: Which one did you pick Natalie? What feeling could that be?

Caleb: Shy

Natalie: ….Shy

Researcher: Interesting idea. Does anyone have an idea why somebody might feel shy? Or when you might feel shy?

Kyle: Umm, Santa. We would be shy if Santa

Researcher: You might be shy? Or if you met Santa

Kyle: You'd be shy to meet Santa

Researcher: Interesting ideas, does anyone else have an idea about when someone might feel shy?

Carter: I never!

Researcher: No, you've never felt shy Carter? [Carter nods] Anyone else?

Chase: Excuse me, I never felt shy on Santa

Researcher: You've never felt shy with Santa Chase [Chase nods]? Lots of different ideas.

Anthony: I never be shy at all

Focus Group 11

Researcher: Simon, which emoji did you pick?

Simon: Sad face

Researcher: Sad face. Can you tell me a story about someone feeling sad? [no response] Do you want to think about it? [Simon nods] Yeah. Can anyone think of a sad story?

Andrew: Um, a sad, um when, um, when the happy friend went out with his mum and dad and he went the wrong way and he didn't know where his mum was, or dad was, or brother, and he was lost. And he was so sad.

In both focus groups 7 and 11, multiple children interjected differing ideas and understandings of the feeling being discussed. They also shared how they would experience or negotiate meeting a new person or navigate a difficult situation such as being lost. The presence of divergent views in focus groups indicates that the use of emoji supported the limiting of researcher input. Additionally,

divergent views also suggest that the limiting of researcher input also promoted the idea that there are no right or wrong answers, and that all ideas children shared were important to the research process.

Empowering children to take an active role in the research process requires that their voices are heard and interpreted correctly by the researcher. The researcher used a 'check back' mechanism of reiterating what each child said to ensure that the idea was understood correctly. While it is evident in the below excerpts that the researcher did not always get it right in the first instance, children's willingness to correct the researcher suggests that they felt confident in asserting their role as equal partners in the research process and taking control of how their voices were heard and understood.

Focus Group 10

Researcher: [Observes Jonas pretending to push buttons on the phone/table emoji (emoji 11) after another child spoke about ringing family on the phone] Jonas, are you ringing someone on your phone?

Jonas: No I'm playing on my iPad

Researcher: Oh you're playing on your phone, my mistake. What are you playing?

Focus Group 7

Researcher: Can you tell me a story about the picture you're holding Carter

Carter: It's a paw print
Imran: I've got a dog

Researcher: It's a paw print, or maybe a dog print?

Carter: At the car park and the bitumen I saw some, I saw a few footprints

Researcher: [misunderstanding the word bitumen for beach] Oh on the beach when people walk on the beach, they leave footprints?

Carter: No! On the car park!

Researcher: Oh, on the car park, thank you for helping me to understand. Can you tell me a story about the paw prints? Could you use one of the feeling emoji in the story?

Children also frequently corrected the researcher to ensure that elements of their stories or ideas were understood and repeated back to them with the correct emphasis. While the researcher understood the children's main ideas below, both Maddie and Ali continued to express the key elements of their story until the researcher fully understood the important ideas and information.

Focus Group 12

Researcher: Maddie, what emoji did you pick?

Maddie: Um, sad

Researcher: Sad. Can you think of a reason someone might be feeling sad?

Maddie: Because, um, somebody did something wrong with their toys.

Researcher: Oh, like what?

> **Maddie:** Um, like wrecked it.
>
> **Researcher:** Oh, if somebody wrecked their toy, they might be feeling sad?
>
> **Maddie:** And when they just bought it
>
> **Researcher:** Ah, so it was a brand new toy, and somebody wrecked it?
>
> **Maddie:** Just when they bought it

Focus Group 6

> **Researcher:** Which emoji did you pick Ali?
>
> **Ali**: Angry
>
> **Researcher:** Angry. Can you tell me a story about when someone might feel angry?
>
> **Ali:** When the monster came, I feel strong! And then, I just hit the monster!
>
> **Researcher:** So if a monster came you would be angry?
>
> **Ali:** And then I just hit the monster

In addition to encouraging divergent views and supporting participants in correcting the researcher if their ideas and stories were not understood correctly, the emoji also imbued children with the confidence to take control of the research procedure and, in some instances, dictate how they would like to participate even if it differed from the researcher's prompts. An example of this was the way children asserted agency using the emoji prompts discussed previously in this chapter (see examples with Seth and Maisie).

The final point of reflection is the use of emoji as a method that demonstrated capacity to imbue children with choice and opportunities. All 78 children who participated in the focus groups were willing to pick up emoji of their choice at the researcher's request. The majority of children readily gave verbal responses to the researcher prompts or engaged in conversation and discussion with their peers about the emoji and the feelings and stories being shared. Instead of, or in addition to using verbal language, children used a variety of communication techniques including body language, noises/sounds, matching pictures together, and pairing pictures with their friends/peers. For children who were cautious about participating verbally, or had limited spoken English language abilities, the emoji offered a variety of ways for children to engage in the research process once they felt comfortable or had the language/vocabulary to express their ideas.

The excerpt below is an example of how Ling, a child who is learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), negotiated her participation in the research process using the emoji and a variety of non-verbal and verbal responses.

Focus Group 6

Researcher: Can everyone pick up an emoji? [all children in the focus group select an emoji] Ling, which one did you pick? Which feeling is that?

Emilio: Angry! Angry!

Ling: [no verbal response]

Researcher: That's an interesting idea Emilio. [speaking to Ling] Could this be an angry face? [Ling nods]

Multiple voices: Angry!

Researcher: Ling do you have a story you'd like to share about why someone might feel angry?

Oscar: Cause someone called him silly

Researcher: Oh that's a good idea Oscar, but I'm wondering if Ling has an idea. Do you have a story you'd like to share? [Ling doesn't respond]. Should I come back and ask after? [Ling nods] Thanks Ling, I'll come back to you later to see if you want to share any ideas.

[Later in the focus group]

Researcher: Who else would like to share an idea or story? Ling, would you like to tell me about the one you're holding?

Ling: Heart, that's heart [emoji 8]

Researcher: A heart. Thanks Ling. Would you like to tell me a story about the heart or how it might make someone feel?

Ling: [shakes head]

Researcher: Thanks Ling

Ling was eager to select an emoji and share her choice with her friends. She also readily responded to questions using non-verbal cues in the beginning of the focus group. The emoji offered a variety of ways for her to participate and share her ideas and feelings with her peers and the researcher without the need to communicate verbally in English. As EAL/D speakers commonly experience being excluded from the research process (Frayne, Burns, Hardt, Rosen, & Moskowitz, 1996), children (who as a group have also been largely excluded from research) who are EAL/D speakers are likely to be even further silenced. However, later on in the focus group, after watching and listening to her peers respond, Ling did respond verbally to identify the emoji she had chosen. Ling was visibly proud of her verbal contribution to the group, and when another child chose the same emoji afterwards, she indicated that they had the same emoji by repeating "that's heart". The emoji were used in a variety of ways by Ling and other children to convey children's ideas and the images' important to them, presenting opportunities for children to engage in the research process in the ways they wanted and/or were able to.

In addition to EAL/D learners, several other children struggled with the idea of telling a story about a feeling, especially for the more ambiguous emoji. These children often waited for another child to go first to tell a story about a particular emoji and use the previous example to build from. Marcus, a child

with special needs, actively participated in the beginning of the focus group but, when prompted to tell a story, would instead re-identify the emoji he had chosen, even after several other children had modelled story telling. Recent years have seen an increasing involvement of children with special needs in the research process, yet, they have often been relegated to, or have occupied passive roles where their participation is largely tokenistic (Gray & Winter, 2011; Shier, 2001). Marcus's engagement with the emoji, however, was far from passive. Despite the initial challenges for Marcus in moving past description to storytelling, by the end of the focus group, Marcus was able to communicate an example of how he might feel and offer a significant insight into how he conceptualises feeling well.

Focus Group 9

Researcher: Great ideas, everyone. Marcus, can you tell me a story about this one? Why somebody might feel happy or silly?

Marcus: Silly

Researcher: Can you tell me a story about why someone might feel silly?

Marcus: There's a silly one and an angry

Researcher: Interesting ideas, they're showing different feelings. Thanks Marcus, I really appreciate your ideas.

Marcus: I want this one [referring to emoji Number 4]

Researcher: You'd like to hold that one?

Marcus: Yeah

Researcher: Ok, you hold onto that one, and I'll come back to you to see if you'd like to tell me a story about that feeling.

[Later in the focus group]

Researcher: Reid, can you tell me a story about feeling sad?

Reid: This week

Researcher: Did you feel sad this week? Can you tell me what made you feel sad?

Marcus: I've been sad

Lee: A creature bite you

Researcher: Lots of interesting ideas…[interrupted by Marcus]

Marcus: I've been sad!

Researcher: I want to hear your ideas in a minute Marcus, but I'd like to let Reid finish his story? Reid when did you feel sad?

Reid: Someone hit me

Researcher: You would feel sad if someone hit you? That would make me feel sad too, thanks for sharing Reid. Marcus, did you want to tell me your story about when you felt sad?

Marcus: I missing my mum

Researcher: [didn't quite understand what Marcus said] When you were with your mum?

Marcus: I tell me mum

Researcher: You would tell your mum if you are feeling sad? That's an excellent idea. What would your mum do if you tell her you're feeling sad?

> **Marcus:** And gives me medicine
> **Researcher**: She gives you medicine? If you are sick?
> **Marcus:** Yes

Repeated exposure to the procedural use of the emoji during the focus group supported Marcus in moving past a simple description of the emoji to connecting to his own experiences and feelings. In this way, the structured, yet open-ended nature of the emoji method and the focus group procedure allowed opportunities for participation from both children who were easily able to communicate their ideas and stories verbally, and children who required further support and modelling from peers, such as Ling and Marcus.

Reflection on the method provides evidence of the utility of emoji as a visual research method. Authentically capturing children's voices requires both the ontological positioning of children as having the right to be heard and having their opinions taken into account, and recognition of their innate capacity to generate and share meaning, knowledge and experiences about their lives as distinct from adult knowledge and understanding. Children's engagement within the research process in Stage 1 indicated that the use of emoji as a visual research method did work to shift hierarchical power imbalances between researcher and children and leave space for children to determine what was important for the researcher to know. They also enact control over their participation in the research process in a variety of ways. Emoji as a visual research method offered a vehicle to support the limiting of adult input and bias on children's experiences, understandings, and accounts of wellbeing, providing opportunities for young children to express their understanding and interpretations of feelings or everyday objects or events. These processes powerfully contributed to the positioning of children as knowers and framers of knowledge within the research process.

It is important to acknowledge that visual research methods, including emoji, do not in and of themselves present solutions to complex methodological challenges of conducting childhood research with young children. However, their use within an ontological framework that positions children as capable and necessary contributors to knowledge of childhood can contribute to negotiating the shift of power and control from researcher to participants. This supports children's voices in being heard, being authentically captured, and being used to inform matters that affect them.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter reported the findings from Stage 1 of the research study. Analysis of the Stage 1 data demonstrated that children's accounts corroborated and validated adult derived wellbeing

frameworks as applicable and meaningful to the ways in which young children experience and understand wellbeing. Additionally, children's accounts identified two novel indicators of key importance to their sense of wellbeing: play and agency. In explorations of these child-identified indicators, children's accounts of play and agency were situated in relation to current theoretical understandings and empirical research, elucidating key areas for further investigation. The chapter concluded with critical reflection on the use of emoji as a visual research method for conducting participatory research with children, and the ways in which the method supported the second stage of the research. The following chapter reports the findings from Stage 2 of the research study, as outlined in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 6 - Results & Discussion: Stage 2

6.0 Introduction

In Chapter Six I report on the data collected during Stage 2 of the research study. Data from Stage 2 were collected in two distinct phases. The first was in participant's final term of preschool at their ECECS (November 2016), and the second in children's second term of school (April-May 2017). The chapter is structured into three sections. Section One contains a participant narrative for each of the 20 child participants. Section Two is comprised of three matrices which report and compare data from both phases of Stage 2, organised by the three a priori themes identified from Stage 1 (play, rules, and agency within the research process). Section three further explores the data and the ways in which children described their experiences and understandings of transition in relation to the wider literature.

6.0.1 Research Timeline
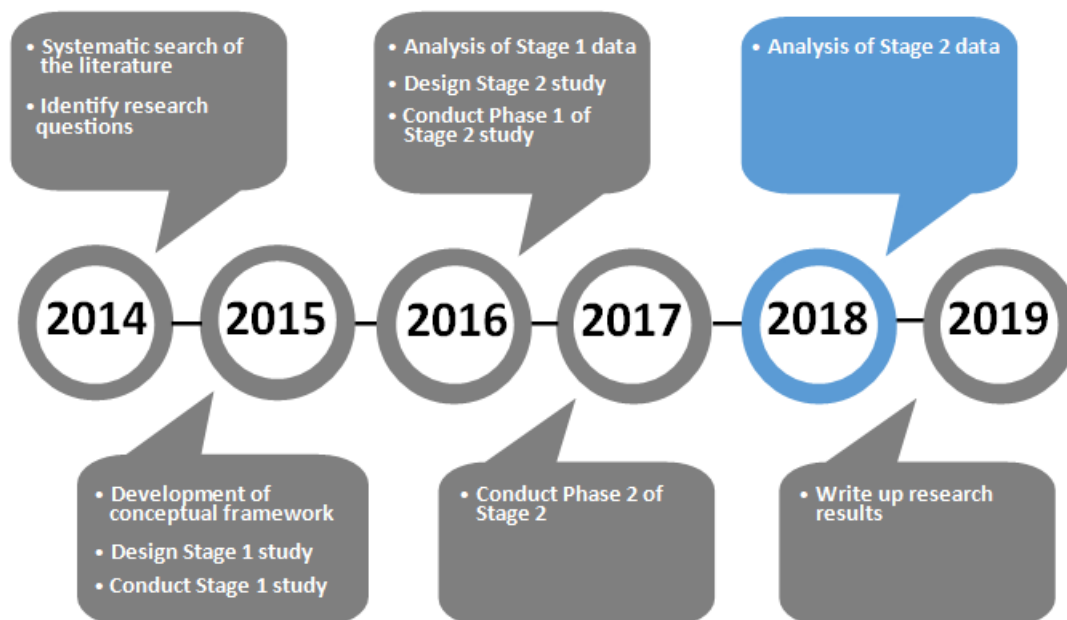
Figure 13. Research timeline - Chapter 6

6.1 Reporting the Findings

Representing data and reporting the findings of qualitative longitudinal research (QLLR) is a complex task (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The complexities of representing data and reporting QLLR data co-constructed with young children presents an even further challenge in relation to capturing children's authentic voices within my (adult) interpretation of children accounts. Addressing these complexities and challenges required careful thought to the setting and set up of participant interviews. The rationale to pair child participants together in phase 1 was to make participating in the research process initially less intimidating. Additionally, pairing children was a successful strategy for gathering in depth accounts of children's understandings and experiences as the pairing of children frequently resulted in discussion, agreements, and disagreements that offered interesting insights that may not have been evident in a one-on-one (adult and child) situation. However, a challenge that resulted in this decision was that children's accounts tended to be 'choppy' (frequent short quotes and statements) as participants frequently interrupted each other. This 'choppiness' was also compounded by the need for me to frequently clarify what children had said due to difficulty hearing and understanding children in the often busy and loud environments of ECECS. Even in phase two, where children worked one-on-one with me during the research process, I frequently needed to repeat children's statements to them to ensure that I had heard and understood children's accounts correctly. This, paired with frequent interruptions by parents and background noise in many of the phase two interview locations, led to phase two data also being 'choppy' in nature, with frequent exchanges between participant and researcher.

Despite these challenges in organising and analysing the data, the underpinning of the child-citizen theoretical perspective for this study does not support these challenges being framed as a deficit, or something to avoid when conducting research with young children. Rather, these challenges have arisen due to the very nature of co-constructing research with young children in their everyday environments, places that children are comfortable in and have ownership of. As such, these challenges are viewed as necessary adult obstacles for making the research process child-centred and participatory for preschool aged children. Obstacles not to be avoided, but instead carefully mitigated.

In light of the nature of the data, the challenge remained for me to systematically report the data while allowing for children's individual voices and experiences to be come to the fore. This required considered thought as to the approach to representing the findings of the study. To address these challenges, I employed a multi-step strategy for reporting the findings guided by the structured approach to trajectory analysis (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016).

6.2 The Findings

This chapter reports the findings of Stage 2 using a multi-step approach. The first step was the creation of a narrative for each child participant. The second step was to report the data using temporally ordered matrices to highlight key themes that emerged in the data. The third step was to further investigate key themes through exploration of the ways in which children's accounts of their transition inform and challenge adult's conceptualisations of child wellbeing in relation to the wider literature.

6.3 Writing the Narratives

As per the structured approach to trajectory analysis (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016), the focus of the analysis is the individual's experience of change over time. In this approach, the individual is the primary focus of analysis. Each individual child had a unique experience during the transition to school, and these unique experiences can be obscured through thematic reporting of the data. To ensure that elements of each child's voice, understandings, and experiences of transition was captured and highlighted in the data, a participant narrative was written for each child. The purpose of these narratives is to present a snapshot of each child that works to highlight their words, and perspectives above adult observations and interpretations. The narratives centre on the ways in which children described and experienced the concepts of play and rules across the transition to school, as well as the ways in which they exerted agency during the co-constructed research experience.

Each narrative begins with background information about the child, focussing on the settings and processes involved in their transition from their ECEC service(s) to their new primary school. This contextual information is important as investigating the impact of service integration on children's transition to school was a key aim of this research study. Each ECEC service that children attended was unique in terms of size, location, SES, and service integration. Table 13 gives a brief overview of the context for each site.

Table 11: ECEC service descriptions

Service	Description
Service A	Service A is a large not-for-profit community childcare centre located on the grounds of a University and University Hospital in metro Adelaide. Almost all the families who use this service have a parent(s) who work at the University or Hospital. Many families live a significant distance from the service and commute for work. The service has four rooms (infant, toddler 1, toddler 2, and preschool).

Service B	Service B is a medium sized not-for-profit childcare centre located in a business park in an area ranked as a 5 for SES status. The service is used primarily by parents commuting to the business park but is also used by families in neighbouring suburbs and is organised into three room (infant, toddler, and preschool). The service is trialling a few transition visits with neighbouring primary schools this year with preschool aged children.
Service C	Service C is a large not-for-profit community childcare centre in an area ranked as a 6 for SES status in a central suburb not far from Adelaide CBD. The service is divided into four rooms (infant, toddler, junior kindergarten, and kindergarten). The centre has been doing transition visits with three closely located primary schools for the past 2 years, as well as a transition information session for parents.
Service D	Service D is a small not-for-profit childcare centre in an area ranked as a 4 for SES status in a Southern suburb of metro Adelaide. The centre does not have separate rooms, so children from the age of three-months-to-five years of age share the same indoor and outdoor space. Service D is co-located with an Out of School Hours Care service and a preschool which preschool aged children from Service D attend twice a week.
Service E	Service E is a medium sized, for-profit childcare centre in an area ranked as a 3 for SES status in a North Eastern suburb of metro Adelaide. The centre has three rooms (infant, toddler, and preschool).
Service F	Service F is a small for-profit childcare centre in an area ranked as a 2 for SES status in a Western suburb of metro Adelaide. The centre does not have separate rooms, so children from the age of three months-to-five years of age share the same indoor and outdoor space, with some zones specified for certain age groups.
Service G	Service G is a large early years program that is part of an Independent IB junior school in an area ranked as a 9 for SES status close to the Adelaide CBD. The early years centre has four rooms (two for two-to-three-year-olds and two for four-to-five-year-olds) and is situated in the same building as the reception classes. Children from the early years program regularly participate in whole school events/activities and complete a series of transition visits to the reception classrooms.
Service H	Service H is a medium sized childcare centre that is co-located on the same site as a standalone preschool and a primary school. The site is in an area ranked as a 2 for SES status in a Northern Suburb of metro Adelaide. Children from the childcare regularly attend preschool programming at the co-located standalone preschool and complete a series of transition visits to the co-located school.

Children who attended the same ECEC service had similar transition experiences prior to their transition to school. However, as children from the eight ECECS transitioned to sixteen different primary schools, there were many different unique transition experiences. It also became clear during my analysis of the data in some cases, even children who transitioned from the same ECEC service to the same primary school had very different experiences. This suggests that regardless of transition experience, all children had unique journeys through the transition to school that warrant

investigation. As a key aim of this study is to '*Investigate how service integration in ECEC settings impacts children's experiences of wellbeing during the transition to school*, each narratives also details the level of service integration (including elements such as partnerships and transition processes) children experienced during transition. This was done through my creation of three distinct integration categories (informed by the systematic search of the literature) to broadly categorising children's transition experiences as part of data analysis. The criteria for transition categories, and the category each participant was place in is listed below in table 14.

Table 12: Participant's transition to school integration category

Transition Category	Child name
Significant transition – low level of integration (category 1) • no transition process between pre-school and school, or • childcare/early learning/preschool and school are not close proximity, or • child transitioned to school with no other peers from childcare/early learning/preschool • child had a gap in their transition experience due to extenuating circumstances	Aida Colton Dakota Grace Leo Olivia Satriawan Tavi
Moderate transition – moderate level of integration (category 2) • some transition processes at preschool or school, or • childcare/early learning/preschool and school are located in close proximity, or • child transitioned to school with several or more peers from childcare/early learning/preschool	Abigail Anderson Carter Clara Connor Elsie Joshua Ned Sebastian
No to low transition – high level of integration (category 3) • preschool and school are co-located or strongly integrated through proximity or transition processes.	Cora Oliver Sadie

After outlining pertinent background information, the narratives describe each child's experience of participating in phase one (pre transition) and phase two (post transition) of the research activity including direct quotes from participants and information from field notes.

6.3.1 Participant Narratives

The following section contains a participant narrative for each of the 20 children who participated in both phases of the Stage 2 study. To emphasis individual children's experiences of change through time, narratives are written in a similar style and follow the same layout.

Abigail

Contextual information

Abigail is in the moderate transition category. She attended Service E once a week for the past year. She also attends a neighbourhood preschool three times a week which is located close to her home. Abigail's parents are happy that she is attending both services as she is an only child and they want to give her many opportunities to build social skills. Abigail transitioned to a neighbourhood public primary school in close proximity to her preschool with several other children from the preschool. Abigail attended a welcome to reception event at the school and visited the Out of School Hours care (OSHC) program prior to starting school which she now attends.

Prior to school transition

When I visited Abigail's childcare to complete the emoji activity with her and another participant, the other child did not assent to participate. Abigail was very brave and friendly and was happy to complete the activity on her own with me. She is a confident child who insisted on lining up the dolls and toys she was playing with at the table we were working at before she was ready to begin. Half way through the activity we had to stop for a few minutes due to a staffing issue at the centre, however, Abigail was happy to tell me about what she liked to do at childcare while we waited. Abigail had a certain way she wanted to complete the emoji activity. After giving her the emoji pictures, she told me to turn around until she was done making her pictures, she repeated these instructions each time new pictures were given. Abigail's play picture featured her family. When describing her rule picture who makes the rules, she said kids make "silly rules, and Mums and Dads make safe rules".

Post school transition

Abigail is now in her second term of reception at school. I visited her house on a Saturday to do the emoji activity with her, and she was in her school uniform as she wanted to show it to me. Before we started the activity, Abigail wanted to show me her house and room, as well her school book where she has been doing her letter work. We competed the activity at her kitchen table with her mum sitting with us. Much like the first time I did the activity with Abigail, she created her own set of procedures and rules for turning over the emoji and sharing her ideas. Abigail's answer to questions about her pictures and stories were sometimes subversive, with comments such as "I feel happy because I cut my finger open and I cut my brain open." When asked if there was more or less time to play at school than childcare, Abigail said it was "different" and named many parts of her school and playground. When asked about rules at her school and who makes them, she said her teachers did, and gave specific examples. She also shared that she would make "naughty rules", while her dad made "safe rules". She stated that both childcare and school had "all rules everywhere" and that school is "much better because lots of kids, lots of loud noise".

Abigail also told me about her experience in Out of School Hours Care (OSHC), and how a boy drew on her dress and she didn't know how to ask for help. Mum shared that she had several conversation with OSHC staff and how Abigail could be more supported, and that Abigail feels better going now. Abigail told me she was finished talking about the emoji, and the activity was concluded.

Aida

<u>Contextual information</u>

Aida is in the significant transition category. She attended Service G four days a week for the past two years. Aida has a little brother who also attends the same service. Aida will not be continuing on to the reception classes at Service G (an integrated service). She transitioned to a public primary school in a neighbouring suburb. One other child from Service G who also participated in this research study, Leo, also transitioned to the same school.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Aida was very shy and quiet at the beginning of the emoji activity which she completed with Sadie and another child; however, she was very engaged in turning over the emoji and making pictures. At times, she stumbled with words and needed a little longer to tell her story, but she continued until she was finished. She was very clear about when she had finished her picture and when she was ready to tell her story. Her play picture featured playing with her friends outside, where she used the emoji faces to represent her friends. When telling me about her rule picture, she listed several rules at preschool including raising your hand, waiting for mum or dad to pick you up, and "walking down the street together". When asked if she thought there would be any rules at school, she said "maybe no dancing…and no putting your hand up during fruit time". I asked Aida if she would like to tell me anything else, when she said no, the activity was concluded.

<u>Post school transition</u>

Aida is now in her second term of reception in a split reception/year one classroom. We completed the activity at a nearby library where Aida's mum sat at the table with us. All the stories Aida told around the different emoji feelings involved her friends. She was very proud of having many friends. When asked to make a picture of how she liked to play, Aida talked about playing on the playground when bored, but did not have other ideas she wanted to share of how she liked to play at school. When asked if she used computers or iPads at her school, she told me they were 'only for the big kids'. I asked Aida if there was more or less time to play at school than preschool, she said 'more time…because there is free play at fruit time, recess, and lunch', but that overall there are less things to play with.

Aida created a picture about rules at her school such as "sitting criss cross so everyone can see…having manners… [and] showing responsible behaviour". When asked who makes the rules at school, she said teachers and that they make 'good rules' and that if you break them 'you might go to jail and wear an orange jump suit.' I asked Aida if there were more rules at school or preschool and she said, "that there are more rules at school, because it's a bigger school". Aida wanted to continue making her own pictures with the emoji and asked if she could take a picture of her stories with the iPad I had been using to take photos. After a few more pictures, she asked if she could read a library book with me and was able to sound out many of the words in the book which she was very proud of. After the story, we finished the activity and Aida and her mum went to pick up her little brother.

Anderson

Contextual information

Anderson is in the moderate transition category. He attended Service F one to two days a week for the past year. Anderson also attended a nearby kindergarten three days a week which is in close proximity to the childcare and the public primary school he transitioned to. No other children at his ECEC service transitioned to the same school.

Prior to school transition

Anderson is a highly active child who was busy playing chasey with his friend Colton outside. I asked both boys to come with me to do an activity and while a little reluctant to leave their game, were excited to see the materials I brought. When working with the face emoji, Anderson chose to use actions and sounds to convey his understanding of the feelings, rather than words. He did not want to tell me a story about why someone might be feeling that way. While working with the emoji, Anderson and Colton frequently compared ideas and stories and told jokes to each other, such as calling the trees 'broccolis'. I asked Anderson if he would like to make a picture about how he likes to play, he said no. I then asked if he would like to see the other emoji I brought, to which he answered an enthusiastic yes. However, when given the 'rule' emoji, Anderson chose to hide them under his paper. When Colton began to answer questions with sounds such as "dah dah dah", Anderson began to mimic this response as well. When asked about whether there were rules at childcare, Anderson was able to list several, however, when asked to make a picture he responded, "we don't have any" and then "I don't know bye bye". I asked Anderson if he was finished with the activity, he said "no". Both boys continued to play with the emoji for a minute before throwing them on the ground. I asked Anderson and Colton if they would like to go back outside now and they both said yes, so the activity was concluded.

Post school transition

Anderson is now in his second term of reception at school. His mum and dad brought Anderson back to his previous ECEC service to complete the emoji activity with me. Mum and dad waited in the entrance talking to the centre director while Anderson and I worked in the preschool area of the childcare centre. Anderson was keen to begin the activity and when given the five face emoji, said that the 'angry' one was "for me" [the researcher] and the rest were for him. I asked Anderson if he could tell me a story about how he feels at school using an emoji. He picked 'angry', but then tells me he has never felt angry at school. When working with the emoji, Anderson said that I could take a photo of his picture, but then used his hands to block his picture. When asked about the picture he made, Anderson did not respond.

When given the 'rule' emoji, Anderson used words such as "volcano" and "hurting heads" to describe them but did not explain to me what he meant. He then turned them all upside down. I asked Anderson if he was finished and he said yes, so the activity was concluded after only 15 minutes.

Carter

<u>Contextual information</u>

Carter is a child in the moderate transition category. He attended Service H one day a week for the past three years. Most of the children in this ECEC service transitioned to the co-located primary school, however, as Carter moved away from this area two years ago, he transitioned to a Lutheran school closer to his current home. Carter also attended a preschool in his home suburb twice a week. Some of the children at his preschool transitioned to the same school. Carter completed several transition visits to his new school which he was excited to tell me about. During these visits he met the reception teachers and was given a special bag with materials with his name on it. Additionally, Carter attends a language school on Saturdays to learn his Mother's native language.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Carter was an enthusiastic participant in the emoji activity and was keen to speak into the recorder and say his name. Before turning over the emoji, he chose to guess which one it would be. Carter was paired with another child during the activity. The other child was quite hesitant to share her ideas and Carter tried to help and support her during the activity. When talking about the picture he made with the play emoji, Carter said that "it was a messy day" which he said meant "that he brought all his toys out and will leave them out forever". This was similar to his story about how he might play at school, where he placed all the emoji on his paper. Carter gave many examples of rules at childcare when talking about his rule picture and stated that "you can get in trouble with the police" if you don't follow the rules.

<u>Post school transition</u>

Carter is now in his second term of reception. When scheduling a location to meet with Carter to complete the emoji activity for phase 2, Carter asked to meet as his favourite park. When he and his mum arrived, he was excited to show me the playground, lake, and geese. The emoji activity was challenging to do outside because of the wind; however, Carter came up with the solution, and instead held the emoji he wanted to talk about instead of laying them down on a paper. When I asked Carter about how he played at school, he gave very detailed accounts. He talked about playing footy with his friends outside on the oval and how many goals he kicks. He also spoke about inside play where his class dose "investigation time" which is when his teacher picks a theme "like puzzles or games". When asked if investigation time was fun games or learning games, Carter said "fun", but also that if students are "naughty" they have to play learning games "but like good boys and good girls they get to pick what they have to have." I asked Carter if there was more time to play at school or childcare, he said school had "two hours…and that recess was less but lunch was more".

When looking through the rule emoji, Carter was able to tell me very detailed information about rules at his school, such as 'A choices' and 'B choices', and who makes the rules. He also gave many examples of rules he and other reception students had to follow and that at school "we need to follow the rules a lot more" and that the rules are "good rules". Carter was excited to tell me about a medal he won at school for being good at learning and being patient, and how he was given a bible at chapel which was very special to him. Carter told me that he had shared all his ideas, so the activity was concluded.

Clara

Clara is in the moderate transition category. She attended Service F three days a week for the past three years. Clara transitioned to a public primary school located in the adjacent suburb that her older sister currently attends. The primary school recently began a gradual entry intake at the start of school to support children's transition. This process was not available when her older sister started. No other children from Clara's ECEC service transitioned to the same school.

Prior to school transition

Clara was very eager to participate in the activity as she had seen other participants working with the emoji earlier and wanted a turn. When creating a story about how she likes to play, Clara used pairings of emoji to tell multiple stories and included multiple face emoji to describe how someone's feeling change in response to actions or events. I asked Clara if she could make me a picture of how she played at childcare, she said "I don't want to, I'm going to do something else' which was a picture about a boy that encountered a series of negative events. When asked if she knew of any rules at childcare, she was able to list many and used emoji to describe them and how they made her feel. She also talked about rules that would be at school and how teachers make them and that they are "good rules" just like mummy and daddy make at her house. Both Clara and the child who was participating in the emoji activity with her wanted to continue to make pictures and tell me about them in detail once they had finished. They continued to do this for about 10 minutes until Clara told me she had finished.

Post school transition

Clara is now in her second term of reception at school. She and her mum meet me after school at her previous ECEC service. We go outside to complete the activity in the play yard as the centre now has a television in the preschool room which is playing a movie and very distracting for her. Clara is very shy with her mum present, and initially does not assent to having the activity recorded. I play back a part of the recording from the last time she did the activity with me to remind her, she then assented to the recording. Once she started working with the emoji, Clara became engaged in the activity and was happy to share her ideas. When telling me a story about why someone might feel 'sad', she talked about "going on B". When I asked her what this meant, she talked about a behaviour management strategy employed by her teachers at school which meant you had made a "bad choice". She then said she felt happy when as was on "A" which meant she was making "good choices".

I asked Clara if she could make me a picture about how she played at school. Her picture and story revolved around her lunch order and the canteen. I asked Clara if there was more time to play at school or childcare, she said there was less time to play at school and "no babies" like at childcare. Clara asked her mother if she could eat the snack they had brought, cut watermelon. After opening her snack, Clara asked for her fork telling her mum that she is "not allowed to give watermelon without a fork". I asked Clara if that was a rule for mum, she said no and that "kids can't make rules". I asked Clara if she would like to make another picture, she said no but wanted to rearrange the emoji on her paper. Once she had done this, she said she was finished so the activity was concluded.

Colton

Colton is in the significant transition category. He attended Service F one to two days a week for the past three years. Colton transitioned to nearby Catholic primary school where his older sister also attends. None of the other children at his childcare transitioned to the same school.

Prior to school transition

After a little reluctance to leave his game of chasey outside, Colton agreed to come with his friend Anderson to do the emoji activity in the preschool area of the childcare centre. Colton enthusiastically said his name for the recorder and was keen to manipulate the face emoji, however, chose to use actions and sounds to represent the feelings rather than words. Colton and Anderson compared and shared their emoji, generating a significant amount of conversation between the two of them. When making a picture about how he likes to play, Colton wanted to use all the emoji and told a detailed story that involved ten different 'play' emoji which centred on playing footy and using a phone. After being given the rule emoji, Colton began to use inappropriate language ("what the hell'), and toilet language. He also started to hide the emoji which made Anderson laugh. When asked about a rule at his house, Colton responded with "you have to hit and kick yourself" and "bam bam bam". Colton then started to throw emoji on the ground. I asked him if he had finished with the activity, he said "no". However, when Colton stood up from the table and started throwing Anderson's emoji, I concluded the activity and took both participants back outside to join the other children and educators.

Post school transition

Colton is now in his second term of reception at school. When I arrived at Colton's house to do the emoji activity, he was playing in the yard with a toy crossbow that he was keen to show me. We sat at the kitchen table to do the activity and were joined by Colton's dad and older sister who he interacted very positively with. When asked about how he likes to play at school, Colton's emoji picture included a football and a di. His story heavily featured playing footy [Australian Rules Football] and recess which he stated was his favourite part of school because that's when he can "play". He also talked about a dice game that he plays at school but added that "it's not really fun" and a game they "have to play".

When asked if there were rules at school, Colton listed several rules such as "hands off feet off" and "no fighting". He also shared that sometimes this is a hard rule to follow. When asked if there were more rules at childcare or school, he said the same. When asked if the same thing happens at school when you don't follow the rules, he said it is different from childcare, but when asked how he said, "I don't know, the teachers know because I don't know". I asked Colton if kids can make rules and he said "no, not ever because they would go crazy". Colton's becomes less interested in the emoji and answering questions. I ask him if he is finished and he says yes. He shows me how his crossbow works before going back outside to play.

Connor

Connor is in the moderate transition category. He attended Service D two to three days a week for the past three years. Connor transitioned to a nearby public school that his older brother currently attends. A few children from the preschool program co-located with Service D transitioned to the same school. Connor also attends the co-located OSCH on the same site as Service D.

Prior to school transition

As the one room childcare centre is a busy place, Connor, Dakota (another study participant) the centre director, and I walked over to the OSHC building to complete the emoji activity. Connor was an enthusiastic participant and readily turned over the emoji and told me what feeling the face was showing and a story about why someone might be feeling that way. When I gave Connor the play emoji, he proudly told me that "I know what all of these are" and gave examples of what you could do with all of them. His play picture featured video games and bike riding. When I asked him how me might play at school, his ideas built off of Dakota's picture about playing in the sun as he said, "I do not like getting sunburnt because, because I don't want to get sunburnt". When I asked Connor if there are any rules at childcare, Connor said that "he could do whatever he wants". When reminded about the "crossing the road rule" by Dakota, he then added that you must be "responsible" and "listen" at childcare or you "will get run over". With the rule emoji, Connor made a picture of a rule that means he has to say "bye [to his mum] and give her a cuddle". Connor told me he had finished making picture but wanted to show me the board games at the OSHC before we left, so the activity was concluded.

Post school transition

Connor is now in his second term of reception at school. Connor quickly remembers me and starts listing the emoji I brought from last time. We work at his kitchen table while his mum helps his big brother with homework in another room. When turning over the 'tongue sticking out emoji', Connor said he "couldn't remember that one" but when asked what he thought it might be "excited". Connor's picture about how he liked to play at school featured a sun and a computer. When asked what he plays on the computer, he tells me about a reading eggs game which helps him to learn letters. When asked if it was a fun game or a game they have to play he said, "you have to, it's for fun". I asked Connor if there was more time for play at school or childcare, he said school because "it's way more better … because there's goals and there's footy and there's basketball".

Connor makes a picture about rules at his school. He uses a phone/table emoji to explain about "award time" when his class is allowed to use the iPads. When asked if kids get to make rules at his school, Connor says "no…because they always think about doing naughty stuff". Connor feels that there are more rules at school than childcare, but that they are "good" because they keep you safe. The activity concluded when Conner said he had finished making pictures.

Cora

<u>Contextual information</u>

Cora is in the low-to-no transition category. She attended Service A once a week for the past two years. Cora also attended a preschool close to her home that is across the street from the public primary school transitioned to. Many of the children at this preschool transitioned to same school. The preschool completes a series of transition visits to this primary school to familiarise students with the school and support their transition.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Cora was eager to participate in the emoji activity at childcare. At the beginning of the activity she shared that even though she is happy at childcare throughout the day, she is often sad at drop off time because she misses her mum. She and her friend Olivia (also a study participant) generated their own stories and built from each other's ideas. Cora's play stories featured outside play and her pet dog. When given the rule emoji, Cora was very explicit in telling me how she was using the emoji to share rules she knew of at preschool and at home. If I misunderstood one of her ideas, she corrected me to ensure that I understood what she was saying. Cora was one of the few children that wanted to make up her own rule when asked. However, when she shared her rule, she said it was made by a mum who said, "no skipping inside".

<u>Post school transition</u>

Cora is now in her second term of reception at school. Her older brother and sister attend the school, so in addition to having done transition visits with her pre-school, she had visited the school many times before. Despite this, however, like at childcare, she is still sometimes a little sad in the morning at drop off. Cora worked with me at her kitchen table while her mother was in the room. She was shy at first, but once she saw the emojis she remembered me and the activity and told me about her favourite game to play at school where her and her friends pretended to be 'doggies'. This time, her play picture features a computer, and when asked about it, she stated "I like going on the computer because I get lots of screen time". I asked if she could make me a picture about how she liked to play at school, but she said, "none of these fit". I then instead ask if she could tell me about playing at school. She gladly shared that she "liked to play outside on the oval" and that she sometimes played doggies with two of her friends. I asked Cora if she thought there was more time to play at school or childcare, she said childcare because "you do lots of learning at school".

When asked if she could make a picture about a rule, she tells me that at her school there is a rule that you can't go past the fence, and that people who break this rule "get in trouble". When asked what it means to "get in trouble" at school, Cora stated that you have to "go to the Principal of the Focus Room". When asked who makes the rules, Cora said "teachers". I asked if kids could make rules, she said "no, they're not teachers". I asked if there was a rule she would like to make, she said "no". I asked Cora if her school had good rules or bad rules, to which she said good. We talked about how rules differed between childcare and school. Cora felt the rules were different and gave the example of having to cross her legs on the floor because it's "one of the five L's". Cora was very proud to tell me that she had finished all her sounds and the 'R' was the last one. Cora told me she had finished making picture and telling stories, and the activity was concluded.

Dakota

<u>Contextual information</u>

Dakota is in the significant transition category. She attended Service D two to three days a week for the past three years. Dakota transitioned to a public school in a neighbouring suburb. One other child from the co-located preschool that she attended at Service D and a family friend transitioned to the same school.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Dakota was an enthusiastic participant who added extra ideas and stories to the emoji when explaining her thinking and creations. She and Connor, another child participant in the study, built off each other's ideas and ways of storytelling throughout the activity. Dakota's play picture featured a phone and a bicycle. She explained how she liked to play on her mummy's phone and, interestingly, how she didn't like riding a bike. However, she then added that she didn't like getting hurt, and wanted 'someone to hold the seat for her'. Dakota was able to identify many rules at childcare, such as wearing a hat, putting your hand up, and crossing the street with a grown up. When asked about what rules she thought there might be at school she said, "no going across the road without holding a parent's hand". Dakota asked to make another picture. This picture was about playing with friends, and how she likes to be with her mummy and give her hugs. She also said that she "doesn't want an itchy head as that would mean she had head lice". When Dakota finished telling her story the activity was ended.

<u>Post school transition</u>

Dakota is now in her second term of reception at school. I met Dakota and her mum at their local public library to complete the activity. Dakota was highly engaged throughout the activity, and able to identify and explain a range of feelings. When I asked her to make a picture of how she liked to play at school, Dakota made a picture about how she is learning to ride her bike with her mum. I asked if she could tell me about playing at school, and she shared that there are times at school where she can choose how and what she plays, but her story also featured rules about how many times you could choose an activity, or when you were allowed to choose. Dakota told me that she thought there was more time to play at school than childcare, and that there were more things to play with such as an oval and a playground, emphasising that "there's not even a playground at childcare".

Dakota explained the picture she made about rules at childcare, such as "no punching and no pushing". When asked if she could tell me what happens if you don't follow the rules she said "some people who aren't good in class when it's recess time or lunch time, they go on a red spot so they have to sit… they have to go on a red spot and they can't play when the bell goes". She then further explains that if someone is on the 'red spot' they have to wait for the yard duty teacher to tell them they can go. She shared that there has been two people [from her class] who have gone "on there". I asked who made the rules and Dakota said that her teachers and the principal did. When asked if kids can make rules she said, "no no no because kids will make bad rules". She also added that there are a lot of rules at both childcare and school. Dakota indicated she had finished making pictures, so the activity was concluded.

Elsie

Elsie is in the moderate transition category. She attended Service C once a week for the past two years. Her younger sister is also registered at the same childcare one a week in the infant room. Elsie additionally attended a neighbourhood preschool three times a week located close to her home and in the same suburb as the public primary school she transitioned to. Several children from this neighbourhood preschool transitioned to the same school as Elsie.

Prior to school transition

Elsie was excited to complete the activity with another child at her childcare and was quick to turn over the emoji and name them. She was able to tell a story about why someone might feel a certain emotion for most of the emoji. Her picture of how she liked to play featured the outdoors, and she talked about enjoying outdoor play both at home and at childcare. When asked about how she might play at school, she used the same emoji and talked about the same types of outdoor play. When given the rule emoji, Elsie said she couldn't make a picture of a rule, but was able to list some rules at her house. She thought that at school, teachers would make the rules and a rule might be "no punching or kicking because someone might get hurt". The activity ended when Elsie said she didn't want to make any more pictures.

Post school transition

Elsie is now in her second term of reception at school. We completed the emoji activity at a table in her lounge room while her Dad worked in the kitchen and her younger sister napped. Elsie was very excited to tell me she was moving to a new house and show me some of her favourite toys. Their new house will be close by, so she will continue to attend the same school. Elsie was quick to name a feeling for each emoji face but struggled to tell a story about why someone might feel that way at school. When I asked if she could make a picture about how she liked to play, she said that she needs a "happy face" for her picture which featured outdoor play. Elsie's picture about how she plays at school focussed on outdoor play at recess and lunch, and the rules for lining up. I asked Elsie if there was more time to play at school or childcare, she said there is more time to play at school. Elsie also included a computer emoji in her picture and when I asked about it, she said, "my teacher tells us what to do on their" and that they work on letters and numbers.

When Elsie received the rule emoji, she was keen to tell me about the rules in her class and school with little prompting. She said she wanted to tell me about the "weaker choice list" in her class which is a behaviour management strategy employed by her teacher. Elsie talked about examples of weak choices, and how you might feel if you made one. She explained the system very clearly modelling language her teacher uses. Elsie also shared an interesting comment about the 'girl with hand raised emoji', saying that because her hand is only half way up "the teacher wouldn't know if you had a question" and that "you have to put your hand all the way up and wait for your turn". Elsie then asked if she could show me her bedroom, so I asked her if there was anything else she wanted to tell me about school. She said no, so we finished the activity and then she showed me her room which she was very proud of.

Grace

<u>Contextual information</u>

Grace is in the significant transition category. She attended Service A two days a week for the past two years. Grace has a younger sister that also attends the same childcare in the toddler room. Grace transitioned to a public school that is close to her home. None of the other children from Service A transition to the same school.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Grace was eager to participate in the emoji activity with her friend Joshua. Grace and Joshua generated significant conversation between themselves in relation to the emoji and creating pictures, building off each other's ideas and sometimes disagreeing. When asked about how she liked to play at childcare, Grace's story revolved around a Power Rangers game that she and Joshua play with other children. When I asked Grace follow on questions about others ways she likes to play, or how she thinks she might play at school, Grace continues to talk about play fighting and makes 'fighting sounds' and pretends to punch herself. When I gave Grace and Joshua the 'rule' emoji, Grace quickly push aside the 'boy' emoji and said she "just wanted girls" and that "I don't want boys, they're silly, you have the boys! [to Joshua]". I asked Grace if she could make me a picture about a rule, but she didn't want to. She was happy to list several rules at childcare that she said were made by the lead educator and at her home where "mummy and daddy are the boss". She shared a rule at her house about not being able to hurt her sister which she thought was a "good rule". Grace and the other child she completed the activity with, Joshua, started moving unsafely in the room, so we ended the activity.

<u>Post school transition</u>

Grace is now almost at the end of her second term of reception at school. She completed the emoji activity with me later in the term than the other participants as her family was on an overseas holiday visiting family living abroad. We work at the kitchen table while her mum is tidying up the house. Grace easily recalls many of the emoji I showed her last time. She tells a detailed story for each of the emotions and connect them to experiences she or other classmates have had at school. I ask Grace to make me a picture of how she likes to play at school. She selects the computer emoji and tells me about the computers in her class. When asked if they were fun games or learning games, she says "fun letter games". Grace's second play story features the outdoor play environment at her school, and she avidly describes the playground, its proximity to her class, and the recess and lunch schedule in detail. When asked if there is more play time at childcare or school, she says school, but that there are more things to play with at childcare.

Grace uses the rule emoji to make a picture about several rules in her class, stating that they are "good rules". When asked who makes the rules, she said teachers. I asked Grace if children should be allowed to make rules, she said no, and went on to explain what happens in her class if children don't follow the rules, that "they have to go to another class until their teacher comes to get them". When asked if there are more rules at school or at childcare, she said school. I asked if that was a good thing or bad thing, she said good, but didn't know why, adding that none of the rules were "bad rules". Grace showed me her school workbook, and proudly read all her sight words and 'tricky words'. I asked her if she liked doing this work, she said no but that another boy had won a prize for finishing, so she wanted to as well. She then told me about her recent overseas trip after saying she was finished with the emoji activity.

Joshua

<u>Contextual information</u>

Joshua is in the moderate transition category. He attended Service A two days a week for the past four years. His younger brother also attends the same childcare in the toddler room. He transitioned to a nearby catholic primary school with three other children from Service A, including his good friend Sebastian who also participated in the study. Joshua and the other children who transitioned to this school visited the school for an afternoon transition to school event prior to starting reception.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Joshua is a confident and energetic child who was highly engaged in all the activities I completed with him at his childcare centre. He completed the emoji activity with Grace, another study participant, and they interacted frequently with each other, creating combined stories and building off each other's ideas. Joshua's picture of how he liked to play featured a bicycle, and he was very proud to tell me he could ride without training wheels. He also told me about a favourite game he, Grace, and other children played at childcare called Power Rangers. He used a variety of emoji in his story to explain how he feels when playing games. I asked Joshua if there were any rules at childcare, he said a rule was "no real guns" but he was very pleased with himself to tell me that he had a "real bow and arrow" under the couch at childcare. Joshua and Grace started climbing on furniture and the table we were working on, so I asked if they had told me everything they wanted, and they said yes, so the activity was concluded.

<u>Post school transition</u>

Joshua is now in his second term of reception at school. When I arrived at his house, he was very excited to show me his families very extensive Lego collection. I worked with Joshua at the kitchen table while his mum and little brother played in the next room. Joshua's play picture featured technology both at home where he plays computer games, and at school where he plays games on an iPad. I asked if the iPad games were fun games or learning games. Joshua hesitated, but then said "learning" but that some of them are "fun too". He also added that you "have to play them for reading groups" so the teachers "brings them to you". When I asked Joshua if there was more playtime at childcare or school, he said childcare, because at school he "has to do maths".

I asked Joshua if he could make me a picture about a rule at school. He said he didn't want to make a picture about it but told me a rule is "keeping hands to yourself". He said this was a "good rule" and if you don't follow the rules and do something "really bad you have to do community service". When I asked who makes rules Joshua said, "probably teachers", and that kids don't makes rules because they would "make rules like in the Captain Underpants book where the sandwiches are called pee pee sandwiches…that's why no kids are allowed to do rules". Joshua then went to go find the book to show me the page about 'pee pee sandwiches', he that thinks this page is the funniest in the whole book. After telling me about the Franklin shows he watches on the Smartboard while eating lunch at school, Joshua starts to make more and more 'pee pee' jokes. I ask him if there is anything else, he'd like to tell me and he says no, so the activity is concluded.

Leo

Contextual information

Leo is in the significant transition category. He attended Service G four days a week for the past year. Leo is an only child who is very happy to not have any brothers or sisters. Leo is an English as an additional language learner and he and his family are relatively new to Australia (arrived eighteen months ago). Leo did not continue onto the reception class at Service G (an integrated site). He transitioned to a public primary school in a neighbouring suburb with Aida, another study participant.

Prior to school transition

Leo enthusiastically engaged with the emoji. While naming emoji and describing his picture in English was a challenge for Leo, with some extra time and support, he was able to clearly convey his ideas, and repeated words or ideas if needed to ensure I fully understood what he was trying to say. He used a large variety of emoji to describe the way he liked to play at home and at the early years program. His picture featured outdoor and electronic play. Leo did not have any ideas about how he might play at school. When I asked Leo to make a picture about a rule at school, he used the child raising hand emoji and the 'happy' face and said, "raise your hand up when you have a questions". He also said he felt "good" when following the rules. When asked if there are any rules at his house, he told me "one kid, not two kids" which was a rule for his Mum. Leo could not think of any rules there might be at school. It was snack time now, so Leo helped me to clean up the emoji.

Post school transition

Leo is now in his second term of reception at school. I met Leo and his mum at their local library, which is a favourite place of Leo's because there is a toy lending service there. Leo's mum told me that Leo did not go to school today because he is very upset about something that happened earlier that week. She is unsure of what happened, as Leo will not talk to her about it, and she is finding working with the school challenging as the Australian school system is unfamiliar to their family as they are relatively new immigrants. She sat next to him throughout the activity. Leo was keen to engage with the emoji and used other materials (such as his water bottle) to add to his pictures and tell his stories.

Leo's stories about play centred around toys, especially his favourite toy 'dino trucks'. He told me that he doesn't like the toys at school and wants to stay home to play with his toys. At school he likes to draw dino trucks and was frustrated that he couldn't make one out of the playdough at school. Leo shared that he liked the Smartboard at school because it was like 'video games'. When asked if there was more time to play in the early years program or school Leo said that there was more time to play at school, but that outside play was boring. He also shared that he didn't have friends to play with outside. When working with the rule emoji, Leo was able to name several rules at home and at school. His picture was about the rule of "no video games", and he said the teachers made this rule. When I asked Leo if there was anything else he wanted to tell me about school, he said he hated it and wanted to stay home with his parents and grandparents and play with his toys. Leo showed me the toy lending area at the library after the activity was concluded.

Ned

<u>Contextual information</u>

Ned is in the moderate transition category. He attended Service B three days a week for the past three years. Ned's younger brother also attend the same childcare in the toddler room. Ned transitioned to a public primary school down the street from his home, which is a significant distance from Service B. He completed a series of transition to school visits at his new school, which he was very excited to attend. No other children from Service B transitioned to the same school.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Ned was a very confident participant who asked many questions about the activity and my visit. He frequently engaged with his friend Tavi's ideas who was completing the activity with him, and the two both agreed and disagreed about their ideas and stories many times throughout the activity. When asked about how he liked to play, Ned's stories featured playing with his brother, friends, and riding his bike. When asked about rules and routines, he shared detailed information about how "things are done" at childcare, and which children come on which days. When asked who made the rules at childcare Ned said that he did "good rules…like making things clean". However, when Ned corrected information in a rule that Tavi was sharing, he said that "a mum" made that rule. Once Ned told me about his rule picture, he said he was done with the activity. He then asked me to play 'babies' with them outside and showed me how to play the game.

<u>Post school transition</u>

Ned is in his second term of reception at school. When I arrived at his house, he was proud to tell me that he remembers the emoji activity and is keen to participate. We do the activity at the kitchen table while his parents are in another room and his younger brother naps. Ned tells elaborate stories about the emoji faces, including about how he was a little nervous on his first day of school, but is now very happy at school. He tells me all about grade one and the things he will be allowed to do next year when the new reception students come. When asked how he plays at school, Ned's stories feature outdoor play on the play equipment and year seven friends who help "little kids" play. He also talks about video games and his remote-control car which he plays with at home and shows the car to me. When asked if there was more time to play at childcare or school, he says school because at school there are "two times…no three" to play and more things to play with.

Ned asked if we could play his favourite game 'Trouble', I asked if we could wait until he finished the activity I brought and he agreed. When asked if there were rules at school, Ned said "definitely" and shared several rules largely related to swimming, an activity that Ned's class is currently doing at school. When asked if he could make a picture of a rule at school, Ned used several emoji to convey a variety of rules which he organised hierarchically to emphasise their relative importance. Ned thought the rules at school were "good" rules and said that if you break the rules "they put you in the principal [office]". When asked if there were more rules at childcare or school, he said school, but that he's "not telling me all of them". Ned then said he was finished and asked if we could play 'Trouble', so we played a game before I left.

Oliver

<u>Contextual information</u>

Oliver is in the no-to-low transition category. He attended Service A three days a week for the past year. His younger sister also attends the same childcare in the toddler room. Oliver transitioned to a catholic primary school in a neighbouring suburb. One other child from Service A and a good friend of Oliver's transitioned to the same school. The school offers many transition supports to new students including a teacher visit to the child's ECEC service, a parent orientation and welcome, and multiple transition visits for children prior to school start.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Oliver was excited to participate in the emoji activity with two of his friends but found it difficult to tell a story about the face emoji, needing some support in finding the words he wanted and building off other's ideas. Oliver was quick to correct me if I didn't repeat back the correct emphasis of his story or idea. When asked what the 'straight mouth emoji' was feeling, he said it was a "stick face". When asked why someone might feel like that, he suggested that "because maybe they want to get a stick but their parents won't let them". Oliver's picture of how he liked to play centred on his transition visits to his new school where he played in the sandbox with a friend. When asked how else he might play at school, he said with a different friend in the sandbox. I asked Oliver if he could think of a rule that might be at school, he said, "listen when it's time to go outside" and that rules were "good because you can have fun". Oliver also shared that he thought he would see his mum and dad less when we went to school, "only at pick up" and that this made him feel a little sad. Oliver asked to be finished, and the activity was ended.

<u>Post school transition</u>

Oliver is now in his second term of reception at his school. We completed the activity at his old childcare which his sister still attends. Oliver's mum and sister played in the toddler room while we completed the activity. Oliver was much more confident in naming and telling stories about the emoji this time. All his stories about feelings and play revolve around footy (Australian Rules Football) which he plays at school with friends. He was very proud to tell me that he "even played with year ones" and was hit in the head with a footy and "didn't even cry". Oliver also told me about playing "fun games" on the computer at school where students chose what they would like to play.

When asked if he could make a picture of a rule at school, Oliver found this tricky, and instead talked about rules at his house, or for walking to school. After asking if there were rules in his classroom, Oliver shared that there is "no tackling at school or playing on adult's phones unless they say yes", and that the Principal made these rules. Oliver shared a story about a little boy who had to go see the principal when he broke the rules. I asked Oliver if kids make rules, and he said "no, except only in footy". Oliver told me more about his favourite footy teams and then that he was finished.

Olivia

Contextual information

Olivia is in the significant transition category. She attended Service A two days a week for the past year. Olivia also attended a preschool close to her home three days a week. She transitioned to a private Christian school located a significant distance from her home, Service A, and preschool. No other children from Service A or preschool transitioned to this school.

Prior to school transition

Olivia was highly engaged with the emoji and greatly enjoyed flipping hers over and comparing hers to Cora, another study participant. Olivia and Cora shared ideas and engaged with each other's stories by building from each other's ideas. Olivia's play picture was full of different emoji including both 'face' and 'play' emoji. However, when I asked her to tell me about her 'play' story, it was about a recent trip to Disneyland and seeing princesses. When I asked about the picture, she told me she was "decorating" for her friends (represented by the face emoji). Olivia decided to create a second picture about play, this one featuring her and her friend playing outside with her dog. Working with the rule emoji, Olivia made a picture about having to listen during story time. She included a happy face and a sad face, saying happy for "following the rules" and the "crying face" for "when I didn't listen to the rules". Olivia and Cora also talked about playing fair. The activity ended when both Olivia and Cora had finished their pictures.

Post school transition

Olivia is now in her second term of reception at her new school. I work with Olivia at a low table in her lounge room while her mum and dad sit on the couch. At first, Olivia is very shy and responds to my questions by telling her mum. After a few minutes she becomes more confident and starts to respond directly to me. Olivia's stories and ideas all feature her new friends at school. Her play picture depicts her favourite game where Olivia and her friends have a secret hideout in bushes at school. I ask Olivia if playing at school is different than playing at childcare, she says different "because there is fruit time, recess, and lunch…and you can eat lunch outside".

When working with the rule emoji, Olivia makes a picture about the rule "you don't go outside without a teacher". When I asked who makes the rules at school, she says "my teacher…because she's the boss". When asked what happens if you don't follow the rules at school Olivia says, "when you are being naughty, and you do E choices or a very big E choices you get a yellow slip or a pink slip". Olivia wasn't sure what the colours meant, only that it means you were in trouble and your parents would know. I asked her if there were more rules at childcare or school, she says that she "wasn't sure". Olivia is very keen to continue making pictures and explaining them to me. She makes four more pictures about her school and what she likes to do. She then shows me some of the gymnastic moves she's been working on in gymnastics class. The activity is concluded when Olivia tells me she is done sharing her ideas.

Sadie

<u>Contextual information</u>

Sadie is in the low-to-no transition category. She attended Service G four days a week for the past two years. Sadie transitioned to reception within Service G (an integrated service), staying in the same building with about half of her Service G peers. Sadie has a younger sister who started at Service G in the two-to-three year old room when Sadie transitioned to reception.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Sadie was an enthusiastic participant who was quickly able to identify feelings and share her ideas. When asked to create a picture of how she likes to play at home, and then at her early years program, both pictures featured outdoor play. When asked about how she might play when she goes to reception, she added a computer emoji to her picture as she thought she might play on computers there. Sadie was able to describe several rules at her early years program and made a picture of a rule at home which is staying with your family at the shops "so you don't get lost". Sadie thought there would be rules at reception but wasn't sure what they would be. I asked Sadie if she would like to tell me anything else and she said she was finished; she said no, so the activity was concluded.

<u>Post school transition</u>

Sadie is now in her second term of reception in a classroom down the hall from her early years program. We completed the emoji activity in the school library while Sadie's mum and sister played outside. Sadie was a little shy at first but become more confident when I brought out the emoji and she remembered them. I asked her how she felt about moving to a new room in the school for reception, she said she "felt shy" at first and that things were "a bit different". Sadie shared that she thought it is "better" to be in reception because they can play on the big playground and there are "more things to do", even though she thought that there was more time to play at childcare. Her picture of playing at school featured the outdoors, and she said how she liked to share the swings with her friend. Sadie also chose to make a second play picture where she used a creative layering technique to demonstrate playing on the computer at school. She said that she played learning and fun games on the computers.

When asked about rules at school, Sadie talked about her classes' classroom contract and that "teachers and big kids make the rules at school". When Sadie had finished talking about her story, she decided to show me her classroom on the way back out to the playground to find her mum and sister. She was very proud of her artwork that was displayed on the wall

Satriawan

Satriawan is in the significant transition category. He attended Service B twice a week for the past two years. He also attended a local kindergarten three times a week closely situated to the primary school he will transition to. Satriawan's parents are International students studying at a nearby university. Their family is living in Australia while the parents undertake their degrees, with plans to return to their home country when finished. Satriawan is an English as an additional language learner who transitioned to a nearby public primary school. Satriawan was supposed to start reception in late January when school began. However, there was an issue with his visa, so he had to remain in his home country with his father (who had completed his university degree) before Satriawan could re-join his mother in Australia who was still studying. Because of this, Satriawan started reception five weeks into the school year. Some children from his preschool transitioned to the same school.

Prior to school transition

Satriawan readily engaged in turning over and interacting with the emoji, however, at the start he was not ready to share any thoughts or ideas and said, "I will tell you later". Once Satriawan was more comfortable, he began to volunteer ideas and answer questions. The child who was also completing the activity with Satriawan frequently interrupted him when he needed time to find the words he wanted to say. However, Satiawan was very deliberate in his wording and what he wanted to say, and consistently corrected me and the other child to ensure his ideas were fully understood. When Satriawan could not find the words he wanted to use, he would use sounds or actions to express his thinking. When asked about how he liked to play, he talked about being very proud of himself for being able to ride a bicycle with no training wheels, however, he did not want to tell me about how he played at childcare. When asked how he might play at school, he said he would have homework and he might have a phone to play games on. Satriawan let me know he was done by standing up from the table and asking to leave.

Post school transition

Satriawan and his mother came to the university after school to complete the emoji activity. He was very excited to tell me that he had been to the university many times and loves to use his scooter on the plaza. He was also excited about the upcoming Harmony Day on campus which involved sharing food. Satriawan was very tired during the activity and needed a snack break halfway through. He said that school makes him very tired and is boring sometimes. Satriawan frequently says "I forgot" during the beginning of the activity. Tt is unclear to me whether this is a strategy Satriawan uses when he doesn't know the English words to use, or when doesn't know the answer, or doesn't want to answer my question. After a few minutes, he is feeling more comfortable and shares more ideas. When talking about play, he describes several situations of how other children play at school but that he didn't play with them, or that he didn't know how to play. He also shared a story about how he tried to buy food at the canteen like the other children, but that the canteen was closed, and he didn't know what to do.

When asked about the rules at school, Satriawan said they were good rules made by the "principal and big kids". Satriawan was proud to show me his reading log and talk about all the books he read before telling me he was done with the activity.

Sebastian

Sebastian is in the moderate transition category. He attended Service A three days a week for the past three years. His younger sister also attends the same childcare in the toddler room. He transitioned to a nearby catholic primary school with three other children from his childcare, including his good friend Joshua who also participated in the study. Sebastian and the other children who transitioned to this school visited the school for an afternoon transition to school event prior to starting reception.

Prior to school transition

Sebastian was excited to engaged with the emoji and make pictures, however, he sometimes struggled to find the words he wanted to use. He started to tell a story about being "mad", but after struggling with finding the words he wanted to use, decided to tell a different story about tickling a friend with actions and sounds accompanying his words. When Sebastian created a story about how he liked to play, he created an outdoor scene and asked to use all the face emoji to tell his story. He used the 'happy' face to show he liked to play when it was sunny, and the 'sad' face to describe how he would feel if he bumped into a tree. Sebastian identified rules at childcare and made a picture of a rule he thought would be at school saying, "you have to listen to the teachers". When asked to tell me about his picture, he was very insistent that he needed to finish his picture first. When I accidently interrupted Sebastian during his story, he told me he wasn't finished and continued. When the other child Sebastian was working with said he was finished the activity, Sebastian said he was finished as well so the activity concluded.

Post school transition

Sebastian is now in his second term of reception at school. Sebastian and I completed the emoji activity at his kitchen table while his father was in the room. He shares that he was sometimes a "little lonely" at the beginning because his friends were not in his class, and one of his friends moved away. However, he shared that he made new friends soon and wasn't lonely anymore. Sebastian was very engaged in the activity and took time to think carefully about his ideas and answers before sharing them with me. Sebastian's picture about how he likes to play at school featured his friends and his favourite game, soccer. Sebastian also talked about a dice game his teacher had students play at school and used the 'straight mouth emoji' to show how he was feeling before he learned how to play and thought he 'was losing'. When asked if this was a learning game or a fun game, Sebastian said it was a "fun game". When asked if there was more playtime at school or childcare Sebastian said "childcare". I asked if less play time at school is a good thing or bad thing, he said "good, because you can still play".

Sebastian made a picture of a rule at his school. When explaining his picture to me he said, "you can do anything you want when it's playtime, but some toys need to stay in the corner". I asked why that's a rule, and he said, "I know the teacher just said so, and I don't know…I think it's a good rule, because the teacher said so". I asked if kids made rules and Sebastian said he didn't know. I asked if kids would make good rules and he said, "maybe they will do good things, but sometimes they do bad things". I asked what rule he would make if he could make one, he said "maybe playing". After telling me about his school canteen, Sebastian told me he had shared all his ideas and the activity was concluded.

Tavi

<u>Contextual information</u>

Tavi is in the significant transition category. He attended Service B twice a week for the past three years. Tavi is an English as an additional language learner who transitioned to a public primary school in an adjacent suburb. His high school aged brother previously attended this school. No other children from Service B transitioned to the same school.

<u>Prior to school transition</u>

Tavi was hesitant to participate in the emoji activity first, and often let his friend Ned answer first before contributing his own ideas. As the activity continued, Tavi became more confident in sharing his thoughts, and at some points challenged or corrected ideas Ned shared. He was very clear about which emoji he wanted to use and where he would place them. When talking about starting school, Tavi told me that when he was little and first started going to childcare he cried and wanted to go home, but now he is happy to come. When asked about how he plays at childcare, Tavi shared that he doesn't play here, he "only plays at home with his big brother". Tavi's pictures of play and rules focused on his home life and particularly his brother. Tavi shared that he is feeling good about going to school but doesn't know what his "teacher will say yet".

<u>Post school transition</u>

Tavi is now in his second term of reception at school. He was very shy when I first arrived and didn't remember me or the activity until I reminded him about how he completed it with his friend Ned. We sat at the dining room table with Tavi's mum, and for the first five minutes he would only whisper his answers to her, however, as the activity continued, Tavi began to speak with me and respond to questions and volunteer his ideas. Outdoor play at school and his garden at home featured heavily in Tavi's stories about how he likes to play. He also shared at length about the computer and video games he plays with his brother and the computers at school. Tavi told me that there is more playtime at school, and how you "don't play with the teachers" like at childcare.

When asked about rules at school, Tavi said he didn't remember whether there were more rules at school or childcare, but he was keen to share many details about the rules at school. These included his class having a class manager and their associated duties, and a behaviour management system where children in his class are given marbles to put in a jar when they are "good" or take marbles out when they are "bad". Tavi told me that at his school the Principal makes the rules and they are "good rules". Tavi was excited to tell me that when he is big, he will have his own phone like his big brother and be able to play in his house and garden "all by himself". Tavi was keen to show me his garden and the seeds he has planted through the kitchen window when he was done making pictures and the activity was concluded.

6.4 Representing the Data Thematically

As per the structured trajectory approach (Grossoehme & Lipstein, 2016), in QLLR, time-ordered matrices are a valuable approach to organising data to demonstrate 'what led to what' while preserving "chronological flow" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The Stage 2 study consisted of two phases (distinct data collection points) which followed children across the transition to school. As the time-ordered matrices used in the structured trajectory approach generally include three or more data collection points, this approach needed to be adjusted for this research study. To account for the two phase design, the a priori themes are the unit of analysis for the matrices. In the matrices, these three a priori themes are temporally organised in relation to the transition to school process. Participant's experiences are recorded in the data and sequenced by time. In cases where more than one child had a similar experience, words such as some, most, or a few, are used to illustrate commonalities and differences in children's experiences (Saldaña, 2003).

6.4.1 Data Matrices

This section reports the data in three matrices, organised by the three a priori themes identified in Stage 1: children's accounts of play, children's accounts of rules, and children's agency within the research process. Each matrix includes the ways in which children's accounts describe their understandings and experiences, and key ideas emerging from the theme that warranted further exploration.

Table 13: Children's accounts of play

Theme	Findings	Key ideas emerging from the theme
Children's accounts of their play prior to transition	• Children's accounts of play heavily featured outdoor play, friends, and family. Electronic play (computer games, phones, and video games) were also prominent in children's descriptions of play. • Children frequently used the emoji faces and the feelings they ascribed to them to describe their play, or the ways they like to play. Some children also used the faces to depict friends and family members. • Some children's play pictures included a wide variety of emoji and their stories listed how they could or have previously played with the items the emoji represent. Other children choose several play emoji and developed complex and integrated stories about how they like to play. • Several children used the emoji to describe group games that they enjoyed playing with friends. • Some children used the play emoji to describe how they don't like to play, or activities they fear. • Several children stated that they do not play at childcare, only at home. • Most children's accounts of how they think they will play at school involved electronic play (computers, phones, tablets) and outdoor play (playground, oval). Some children did not have any ideas they wanted to share about how they thought they might play at school or were unsure of their ideas.	• Children's stories consistently linked the face emoji and feelings to their stories about play. • Children's accounts of play were often simple stories linked to the emoji that they chose. However, when asked follow on questions about their pictures, children's stories generally became more complex, such as moving from using the sun emoji and saying 'I like to play in the sun' to explain how they like to play outside, or with who. • Children's descriptions of the way they liked to play at home generally focused on family. Descriptions of play at childcare generally focussed on friends. • Most children were unsure about how they would play at school and often repeated ideas for how they play at childcare.
Children's accounts of their play post transition	• Most children's accounts of how they like to play at school were highly detailed accounts of games or sports played with friends during recess and lunch times. • Most children used fewer emoji when describing their play, relying more on their oral storytelling to share their ideas. • Outdoor play was by far the most frequently referenced type of play. Children gave very detailed accounts of their school's outdoor environments and play structures.	• Children's accounts of play post transition were more detailed than their previous accounts. Their pictures and ideas were less tied to the emoji available and more innovative in the way they used emoji to tell their stories • Outdoor play continued to be the most prominent play theme both pre and post transition.

	• Electronic play featured heavily in children's accounts of play at school. • Most children stated that there was more time to play at school than childcare. • A few children felt there was less time to play at school than childcare. • A few children's accounts of play centred on not having friends to play with or knowing how to join into peer play. • Some children missed the toys and other play items, such as sandboxes and bikes, that they had access to at childcare.	• Almost all children included electronic play in their stories about play at school. • Most children described school as having more time to play because there were multiple play times (fruit time, recess, lunch, investigation time) despite that their previous childcare environments had free or guided play opportunities ongoing throughout most of children's day.
How children's accounts of how play differ between preschool and school	• Children's accounts of play post transition featured friend and group play, while most accounts of children's play prior to transition focussed on individual play. • Children's accounts of their play at school are highly detailed, including elements of the physical environment, who they play with, how they play, and when they play. • Many children's accounts of play post transition referenced rules, or when they were could play. Rules were not a prominent theme in any children's accounts of play pre transition.	• Play was described as a social or shared experience most frequently in post transition play stories. Play was highly individualised in most children's pre transition accounts. • Children described their physical environments (outdoor and classroom spaces) with a high level of detail in their descriptions of play. This was not a prominent feature in pre transition play stories. • Structures and rules were a part of almost all children's accounts of play post transition. These were not common themes in children's accounts prior to the transition to school.
Children's accounts of play in teacher led learning experiences at school	• Most children's accounts of play include learning games, such as computer/tablet games, or dice/board games. • Despite children calling them learning games, almost all children state that the learning games they play at school are fun. • Children's accounts of learning games often include rules about when they can play the games, or who chooses what they can play.	• Almost all children used the word play to describe both free play and games or activities that were part of structured teacher directed learning • Learning or teacher-guided play was not a prominent theme in any children's accounts of play prior to the transition to school • Most accounts of classroom play involved electronic play. • Rules featured heavily in the descriptions of teacher led games and activities.

Table 14: Children's accounts of agency

Theme	Findings	Key ideas emerging from the theme
Children's accounts of their rules prior to transition	• Most children's examples of rules are rules were rules made by parents. With prompting, most children could also name a rule at childcare/early learning. • Several children's rules were about drop off routines, such as having to give mummy a 'cuddle' or 'kiss' before they left. • Most children's rules are about physical safety (no hitting, kicking, crossing the street with a grown up). • Some children are unsure if there are rules at childcare or were unable to identify a rule at childcare/early learning. • A few children share 'made up' rules, such as 'you have to hit or kick yourself' or claim that they 'can do whatever they want'. • Most children struggled to think of a rule that might be at their school or repeated a rule from childcare.	• Children were able to articulate rules at their home more easily than rules at childcare/early learning. • Parent's featured more prominently as rule makers than educators/ECEC service staff.
Children's accounts of their rules post transition	• All children were quickly able to come up with at least one rule at school. • Children's accounts of rules were very detailed, using specific language modelled by the teacher (for example 'Five Ls', 'A or B choices', 'classroom contract', 'listening ears') and the behaviour management systems in place. • Some children were able to articulate the consequences for not following the rules at school (go to the Principal, go to another class, wait on the 'red spot' for the supervisor. However, many were unsure about what would happen if someone didn't follow the rules, or what the processes were. • Children's accounts of rules also intersected with their stories about play, as in where you could play, where they would be allowed to play in Year 1, when electronic play was allowed, etc.	• Rules were a prominent feature of children's accounts of their school life. • Children's explanations of rules were highly detailed and used language specific to their classroom/school. • Not all children fully understood the consequences or procedures that happen at school if someone doesn't follow the rules. • Teachers featured prominently in children's accounts of rules.

Children's accounts of how rules differ between preschool and school	- Most children thought there were more rules at school than childcare. - Some children felt there were 'rules' everywhere regardless of setting.	- Rules are more prominent (visible, discussed, enacted) for children post transition at school than they were for children's in their previous ECEC service. - Rules are a normalised part of everyday life in children's accounts of school.
Children's accounts of who should make rules both prior to and post transition	- Prior to school, all children indicated that mummies and daddies make rules. When asked who makes rules at childcare, some suggested their educators, but others didn't know. - After transition, all children said that teachers made the rules, some adding that the principal and 'big kids' made rules as well. - After transition, no children said that kids can make rules. When asked if they should be able to, all children said no because they would make 'silly', 'bad', 'naughty', or 'crazy' rules. - A few children mentioned the police and jail in reference to rules not being followed. - Two children mentioned rules that they made at points during the activity, but when asked to clarify, they either repeated a rule an adult made, or that kids can't make rules.	- The focus moves from parents as rule makers to teachers as rule makes for children across the transition to school. - None of the children thought that children should make rules because they would be 'bad' or 'unsafe'. - Other 'rule makers' featured in children's accounts after transition such as Principals, supervisors, 'big kids' and police.
Children's accounts of fairness and personal autonomy in relation to rules at home, childcare, and school	- All children thought the rules at childcare/early learning and school were 'good rules' and several gave reasons for this such as the rules 'keep you safe' and 'let you have fun'. - Most children talked about feeling 'good' when following rules and 'bad' or 'sad' when not following rules. - No children perceived any of the rules at childcare or school as being unfair, bad, or unnecessary.	- No children indicated at any time that the rules at home (prior to transition), childcare/early learning, or school were 'bad' or unfair'. - Despite most children noting an increase in rules at school, none of the rules were perceived as unfair, unjust, or unnecessary. - Children feel 'good' when following rules and 'sad' or 'bad' when not following them or 'getting in trouble'.

Table 15: Children's agency within the research process

Theme	Findings	Key ideas emerging from the theme
Children's enactment of agency in the research process prior to transition	• Most children worked collaboratively when paired for the emoji activity. Collaboration included building from each other's stories, sharing ideas, agreeing and disagreeing, and guessing the other's emoji. • Several children developed a specific process for how they wanted to work with the emoji (for example without me watching, placing them in a certain order, and turning them over) and instructed me on how they would do the activity. • When children were interrupted or misunderstood, they ensure that I listened and understood what they were saying before moving on from their picture or question. • Some children declined to answer question or make pictures with statements like 'I don't want to' or 'I don't have any' [emoji]. Two children hid or threw their emoji. • Many children wanted to continue making pictures of their choosing with the emoji after making the picture I had asked. • Two children asked to stop the activity or leave during the activity.	• Children frequently adapted the research process and procedures during the emoji activity. • Children were insistent that their ideas and stories were heard in total and not misunderstood. • Children did not answer questions or gave answers that they knew to be incorrect if they wanted too. • Children appeared to feel confident in asking to end the activity or stopping the activity when they wanted.
Children's enactment of agency in the research process post transition	• Several children developed specific processes for the emoji work, in all cases they were different from the procedures they had developed from before. • One participant picked a specific location he wanted to show me (his favourite park). • Several children declined to make picture with the emoji, but verbally answered my questions. • Several children declined to answer some questions or answered with 'toilet language' or comments such as 'I cut my brain open'. • One participant refused to participate or engage with the play and rule emoji entirely.	• Children frequently adapted the processes and procedures during the emoji activity in phase two in different ways than they did in phase one. • If the emoji weren't useful to their story, participants chose not to use them and instead told their story in their own way. • Children participated in the way they wanted throughout the research activity. • Children included items and belongings that were important to them (books, games, toys etc.) into the research process.

	- Children frequently took breaks or moved around the room during the activity. - Many children wanted to show me their schoolwork, or toys, games, or books at their house. - One child asked to take photos of her emoji pictures. - One child wore her school uniform specifically for the research activity (on a Saturday).	

6.5 Findings Explored

This section builds on the findings represented in the narrative and data matrices through exploring the participant's understandings and experiences of play, rules and agency in relation to the literature. Key ideas delineated in the matrices are investigated using children's perspectives and my own field notes and observations.

6.6 Play

Children were asked to give accounts of the ways they like to play in both phases of the Stage 2 study. In phase one, they were asked to make a picture of how they like to play (open ended) and then how they liked to play at childcare (ECEC service). In phase two, participants were asked how they liked to play at school, and whether there was more time for play at school or childcare. As many children's accounts also included teacher/adult-led play (Mode B Play) follow up questions about this type of play were asked to gather further information about the way children understood and experienced play during the transition to school.

6.6.1 Play - Pre and Post Transition

Children's accounts of play varied markedly between the two data collection phases. One of these differences was in relation to the level of detail in children's stories about their play. In phase one, children's accounts of play were highly tied to the emoji they chose, sometimes focused more on describing the emoji or that they liked the emoji (or what is represented) than the way they like to play. With follow up questions, children were often able to more fully describe the way they liked to play. Conversely, in phase two, children's accounts of play were far more detailed and complex, relying less on the emoji prompt. Some children chose not to use any emoji when describing their play, choosing instead to only share their story verbally. In the below excerpt, Cora talks about the play picture she made that featured the 'animal footprint emoji'.

> **Researcher**: Cora, have you finished your picture?
> **Cora:** Can I tell you about it?
> **Researcher:** I would like that Cora; can you tell me your story about the picture that you made?
> **Cora:** Me playing outside with my puppy dog. These are the foot prints of my puppy dog.
> **Researcher:** Those are the footprints?
> **Cora:** I've actually got a puppy dog at home.

After transitioning to school, Cora's play story is no longer tied to an emoji, even though dogs (or pretending to be a dog) is the central theme in both accounts. In her phase two play story, Cora decides that none of the emoji 'fit' the story she wants to tell and decides she would like to tell me about how she likes to play without the use of emoji pictures.

Researcher: Can you make me a picture of a way you like to play at school?

Cora: None of these fit cos … I have at school.

Researcher: Okay, could you tell me about what you like to play with at school?

Cora: I like to play outside on the oval.

Researcher: On the oval, interesting. What do you do on the oval?

Cora: Sometimes I play with [friend's name] and [friend's name]

Researcher: And what do you guys do when you play?

Cora: Sometimes we play doggies.

Researcher: So one of you pretends to be a dog, or you all pretend to be dogs?

Cora: We all pretend to be dogs.

Carter's pre and position transition play story also demonstrated a significant change in the amount of detail included in his play story. For his phase one play picture, he used a wide variety of emoji on his page and when asked if he would tell me about it, he said:

Carter: Um, it's a messy day

Researcher: It's a messy day. What does that mean?

Carter: I brought all my toys out

Researcher: You brought all your toys out? And what are you going to do with them?

Carter: Leave them out forever. I like to mess my room up

Researcher: You like to make your room messy?

Carter: Yeah, with lots of toys everywhere.

In his phase one play story, Carter's description is highly tied to the emoji, and he displays them on his page to simulate the way he likes to have his toys in his room. His phase two story, however, involves him carefully choosing one emoji, which is related to a highly detailed and specific account of how he likes to play at school.

Researcher: Last time we did this activity I showed you some emoji of ways you might like to play with, do you remember? I've brought them again.

Carter: I love to play with that [picking up the football emoji].

Researcher: Do you like that one? What is it?

Carter: A footy, and I can kick it.

Researcher: Excellent. I'm wondering if you could make me a picture down here of how you like to play at school, you can use any of the emoji if you like.

> **Carter**: We have footies at school and then we play with it, and me and Elijah and Joel we play a game of football the whole time through lunch and recess.
>
> **Researcher**: You play footy the whole time?
>
> **Carter**: Yeah, every time we race up after we had lunch, off we go, off we go. I kick a goal, lots of goals. I normally kick 10 goals in front, I always win because I kick either 10 goals and I normally kick one point.

There are several mitigating factors that likely played a role in the differences in children's accounts of play pre and post transition. This first is that the data collection phases were six to seven months apart for participants. For young children, six to seven months is a substantial period of time which can make a substantive difference in their development (Woodhead, 2009). For the child participants, the changes in the level of detail and nuance in their descriptions likely coincide with their development, and therefor are to be reasonably expected. Despite these differences, however, the centrality of play to children's experiences did not change. In both phases, children were eager to tell a story about how they play and share their experiences and understandings with the researcher. Phase two accounts were more nuanced and often located geographically, or included specific details about how their play occurs, however, play and its centrality to children remained constant across both phases.

Another feature of children's accounts of play that differed was the focus and setting of their play stories. In phase one, children's stories generally focused on play at home or with their families. When asked specifically about play at their ECEC service, some children were able to give an example of how they played at childcare. However, these stories were generally less developed or central to the children's overall accounts of play. Even when asked specifically about how they like to play at their ECEC service, some children continued to tell stories of how they liked to play at home. Conversely, in phase two when children were asked about how they liked to play at school, their accounts were animated, detailed, and focused on the school environment. Even when given opportunities to talk about play more broadly, such as "*is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your play*? Only a few children included accounts of play outside of school, mostly relating to specific or special toys they had at home.

The exchange between Ned and myself below highlights how play at childcare was less central to his experiences and understanding of play than home play, even when asked specifically about it.

> **Researcher**: Do any of these pictures help you think about how you might play here at childcare?

> **Ned:** Well it's a sunny day.
>
> **Researcher:** And what are you doing?
>
> **Ned**: Ah, riding my bike.
>
> **Researcher:** You're riding your bike. Where are you riding?
>
> **Ned**: Riding to my friend's house.
>
> **Researcher**: What are you going to do when you get there?
>
> **Ned:** Play with little Lego

However, in his story about playing at school in phase, Ned eagerly talks of how he liked to play at school and includes many environment specific aspects to locate his play there.

> **Researcher:** Are there any other ways you like to play at school?
>
> **Ned:** I have a friend, he's a year 1, his name's called [friend's name].
>
> **Researcher:** You have a friend in year 1? Do you guys play together?
>
> **Ned:** Yeah, we make bases and all sorts of stuff.
>
> **Researcher:** How do you make bases?
>
> **Ned:** Getting sticks and collecting it to get it and one person likes bases.
>
> **Researcher**: So it's like making a special fort or a hiding place?
>
> **Ned:** Yeah hiding place. And you make a trap so no one can go through. But some people got in our base. Right on top where you get in. It's a gully.
>
> **Researcher:** So is that in the playground at your school, there's special places to make bases?
>
> **Ned**: Yeah, we have two big kids playground and we've got one little kid playground.
>
> **Researcher:** And you're allowed to only play at the little kid playground? You have to wait until you're big to play at the big kid playground?
>
> **Ned:** You only turn in year 1.

A contributing factor of this change in focus may be the amount of time participants spent in both their ECEC service and school. All 20 child participants attended their ECEC service on a part-time basis, most attending two or three days a week. While some children additionally attended standalone preschools, none of the children attended early years programming on a full-time basis. In Australia, universal (free) preschool programming is offered on a part time basis, which means that many families use a variety of care options to accommodate their children's care and learning needs (Baxter, 2015). These include having a stay at home parent, parents with flexible work schedules, grandparents/family members providing care, or the use of childcare with preschool programming to provide a full day of care (ABS, 2014). This was the case for the families of children participating in this study, and as such, all 20 child participants attended full days at an ECEC service on a part-time basis. School in South Australia, however, is full time (Monday -Friday), with some children additionally attending out of school hours care due to parent work schedules. This resulted in participants going through a substantial adjustment from part-time attendance at an ECEC service to full-time attendance at school. This element of transition meant that participants were now spending

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significantly more time outside of the home, making it perhaps less surprising that their accounts of play heavily featured the environments where they spent most of their time. Despite this change, only one child seemed concerned about the increased amount of time away from his family in phase one when asked about his new school:

Oliver: We go there five days a week. Which is bad because we don't get to see our family until every single summer
>   **Researcher**: So you have to go to school a lot and that might be bad because you don't see your family as much?

Oliver: Only when they pick us up
>   **Researcher**: You only get to see your family when they pick you up?

Oliver: And when they drop us off that's only when we see them and after school
>   **Researcher**: So you'll only see your mum and dad when they drop you off and pick you up from school? So less then you see them now? Are you a little worried about that?

Oliver: I am at school but not here [at childcare]
>   **Researcher**: That's interesting, so you're a little worried about missing mum and dad at school but not about missing them here?

Oliver: Yes

However, after the transition to school, this no longer seemed to be an area of concern for Oliver. During phase two, his accounts of school were positive in nature, and there was no mention of missing his family, or about school being too long.

6.6.2 Children's Comparison of Play Pre and Post Transition

In Australia, all ECECS are governed by a national curricular framework called the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). The EYLF (2009) is a document that "forms the foundation for ensuring that children in all early childhood education and care settings experience quality teaching and learning" (p. 5). The EYLF has a specific and substantive emphasis on play-based learning (Sumsion, Grieshaber, McArdle & Shield, 2014). Play-based learning is also a central tenet of developmentally appropriate practice, a concept which additionally underpins early child education and care (Yelland, 2011). The EYLF defines play-based learning as "a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations" (2009, p.6). Barblett (2010) asserts that play-based learning is more than just a context for learning rather it is additionally a process for learning. Play-based learning recognises children's right to play, and the centrality of play to their learning. However, it also acknowledges that adults also have an important role in children's learning and development (van Oers & Duijkers, 2013). As such, play-based learning

in the EYLF refers to the relationship between children's innate desire and need to play in ways that are meaningful, interesting, and engaging to them, and role of adults in identifying, supporting, extending, and supplementing this play to meet curricular goals.

All eight ECECS that study participants attended were governed by the EYLF and described their programs as ones that emphasised learning through play. However, Barblett (2010) cautions that not all services that call themselves play-based meet criteria for being authentic play-based learning. She cautions that for a service to be play-based, it must affirm a child's right to play without undue focus on adult or educational goals. Doing this requires a delicate balance between child-initiated and teacher-guided play, and that educators must be critical of "what is called play" (Barblett, 2010, p, 13). While each of the eight ECECS children attended drew on the concept of play-based pedagogies to inform their practice and structure children's day, they all enacted play-based learning differently, and children had varied experiences of play across the service. Despite these differences, there were many commonalities, with all children having large chunks of time during the day to participate in child-initiated play. At all eight ECECS, children moved between child-initiated play, adult-guided activities, and other daily activities such as meal times, with child-initiated play comprising the majority of children's day.

Unlike ECEC environments, however, research demonstrates that school environments in Australia (and internationally) generally have less opportunities for child-initiated play (Lynch, 2015; Pyle & Bigelow, 2014). The change from a focus on child-initiated play to adult guided play with the aim of meeting educational aims in primary school comes from the traditional role of school as a place of academic learning and testing (Yelland, 2011; Pyle and Luce-Kapler, 2014). The focus on learning and curriculum in primary schools in relation to teacher training has also resulted in many primary teachers reporting that they do not have the skills, training, or confidence in meaningfully integrating child-initiated play in a classroom setting (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Martlew, Stephen & Ellis, 2011; Pramling, Samuelson & Johansson, 2006). Additionally, there is also evidence that suggests that children are best supported in engaging in many of the concepts and content embedded in school curricula through adult guided learning opportunities (Fleer, 2009), rather than child-initiated play.

Due to the emphasis on teacher-guided play in primary school, child-initiated play is largely relegated to outdoor play at recess and lunch times, with some classrooms also offering small amounts of child-initiated play time after structured teacher-guided play (as evidenced by children's accounts). These significant changes to children's play during the transition to school, as outlined above, had a profound

effect on children's accounts of play, especially in relation to how play was described and what was considered to be play. Even though child-initiated play is generally limited to small periods of outdoor play, most participants responded that there was more time to play at school than at childcare. The participants who felt school offered more time to play often explained that there was more play time by quantifying the amount of discreet times available for child-initiated play.

Researcher: Carter remember when you were at childcare, do you think there was more time to play at childcare, or is there more time to play at school?

Carter: School it goes for two hours.

Researcher: The play time goes for 2 hours?

Carter: At lunch but recess only one hour.

Researcher: Okay. Do you think that's more time or less time for play then when you were at childcare?

Carter: I think, I think recess was less, but lunch was probably more, lots more.

Researcher: Oh interesting. And do you think there were more types of play that you could do at school, or more types of play at childcare?

Carter: More types of play at school.

Researcher: Do you think there was more time to play at childcare or is there more time to play at school?

Ned: School.

Researcher: There's more time to play at school?

Ned: We go to play time at school two times.

Researcher: Interesting. So is the amount of playtime the same, or does school have a longer play time?

Ned: Longer.

Researcher: It seems longer?

Ned: Actually, you're at playtime three times.

Researcher: Three playtimes at your school. And are there more things to play with at school or more things to play with at childcare?

Ned: School.

Researcher: What sort of things are there at school that aren't at childcare that you can do?

Ned: You have plenty of games and have lots of games and lots of playgrounds.

Researcher: When you were at [service name] did you think there was more time to play at [service name] or more time to play at school?

Aida: More time to play at school because at school we, we get free plays.

Researcher: When is that?

Aida: We got fruit time, recess and lunch.

Researcher: That's lots of time isn't it? And there was not as much time at [service name]?

Aida: No.

Researcher: Interesting. Were there more things to play with at school or at [service name]?

Aida: At [service name].

> **Researcher:** So at [service name] there are more things to play but less time to play?
>> **Aida:** Yeah.

There were also differences in children's accounts of whether there were more things to play at school or childcare, see for example Carter and Ned's accounts which differs from Aida's account above. Despite these small difference, the language used to quantify the amount of child-initiated play was prevalent in many accounts. This prevalence suggests that despites school offering less overall child-initiated play time than childcare, in the more structured environment of school, multiple discrete child-initiated play times during the school day equated to children as more time play, even if overall child-initiated play time was less.

Not all child participants felt that school offered more time for play, however. A small group of children felt that their ECEC service offered more opportunities for play.

> **Researcher:** when you were at childcare, do you think you got to play; do more play time at childcare, or more play time at school?
>> **Joshua:** More, more play time in childcare, because you can do whatever you want.
> **Researcher:** Where at school you can't? How is that different from school?
>> **Joshua:** Because we have to do maths at school.
> **Researcher:** So there's more learning things that you have to do?
>> **Joshua:** Mm, hmm.
> **Researcher:** Is that a good thing or a bad thing?
>> **Joshua:** Good thing.
> **Researcher:** A good thing, why?
>> **Joshua:** Because then you can learn.

> **Researcher:** Is there more time to play at school than at childcare, or is there less time to play at school?
>> **Sebastian:** Maybe less.
> **Researcher:** Maybe less? If there's less time to play at school, is that a good thing or a bad thing?
>> **Sebastian:** Good thing, because you still can play.

Yet, none of the children who felt that school had less time to play perceived it as a negative. Joshua and Sebastian's accounts exemplify how children generally framed less play time as positive, or at least not as a negative, through highlighting the need to learn as an important focus of the school day. This suggests that while there is some disagreement about whether there is more time to play at school or childcare, child participants were happy with the amount of play at school, and that the change between environments with large amounts of child-initiated play (ECEC environments) and

lower levels of child-initiated play (school environments) was not a challenge for most children, nor did it impact their wellbeing.

There were two children, however, whose accounts of play after the transition to school were less positive and did not use words like 'fun' or 'good' which were present in all other children's accounts. The first is Leo, who at the time of the phase two interview had refused to go to school that day.

> **Researcher**: Leo is there more time to play at school or was there more time to play at [service name]?
>
> **Leo**: In reception.
>
> **Researcher**: In reception there's more time to play?
>
> **Leo**: Yes.
>
> **Researcher:** Do you play outside or inside or both?
>
> **Leo**: I, I love to play inside but not outside. Outside you've got too really, it's too boring to play outside.
>
> **Researcher**: Interesting. What's boring about playing outside?
>
> **Leo**: Because there's no nothing I want to play.
>
> **Researcher**: There's nothing that you want to play outside?
>
> **Leo**: yes.
>
> **Researcher**: Do you have friends to play with outside?
>
> **Leo**: No, no friends. I don't like friends or even babies, no way.

In phase one, when asked about how he likes to play at his ECEC service, Leo happily listed ways he liked to play, such as climbing trees, painting, riding a bicycle, and playing games, including both indoor and outdoor activities – typical of other child participant responses. However, during phase two, Leo's account of how he plays at school indicated that he did not enjoy child-initiated outdoor playtime, unlike all other participants. When asked about what he didn't like about playing outside, Leo indicated that there was nothing he wanted to play outside, and that he doesn't have (or want) friends to play with. Satriawan was the other child whose account of play wasn't expressed using positive terms. In phase one, when asked about how he liked to play at childcare, he said that he liked to play games and play on his bike. When asked to make a picture of the way he likes to play at school, Satriawan included a football and di on his page. However, when explained his picture to me, his stories of play involved other children playing, not his play.

> **Satriawan**: I just see they're playing footy, and then their name is [child name], and I saw them, I saw my friends in my school, and I – in another class – I said, I know him.
>
> **Researcher**: At school you saw someone that you knew?
>
> **Satriawan:** And then I said what's your name? And he said [another child's name].
>
> **Researcher**: You saw two friends of yours? You were playing footy with them?
>
> **Satriawan**: No.

Researcher: They were playing and you went to say hi?

Satriawan: They were playing.

Researcher: I see. Was it hard to make new friends at your school?

Satriawan: Yes.

Researcher: How else do you play at school?

Satriawan: I just play dice a little bit.

Researcher: You play dice a little bit, in the classroom?

Satriawan: No, in another classroom, another building

Researcher: What do you do with the dice?

Satriawan: I was – I didn't – it just – all of them was just dice, and I didn't know how to play it, and then I put it back.

Researcher: Oh, did you ask someone to show you how to play the game?

Satriawan: No.

Researcher: No? Why not?

Satriawan: Because it's too hard.

Researcher Did you feel like any of these [emoji faces] when you were trying to play the game and you didn't know how to play?

Satriawan: It's none.

Researcher: No? How were you feeling when you didn't know how to play?

Satriawan: I was quiet, like that [Satriawan closes his mouth to demonstrate being quiet].

In both Leo and Satriawan accounts of play post transition, challenges making friends, or knowing how to join into play with other children appeared to be a significant factor in play not being a positive experience for them at school. While Leo also shared that he doesn't want friends, this may be more to do with the recent negative peer incident that has made him not want to go to school, rather than not actually wanting friends at school. While social participation is an independent wellbeing indicator (derived by adults and substantiated by children's accounts), Leo and Satriawan's accounts demonstrate that social participation and connectedness are also important aspects of children's play at school. The difference in these two participant's accounts between the two phases also indicate that children may have a more difficult time making friends at school than childcare, which in turn can negatively impact their experiences of play across transition.

6.6.3 Children's Accounts of Teacher-guided Play

In the wider play literature, as discussed in Chapter 5, current theoretical perspectives on play express child-initiated or free play as separate from adult guided play and other types of education focussed play (Sutton-Smith 2001; Wood, 2014; Göncü, Mistry, & Mosier, 2000). This conceptual stance is evident in adult derived child wellbeing frameworks, where education, learning, and development are

a validated and widely used social indicator in child wellbeing literature. As one of the research aims in this study is to ascertain if young children conceptualise wellbeing in the same ways as the adult derived indicators, a goal of the Stage 2 study was to better understand how children conceptualised the difference between child-initiated play, and adult-guided or curricular focussed play. In phase two, when describing how they like to play at school, almost all children's account included descriptions of teacher-guided play. To engage children in their understandings of the different types of play at school they were asked if these types activities or play were *'fun games or learning games?'*. Despite that fact that children's accounts of teacher-guided play were highly structured, many children did not perceive teacher-guided play as less enjoyable, or different than child-initiated play when recounting their enjoyment of the activity. This was particularly evident when children talked about using technology at school, where electronic games are perceived as 'fun' even if children are required to play them to support learning outcomes.

Researcher: Can I ask about this one [computer emoji Abigail placed in her play picture]? Do you do computer work at school?

Abigail: I'm not old enough.

Researcher: Do only bigger kids use the computers?

Abigail: We have Ipads though.

Researcher: What do you do on the iPads in your classroom?

Abigail: Play games.

Researcher: Are you choose the game you want? Or does your teacher tell you what game to play?

Abigail: Mrs [teacher's name] tells us. You pinch the cheeks and if you get a yellow one that means there's more to pinch.

Researcher: Is that to help you practice your pinching grip?

Abigail: Yeah.

Researcher: When the teacher asks you to play games, are they still fun games or are they learning games?

Abigail: Fun games.

Researcher: Can you tell me about your play picture?

Oliver: We play on computers sometimes

Researchers: What do you do on the computers?

Oliver: We play games and we draw our names and we draw us and we just draw things so.

Researcher: Are they learning games or are they fun games?

Oliver: They're fun games.

Researcher: Fun games. Do you choose the game, or does your teacher choose the game?

Oliver: We just get to choose but she gets them ready. I know the password there, its 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and then S and then done.

Researcher: Good memory! What do you do in the games?

Oliver: They are matching games where you've got to try match the monsters, it's okay if they're different colours but you've got to try and make them, the same head.

Researcher: Can you tell me about a way that you like to play at school?

Tavi: Yeah, the computer room, that's in the library.

Researcher: It's in the library? What do you do on the computers?

Tavi: We play what our teachers say what we do and then after that we can make anything want.

Researcher So there are certain games that you play first before you're allowed to choose the games?

Tavi: We're allowed to play games.

Researcher: Are they games the teacher chooses fun games or are they learning games?

Tavi: Just normal games.

Researcher: They're like normal games?

Tavi: Yes, we do painting. After we do the picture the teacher says we can have a new paper with a new colour.

Researcher: Could you make me a picture that shows me how you like to play at school?

Conner: I like it when it's sunny and I like to play the computer room.

Researcher: What sort of things do you do on the computer?

Conner: I play Reading Eggs.

Researcher: Is that a game that helps you learn to read?

Conner: No, it makes us learn letters and it means you have to copy the words.

Researcher: Interesting. Is that a game that the teacher asks you to play?

Conner: Yeah.

Researcher: Is it a fun game or a learning game?

Conner: You have to, it's for fun.

Researcher: It's for fun?

Conner: Yeah, there are levels. There's like sixteen!

However, not all participants viewed electronic teacher-guided play as wholly 'fun'. Some participants did differentiate between 'fun' electronic games and electronic games teachers have their students play to support their learning. Joshua's account demonstrates his distinction between the two.

Researcher Q: What kind of games do you play in the classroom?

Joshua: Just learning games.

Researcher: Learning games, so these are games that the teacher asks you to play?

Joshua: Mm, hmm.

Researcher: How do you play them?

Joshua: On Ipads.

Researcher: On Ipads. Are they fun games, or are they learning games?

Joshua: Learning games, but some are fun.

Researcher: Some are fun as well?

Joshua: Like … that I have at home.

Researcher: And what do you do in the games?

Joshua: When you tap the wrong egg it splats. You have to do the word that they're telling you.

Researcher: That sounds tricky. And do you get to go up levels once you get it right?

Joshua: And then you have to, after you finish it you have to make the word.

Researcher: Oh so after you finish them you make the word all on your own. And do you have to play the game, or is it your choice to play?

Joshua: You have to play it because we have reading groups, so the teacher moves it down.

When child participants share experiences of engaging in teacher-guided play that did not involve technology, their accounts further differed from those of teacher-guided electronic play. These accounts acknowledged that learning is a primary goal of these teacher-guided activities.

Researcher: Can you tell me all about your play picture? How do you like to play at school?

Elsie: Okay, so this [emoji] I sit under the tree with my lunch. This [emoji] I paint, I got to football, I do my maths when the maths is not working and you start. I roll a dice, and I sit in the sun when it's cold.

Researcher: Wow, you are very busy at school

Elsie: Uh-huh, and do all of these [emoji] outside, all of those [di and painting emoji] when it's play time inside.

Researcher: Is that still play time when you do the inside activities or is that learning time when you do those?

Elsie: Maths. Maths is when you learn good things like numbers. And these are the things that you do outside and these are the things that you do inside.

Researcher: So those [di and painting emoji] are the things the teacher asks you to do, and [the outdoor emoji] are the things you decide to do?

Elsie: Yeah.

Researcher: When you play at school do you usually play inside or outside?

Cora: We play free activity inside and recess and lunch play outside.

Researcher: So you have outside play at recess and lunch, and inside free activities. Are the inside activities ones you get to choose or does your teacher choose?

Cora: We get to choose from what my teacher puts out.

Researcher: You get to choose from a few choices? Are the choices they're fun activities or are they learning activities?

Cora: They're both.

Here in Cora and Elsie's accounts, we can see that they make a distinction between fun play, whether child-initiated or teacher-guided, and teacher-guided play where learning is a primary focus. Despite the learning focus of these teacher-guided activities, however, both children perceived these activities as 'good' or 'fun'. Carter also makes distinctions between 'fun' play and 'learning' play during teacher-guided activities. In his account, when children have choice between teacher-guided play activities,

the play is 'fun'. However, when children aren't given choice and must complete an assigned teacher activity, this is a 'learning' activity.

> **Researcher**: Can you tell me about your picture and how you like to play at school?
>> **Carter**: I like playing games.
> **Researcher**: Do you play games inside or outside of school?
>> **Carter**: Inside.
> **Researcher**: Inside, and are those games that you get to pick or is that a game your teacher asks you to play?
>> **Carter**: I get to pick it because at the, we used to have investigation time and then Mrs [teacher name] changed it to puzzles and games and I like playing dominos.
> **Researcher**: You like playing dominos, me too. What is investigation time Carter?
>> **Carter**: You can make stuff and you have 10 minutes play time.
> **Researcher**: And now in investigation time you get to pick which game that you play?
>> **Carter**: Yeah, they're all set out but when we go to library on Monday it is books and reading.
> **Researcher**: The games that the teacher picks, are they fun games or are they learning games?
>> **Carter**: They're fun games but the naughty people like [friends names] and that they're my friends but they are quite naughty, they need to have learning games. But like good boys and good girls they get to pick what they have to have.
> **Researcher**: So if you follow the rules and do what the teacher asks you to do you get to pick a fun game?
>> **Carter**: Yeah.
> **Researcher**: And if you're having trouble following the rules you have to play a learning game?
>> **Carter**: Yeah.

Carter, Elsie, and Cora's accounts also demonstrate the ways in which rules and class processes often become a distinct feature in children's description of play at school, a marked difference from descriptions of play prior to transition. Children's accounts of teacher-guided play at school demonstrated that overwhelmingly, children viewed teacher-guided play as an enjoyable and purposeful experience, with several children not differentiating between child-initiated and teacher-guided play. Not every child in the study perceived teacher-guided play as enjoyable, however. When asked to make a picture of how he plays at school, Colton's picture included a di emoji. When asked about it, he said that it was a dice game that he and his peers "have to play" that is "not really fun". Leo's account also speaks to his experience that school's focus on teacher-guided play did not leave enough time or space for child-initiated play, and that the teacher-guided play in his class is not enjoyable.

> **Researcher:** Can you tell me about this emoji?
>> **Leo**: Yes, happy.
> **Researcher**: Happy. Have you felt like that at school before?
>> **Leo**: Yes when something is very good and, and when I have a, I love buying toys because I like to have a toy shop and, and I will have a toy shop. I wish to have a toy shop and when I have a toy shop, I'm happy and I love buying toys.

> **Researcher**: A toy shop would be pretty neat. Are there toys at school to play with Leo?
>
>> **Leo**: Yeah but not much, I don't like those toys because, I just don't like these toys, do not need to play.
>
> **Researcher**: So the toys at school aren't as fun as the toys you really like?
>
>> **Leo**: Yes, the toy that, the toys are in my house is, is perfect for me to play.
>
> **Researcher**: And what's your favourite toy Leo?
>
>> **Leo**: Dino Trucks but when I'm at school I say I love Dino Trucks. The teacher says play a game so what do you like. I say Dino Truck toys and my teacher don't know what is Dino Truck toys. They're Dino Trucks but everyone, everyone in this whole world doesn't know Dino Truck.
>
> **Researcher**: Adults don't know the fun games to play at your school?
>
>> **Leo**: Yes, I have a Dino Truck. I have Dino Truck toys and a Dino Truck game.
>
> **Researcher**: So are the toys at school more for learning instead of playing?
>
>> **Leo**: Yeah.

While the wider play literature makes clear distinctions between child-initiated play and adult/teacher-guided play, children's accounts evidenced that not all young children perceive this distinction, especially when the teacher-guided play involved technology. Most children who perceived a difference between child-initiated and teacher-guided play still recounted their experiences of teacher-guided play in positive terms. This further supports the Stage 1 findings that both opportunities for play (child-identified) and opportunities for learning (adult-derived) are key social indicators of child wellbeing.

6.7 Rules

The second a priori theme identified in Stage 1 was agency. As this is an unfamiliar term for young children, rules (a concept and word highly familiar to young children) was chosen, based on previous empirical research on children's agency (Thornberg, 2008; Haugen, 2010; Bjerke, 2011). The concept of rules served to explore children's accounts of their perceived level of agency in relation to their environments, relationships, and the structural and socio-cultural processes of their everyday lives.

6.7.1 Children's Accounts of Rules Pre and Post Transition

Analysis of the data demonstrated that children's accounts of rules changed substantively across the transition to school. In phase one, many children were unable to think of a rule at childcare without prompting, or further questioning. When children did name a rule, it was often in relation to safety (for example sun protection, crossing the road, or not hurting others). Clara and Connor's prior to

school transition accounts below demonstrate the prompting that some children needed to think about rules at their ECEC service.

Clara prior to transition

Researcher: Clara can you make a picture of a rule at childcare?

Clara: Hmmmm…

Researcher: Are there any rules here at childcare?

Clara: No.

Researcher: There's no rules? You can do anything you want any time?

Clara: Yep!

Researcher: Interesting, because I remember hearing a rule last time I came to visit. Is there is a rule about going outside, do you have to wear something when you go outside?

Clara: Hats and sunscreen

Researcher: Hats and sunscreen. Are there any other rules here at childcare? Are there any other rules?

Clara: I forgot

Researcher: That's ok. You can let me know if you think of any later

Clara: Oh! No eating on the carpet or the floor

Connor (and Dakota) prior to transition

Researcher: Or are there some rules at childcare?

Connor: I can do whatever I want

Researcher: Really? All the time?

Connor: I can walk on the road

Dakota: He doesn't do that at childcare he walks across the road with his mum holding her hand

Researcher: Is there a rule about crossing the street at childcare Dakota?

Dakota: Holding hands

Researcher: Why do you think there is that rule?

Dakota: So you don't get runned over by a car

Connor: Or you can take responsible from me, if you don't have a responsible, you will get run over

Researcher: If you're being irresponsible you might get run over? How do you be responsible when you cross the road Connor? What do you do?

Connor: You have to listen

After the transition to school, however, children were easily able to name a rule, even children such as Clara and Connor who needed support in the previous phase. Most children's accounts of rules at school included a high level of detail and school/classroom specific language. Clara and Connor's post transition accounts demonstrate this contrast.

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Clara post transition

Researcher: Can you tell me about [the straight mouth emoji]? Have you ever felt like this at school before?

Clara: Once.

Researcher: Once? When did you feel like that?

Clara: When I gone on B.

Researcher: Going on B? What does that mean?

Clara: That means when you do the bad choice.

Researcher: You go on B if you make a bad choice?

Clara: That's once.

Researcher: That happened once to you? Is it hard for some people in your class to make good choices some times?

Clara: Yeah.

Researcher: And is good choices means following the rules?

Clara: Yeah. A choices are good choices. B choices are bad.

Connor post transition

Researcher: How do you play inside at your school?

Connor: We do swap classes, like you can go in [teacher name]'s class or [teacher name]'s class or [teacher name]'s class or [teacher name]'s class, so there's four.

Researcher: Are the rules the same in all the different classes?

Connor: Yeah.

Researcher: Is it hard to follow the rules or easy to follow the rules?

Connor: Easy. And somebody doesn't follow the rules, when [teacher name] is talking somebody in our class they always talk to this guy, he talks to everyone.

Researcher: When your teacher is talking sometimes kids are still talking?

Connor: Yeah.

Researcher: What happens when kids talk when they're not supposed to?

Connor: They have to go where they are behind the desk.

Researcher: They have to sit away from everyone else?

Connor: Yeah

Researcher: Interesting. Are there any other rules in your classroom?

Connor: Yeah. When it's award time

Researcher: What do you do during award time?

Connor: When the teacher said it's award time you ask the teacher if they can have a tablet.

Researcher: The rule is you have to ask your teacher if you can have a tablet?

Connor: Yeah.

Conversely, some children were able to independently identify a rule, or rules, at childcare prior to the transition to school. In the excerpt below, Olivia and Cora were both able share childcare rules (and home rules) and built off each other's accounts.

Olivia and Cora prior to transition

Researcher: Olivia, can you think of a rule at childcare?
   Olivia: Listening
Researcher: When do you have to listen?
   Olivia: When someone is reading a story.
Cora: And at show and tell time!
      Researcher: At show and tell you have to listen as well? Good ideas. Are there any other rules?
Both children: Yes!
   Cora: At home
Olivia: At home you don't smash into the walls they might break
      Researcher: What happens if someone breaks the rules?
Olivia: You cry

The accounts of children who were able to independently identify a rule at childcare (such as Olivia and Cora above) also demonstrated significant changes across the transition to school. After starting school, both Olivia and Cora's accounts evidenced greatly increased level of detail, where they are also both able to articulate the consequence(s) for not following the rule.

Olivia post transition

Olivia: Sometimes I feel mad because my friends just throw sand at me.
      Researcher: That's not very nice at all is it? Is there a rule against throwing sand at school?
Olivia: Yes. But they do it anyway. And sometimes [child name] and [child name] talk when they're not supposed to.
      Researcher: What happens when you break a rule at school?
Olivia: When you are being naughty and you do E choices and when you do E choices – when you do very big E choices we get a yellow slip
      Researcher: If you make a very big E choice then you might get a yellow slip. What happens when you get a yellow slip?
Olivia: You have to go sit with the teacher. And sometimes when you do even more E choices you get a pink slip.
      Researcher: And what does a pink slip mean?
Olivia: You are in trouble and the teacher sends it to your parents.

Researcher: Are there any rules about playing outside at your school?

      Cora: No going past the pool. And no going past the fence.

Researcher: No going past the pool or fence. And what happens if someone goes past the pool or the fence?

      Cora: They get in trouble.

Researcher: What might happen if they got in trouble?

      Cora: They'll go, sent to the Principal's office or the focus room.

Another significant difference between children's accounts of rules pre and post transition is the focus of the rule. While rules about safety are still included in some children's accounts, rules regarding behavioural expectations at school were the most prevalent. Behaviour management process in the classroom were also a frequent feature of children's accounts. In addition to the behaviour management systems recounted by Clara and Olivia above, other children shared their classroom's behaviour management system such as: Sadie's 'classroom contract'; Tavi's marble jar reward system; and Elsie's 'weaker choices list'. In fact, almost half the children's accounts of rules included detailed information of classroom management techniques.

As with the changes in children's accounts of play across the transition to school, children's development and the significantly increased amount of time spent outside the home after starting formal schooling impacted on children's understandings, experiences, and ability to communicate of rules. Another significant structuring force on children's accounts of rules post the transition to school is the nature of the schooling environment itself. Dahlberg (2009) remarks that the focus on children's educational outcomes and benchmarking found in formal schooling environments is a significant shift from the social pedagogical approach used in play based early years environments that work to support children's social development and agency in relation to their world. This claim is supported by Brooker (2008) who asserts that the transition to formal schooling produces change not only in children's social environment, but also in their own roles within it. Huf (2013) also asserts that during transitions, we need to consider more than just children's ability to adapt to and participate in daily practices and routines. Rather, we need to consider how processes of reinvention, and reproduction impact upon children's experiences and actions.

The excerpts explored in this section demonstrate how the accounts of individual children across the transition to school evidence changes in children's development and their capacity to articulate aspects of the world around them. However, they also indicate how children have adapted to the practices and structures of their new environment. Analysis of the data reveals the ways in which the

formal schooling environment collectively impacts their agency and actions. To this end, Rogoff (1996) suggests that when considering transitions, we must also ask "how children's involvement in the activities of their community change" (p. 273).

The transition to more formal school environments appeared to fundamentally change children's experiences and understandings of their role within their learning environment. Children's pre transition accounts did not feature rules or daily teacher led processes, with many children struggling to think of rules or structuring processes within their day. This suggests that children perceived their ECECS as having less constraints, and where rules and processes where not key features of their experience. This is in direct contrast to post transition accounts where the transition to formal schooling has fundamentally shaped children's real and perceived involvement in daily practices and 'their roles within it' (Brooker, 2008). This is evidenced in children's detailed description of these processes, and the consequences of not following them. Given this marked shift in children's accounts, the next section investigates how the redefinition of their roles post transition impacts children's perception of their agency between their early years and school experiences.

6.7.2 Children's Comparison of Rules Pre and Post Transition

The question '*are there more rules at childcare or at school?*' was part of the Stage 2 research procedure to investigate how children perceived the amount of regulation in their new school environment in comparison to their previous ECEC service. Children's induction into formal schooling in Australia generally encompasses a fundamental shift away from child-centred play-based environments to classroom settings which position children as independent learners whose time at school is divided into concrete learning blocks, organised by curricular areas with a considered focus on assessment. (Petriwsky, 2005). In their review of the literature on the importance of collaboration during the transition to school, Skouteris, Watson, and Lum (2012) assert that the shift from child-centred to teacher-guided learning often results in children "losing some of their sense of independence due to the increase in teacher-directed activities" (p. 80) by requiring children to adjust to more goal-focussed teaching methods.

Petriwsky (2005) argues that in Australia, there have been four key areas of discontinuity that children face during the transition to school in relation to disparate approaches to teaching and learning between ECECS and formal schooling. These four areas are: (1) child-free choice of learning

experiences; (2) level of structure; (3) amount of whole class work; (4) the formality of the learning layout. To address this discontinuity, there has been a focus on improving support for children during the transition to school in Australia, such as the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) whose introduction of 'transition statements' is aimed at furthering supports for children during the transition to school (DEECD, 2010). Another example is South Australia's focus on the creation of integrated early years services as a means of supporting children across a range of education and health contexts including the transition to school (Nichols & Jurvansuu, 2008; Nichols & Zannettino, 2008). The implementation of these government initiatives appears to have impacted practice, as roughly half the schools that child participants transitioned to offer transition visits or processes aimed at supporting children and families. These transition practices, alongside increased awareness of needing to prepare children for the transition to formal schooling, has likely impacted on children's experiences, as evidenced in children's accounts where these changes are overwhelmingly viewed as positive. However, given previous empirical research demonstrating that the more rigid structures of school can serve to limit children's independence (Yeboah, 2002; Einarsdottir, 2006), continued investigation of how children's accounts of how the amount of rules changed - or remain static - across the transition to school is essential to understanding the impacts of this transition on their perceived agency. Especially within the context of varied transition processes and integration levels across ECECS and schools in Australia.

When asked the question *'are there more rules at childcare or at school?'* most children said school, such as Sadie below.

> **Researcher:** Sadie, do you think there's more rules in reception class or more rules in [early years' service name]?
> **Sadie**: Reception.
> **Researcher:** What rules are there in reception that weren't in the [early years] room?
> **Sadie** More work than more playing.

Many of the children who claimed there were more rules at school often included a justification for why this was the case. Aida, for example told me that there are more rules at her new school "because it's a bigger school". Connor's account spoke about the importance of rules for safety.

> **Researcher:** Connor, do you think there are more rules at school or more rules at childcare?
> **Connor**: More rules at school.
> **Researcher:** More rules at school? What are some of the rules that are different at school?
> **Connor:** Doing playing the, have a blanket and then, no I mean have a pillow and at relaxation you can have a timer or have a timer and have your thoughts or a snack.

Researcher: So during relaxation time you have to choose between a few different things you can do?

    Connor: Yeah.

Researcher: And at childcare was it different?

    Conner: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you think it's a good thing or bad thing that there are more rules at school?

    Connor: Good.

Researcher: Good, why?

    Connor: Because people probably climb the trees and then they might fall off and bump their head.

Researcher: So the rules are good because they help people to be safe?

    Connor: Yeah.

Some children, such as Grace, were quick to say that there were more rules at school, but when asked if this was a good or bad thing, she said "I don't know". Conversely, a smaller number of children felt that there was an equal amount of rules at school and childcare, such as Dakota who remarked that "there's lots of rules at school and childcare", and Cora (see below) who said that both had rules and was able to elucidate how they differed. Of note in Cora's account is the level of detail in her recounting of the rules of school. This further evidences the impact of the school structure on children's understanding of rules, even if the child's overall perception is that the amount of rules in both places is about the same.

Researcher: Cora, do you think that there are more rules at school or more rules at child care?

    Cora: Both.

Researcher: Both, are they the same rules or different rules?

    Cora: Different rules.

Researcher: Different rules, can you remember a rule at child care?

    Cora: No running and no, no running.

Researcher: No running, and is that the same rule at your school?

    Cora: Uh huh.

Researcher: What's a different rule at your school?

    Cora: When you're sitting on the floor you have to cross your legs.

Researcher: Does the teacher tell you why you have to do that?

    Cora: Yes.

Researcher: Why?

    Cora: Cos it's one of the five L's.

A handful of children responded to the question with answers such "I don't know" or "not sure" (see Colton's and Tavi's narratives for example). Only one child, Joshua, stated that there were more rules at childcare than school. However, when asked which rules at childcare were not present at school,

Joshua instead states a shared rule. When asked again for a rule that was only at childcare, Joshua is unsure.

> **Researcher:** Do you think there's more rules at child care or more rules at school?
> **Joshua**: I think there's more rules at child care.
> **Researcher**: More rules at child care? Which rules were at childcare but not school?
> **Joshua** And this is the definitely rule for everyone.
> **Researcher**: Which rule?
> **Joshua**: Don't make guns.
> **Researcher**: And is that a rule at your school too?
> **Joshua**: Mm, hmm.
> **Researcher**: Interesting. Were there any rules at child care that aren't at school?
> **Joshua**: Don't know.

For the twenty participants in this study, their accounts of play and rules evidenced increased structure and focus on learning post transition. Despite participant's transition to the more rigid and controlled environments of school (Yeboah, 2002; Einarsdottir, 2006) children's accounts speak to their acceptance of the increase rules as important or necessary for their safety and learning. This is in contrast to the claims of previous research where formal schooling processes have been perceived as limiting to children's independence (Skouteris, Watson & Lum, 2012). Participants generally accepted the increase in rules and structure as a normalised practice of school. As participant's acceptance of the increased rules at school did not significantly differ depending on the level of transition support or service integration that children experienced, their accounts speak strongly to children's understanding and experiencing the increased rules of school as 'how school should be'. This finding also suggests that the increased generational and power differentials are not affronts to children's agency yet are rather perceived as protective factors. These findings fit with Besag and Nelson's (1984) claim that schools as a social institution continue to mediate dominant values and ideas in a more or less uncritical, taken-for-granted manner by students. As such, it is likely that children expected their new school to have rules, and therefore their participation in the social structure of school, even if more constrained than in their previous ECEC service, was expected and not perceived as limiting to their agency. As argued by Huf, 2013 children "quite willingly accept their role as children and actively seek for possibilities to cooperate within this role" (p.64), which was evidenced consistently within the Stage 2 data.

6.7.3 Children's Accounts of Who Should Make Rules

In phase 1, when asked who makes rules, the vast majority of children named their parents, with some children additionally adding teachers/educators as well. When asked the follow on question of who makes rules at their ECEC service, most children said 'teachers' (educators) and sometimes the service's Director. One child, Carter, additionally suggested that Police officers make rules, and that if you don't follow the rules "you'll get in trouble with the Police…and they'll put you in prison". Conversely, a few children stated that there were no rules at childcare (as reported earlier in this section – see Clara and Connor's accounts), and another, Satriawan, answered, "I don't know" to the question of who makes the rules.

These findings echo children's accounts of play prior to the transition to school, where participant's accounts focussed largely on home life. This is evident in an exchange with Ned and Tavi about rules at their childcare service.

> **Researcher:** Who makes the rules here at childcare?
>> **Ned**: Me.
> **Researcher**: Do you get to make all the rules?
>> **Ned:** Yeah
> **Researcher:** What kind of rules do you make Ned?
>> **Ned**: Um, good rules, only good rules.
> **Researcher**: Only good rules? Like what? What's a good rule to have?
>> **Ned**: Making sure everything is clean
> **Researcher:** Making sure everything is cleaned up. That does sound like a good rule. Tavi, can you think of a rule here at childcare?
>> **Tavi**: Um... um. I don't know
> **Researcher**: I noticed that you two are both wearing hats. Is there a rule about hats?
>> **Tavi**: Yes
> **Researcher**: What's the rule about hats Tavi?
>> **Tavi**: If we go outside, we need to wear hats, if it is too sunny then we to also have hats and sunscreen. If it is too cold, we have hats and jackets. If it is raining, we don't wear hats, we just...we stay under the veranda
> **Researcher**: If it rains you stay under the veranda?
>> **Ned**: No actually we wear our rain jackets.
> **Researcher**: Ned, who made that rule?
>> **Ned**: A mum
> **Researcher**: A mum made that rule?
>> **Ned**: Yep
> **Tavi**: I know that [rule] by myself.

In this exchange, Ned starts by saying that he makes rules at childcare, however, after adding to Tavi's comments about rules governing clothing for outdoor play, Ned states that "a mum" makes the rules about outdoor clothing at childcare. This may be because Ned's mum has made a similar rule at his house, but throughout this exchange, neither child suggests that the educators at their childcare make rules. After the transition to school, however, none of the children named their parents, or any adults other than those employed at the school as someone who can make rules at school.

Given the finding that participants generally found the increased rules and structure of school to be normalised and positive, it was not surprising that children almost unanimously stated that adults who work at the school, such as teachers, principals, and supervisors should make rules. The only exception to this was Leo who said that at his school, kids do make rules. However, when asked what rules children make, his story was about how his teacher chooses who to pick when children's hands are raised. Some parts of his story were unclear due to English fluency challenges, so his ideas may have been more nuanced than he was able to communicate to me.

The vast majority of children's accounts aligned with Johansson and Johansson's (2003) claim that due to the structuring forces of school and the taken for granted stance that schools will have adult derived rules, children to a great degree "accept and have confidence in school rules and teachers' ways of upholding them (as cited in Thornberg, 2008, p. 419). This was clearly evident in the data, as not only did every child state that teachers made rules, they all unanimously agreed that the rules teachers make are "good rules".

> **Researcher:** Are they any other rules at your school Leo?
> **Leo:** the schools playground and a, and has, has go on a slide and, and the little girls hat was, was, its rope was stuck on the, on the poles.
> **Researcher:** A girl was wearing a hat with a rope and it got stuck?
> **Leo: I**t got stuck on its neck. And every school has this problem.
> **Researcher:** So the hats you wear at school can't have ropes?
> **Leo**: Yeah. Even my school, every school has this problem. Every, every, every, every … every place.
> **Researcher**: Every place, so is that a good rule?
> **Leo**: Because at my, and teachers have to cut the rope off.
> **Researcher:** Is it a good rule that there are no ropes so it's safer to play outside?
> **Leo**: Yes.

> **Researcher:** Can you tell me about a rule at your school?
> **Satriawan:** No poking with a fork and knife.

Researcher: Why do you think that's a rule?

    Satriawan: Because you'll hurt.

Researcher: So, it helps you to be safe?

    Satriawan: Yes.

Researcher: Can you tell me about your rules picture?

    Olivia: Lips zipped.

Researcher: The lips are zipped – is that a rule in your class?

    Olivia: We have that rule when the teacher is talking.

Researcher: Who makes that rule?

    Olivia: The teacher.

Researcher: Do you think that's a good rule or a bad rule?

    Olivia: Good rule.

Researcher: A good rule? Why?

    Olivia: So the teacher doesn't forget what she is trying to say.

Researcher: Do you think the rules at school are good rules or bad rules?

    Abigail: Good rules.

Researcher: Why are they good rules?

    Abigail: Because you need to follow the rules and if there's no rules that means you can just be naughty.

Researcher: What would happen if people were naughty all the time?

    Abigail: It would be boring if - and they would get in trouble every day and every night.

Children's accounts of teacher's rules indicated that they were 'good' because they helped to keep children safe (Leo and Satriawan) and school should be a place where learning can happen (Olivia and Abigail). Some children, such as Sebastian, felt that the rules were good rules simply because the teacher made them.

Researcher: Are there any rules at your school?

    Sebastian: some toys need to stay in the corner

Researcher: Do you know why that's a rule?

    Sebastian: I know the teacher just said so, and I don't know.

Researcher: Do you think that's it's a good rule if you don't know why?

    Sebastian: I think it's a good rule, because the teacher said so.

Thornberg's (2008) research also demonstrated that children feel that the rules teacher's provide and enforce are good and necessary to make school a safe and enjoyable place to be. Corsaro (2011)

additionally found that young children recognize the limits of their agency and recognize adults' ability to enforce ways of behaving that support themselves and their peers. In line with these previous findings, children's accounts in this study did not appear to perceive adult rules at school as negatively impacting on their agency. This was demonstrated in children's assertions that adults, not children, should make the rules at school because if children made rules they might be 'silly', 'bad', or 'unsafe'.

> **Researcher:** Do kids ever get to make the rules?
> **Colton**: No.
> **Researcher**: Never?
> **Colton**: Never ever.
> **Researcher**: What would happen if kids made the rules?
> **Colton**: They would go crazy. Crazy blah-blah-blah. They would say investigation time starts all day and they would do anything they wanted.
> **Researcher**: So kids might make crazy rules?
> **Colton:** Yeah.

> **Researcher:** Do kids get to make any rules at your school?
> **Sebastian**: I don't know.
> **Researcher:** Do you think kids would make good rules at school?
> **Sebastian:** Maybe they will do good things, but sometimes they do bad things.

> **Researcher:** Do kids get to make rules at school?
> **Dakota**: No, no, no.
> **Researcher**: No? Why do you think kids don't get to make rules?
> **Dakota**: Because they'll make bad rules. And they'll, and some silly people might say go hurt that girl or boy. So we don't want that.
> **Researcher**: So they might make a rule that's not safe?
> **Dakota**: Some of the silly kids.

> **Researcher:** Do kids get to make rules at school?
> **Joshua**: No.
> **Researcher**: No, why not?
> **Joshua**: Because then, because, like in my Captain Underpants book, George and Harold change to what the sandwiches are called to pee pee sandwiches. That's why not, that's why no kids are allowed to do rules, they could change … like pee pee sandwiches.
> **Researcher**: (Laughing) so they might make silly rules or rules that aren't good rules, and then you might have to eat a yucky sandwich.
> **Joshua**: (Laughing) yes.

Oliver's account, however, did state that children were allowed to make rules in their games. Most children's accounts of rules focussed on teacher's rules for children during both child-initiated and teacher-guided play. However, during children's accounts of their play, several participants' accounts included the rules of their play, or how children worked out child-initiated rules amongst themselves. This suggests that young children may see their own rules as separate from the rules of adults.

> **Researcher:** Do kids ever get to make rules at your school Oliver?
> **Oliver**: No.
> **Researcher**: No?
> **Oliver**: Not unless, only when we play football, we, we, we make a free kick when you miss you'll be another kick to try get it.
> **Researcher**: Oh so kids can make a rule when you're playing a game?
> **Oliver**: Yeah when we play football.

Honing (2009) suggests that children perceive this difference because for children, their play is an expression of children's culture, distinct from learning and adult-led structures. Honing adds further to this stating that children's culture is a collective system of meaning where children become competent actors in their world and develop a that supports them in competently navigating the adult world. If young children do not perceive themselves as able to yet competently navigate the adult world in terms of safety and structure (as evidenced by their above accounts), it may explain why participants did not perceive their lack of agency in contributing to rules at school as problematic or negative.

6.7.4 Children's Accounts of Feelings and Fairness in Relation to Rules

The concept of fairness is often applied to conceptualisations of children's agency, with Fraser (2003), defining it as the feeling of being treated respectfully as an agent within a process of participation. In Bjerke's (2011) study of two child cohort's (eight-to-nine year olds and fourteen-to-fifteen year old) perceptions of their agency at home and school, fairness was a key concept for children. His findings concluded that children experienced their participation at home to be 'fair' while their experiences of participation at school was 'unfair'. Fattore, Mason, and Watson's (2016) research with older children also evidenced children's considered and frequent use of the concept of fairness. Surprisingly, however, in this study, no children used the word fair in either phase of the Stage 2 study to describe their experiences or understandings of rules. When asked how they felt about the rules at school, participants answered with statements such as feeling 'good' when following the rules and feeling

'bad' or 'sad' when not (for example Aida and Clara's accounts of how they or a peer might feel if they don't follow the rules, and Satriawan's account of bullying in the classroom).

Researcher: What happens if someone doesn't follow the rules?

    Aida: One boy at my school called [child name] he didn't listen to the rules when the teacher says everybody cross your legs, he sitted up.

Researcher: And what did the teacher do?

    Aida: She said sit down on your bottom.

Researcher: So he had to be reminded?

    Aida: And sometimes the teacher says only one time or else and you in the next class.

Researcher: Oh so if people are not following the rules they have to go sit in another class for a little bit?

    Aida: Yeah.

Researcher: How do you think that would make you feel?

    Aida Sad.

Researcher: And how do you feel when you're following the rules?

    Aida: Happy.

Clara: If we do bad things there, we get to – we need to go on B.

    Researcher: What happens when you go on B?

Clara: Your name goes there, there's got to be a name – your name is going to be on B and if you do another 2 other bad rule you go to buddy class.

    Researcher: So if you make three bad choice you have to go to the buddy class? What do you do there?

Clara: Buddy class means you just need to sit there and not do anything.

    Researcher: How do you think you would feel if that was something you had to do?

Clara: Sad. Once I go into buddy class.

    Researcher: Can you use the emoji to tell me how you felt when you went to the buddy class?

Clara: [rearranging emoji on her paper] No wait I felt like that [points to the emoji she previously identified as sad and bored.

    Researcher: A little bit sad and bored?

Clara: Yes. But I was not crying [referring to the tear on the sad emoji].

    Researcher: So like the sad emoji but you weren't crying?

Clara: Yeah. My eyes were – my eyebrows were like that but like that and my face was like that.

Researcher: Are there rules about that at your school, Satriawan, in your class?

    Satriawan: Yes.

Researcher: Can you tell me one?

    Satriawan: Bullying.

Researcher: Bullying, or no bullying?

    Satriawan: There is bullying.

Researcher: There is bullying. How would somebody feel if they were being bullied?

>**Satriawan**: [points to the emoji he identified as sad] This.
>
>**Researcher**: Like that? Can you tell me about it, how someone might be feeling if there was a bully?
>
>**Satriawan**: If somebody's sad, somebody would tell the teacher.
>
>**Researcher:** If someone's feeling sad because they're being bullied, they might tell the teacher?
>
>**Satriawan**: Yes.
>
>**Researcher**: And then what would the teacher do?
>
>**Satriawan**: They were angry.
>
>**Researcher**: The teacher may be angry that someone's being a bully?
>
>**Satriawan**: Yes.

Fattore, Mason, and Watson (2016) conclude in their research that children are more likely to resist rules when they "connect them with unfair or uncaring adult responses" (p. 85). Given the participants acceptance of the rules at school as 'good' and of importance for their safety and learning, a conclusion may be drawn that children felt cared for by their teachers, and that children perceived them as having their best interests in mind. This fits with Fattore, Mason, and Watson's (2016) assertion that it is within caring relationships that children are "negotiating and ordering the functioning of an agentic self" (p.85). Bjerke (2011) also suggests that when children view the adults at school as people who care for and comfort them as adults in their home do, children feel respected and that they have more opportunities to exercise agency, even within generational power differences. A key finding of his study was that the cohort of eight-to-nine year old children had significantly less anger and frustration towards school staff than the cohort of fourteen-to-fifteen year olds (Bjerke, 2011). This suggests that even younger children, such as the four-to-five year olds participating in this study, would perhaps feel even less frustration about rules and a lack of control in decisions making processes if they perceived their teachers as caring.

6.8 Children's Agency within the Research Process

Chapter 5 outlined the two ways in which children's agency was identified in Stage 1 of the research study: (1) children's accounts of rules and fairness, and (2) the ways in which children exerted control within the research process. This sections builds on the second understanding of agency by investigating the ways in which children enacted agency within the research process in their actions, responses, and interactions with peers and myself, the researcher. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007) assert that researchers need to both acknowledge that child-adult relationships involve the exercise of generational power, and how children resist this power. Additionally, because the research process was designed to be a co-constructed process, it is arguably even more essential to document children's experiences of participating in child-centred participatory research, both to determine whether

children felt they had control over the process they were asked to engage with, and whether children were able to exert their own interests, wants, and needs throughout the research process.

Children's enactment of agency within the research process was documented using field notes as well as the analysis of transcripts. The documents were combed for places where children responded (or chose not to respond) in unexpected ways, proposed their own ideas or processes, or used strategies which Corsaro (2011) identifies as resistant and challenging to adult authority such as: avoiding, ignoring, or verbally resisting adult processes. While Corsaro (2011) found these to be actions generally reported for older children, a study by Katsiada, Roufidou, Wainwright and Angeli (2018) found that preschool aged children also used these types of strategies to assert their agency. Their findings suggest that exertions of agency and control that are often presumed as 'negative' behaviours in children, are as important to investigate in relation to children's agency as 'positive' enactments of agency.

In phase 1, most children participated in the research process in relatively expected ways. As most children were paired for the research process in this phase, they frequently interacted with each other and would sometimes co-construct stories, copy things their partner was doing if they found it interesting, and generally felt free to move around the space and ask me questions. Most children were happy to work with me until I suggested ending the activity (when I felt saturation had been reached or when children were demonstrating visible or audible signs of wanting to end the activity). A notable exception was Satriawan who stood up and asked to be finished. Colton and Anderson were the only two children who choose to subvert the research process in sustained ways through strategies such as avoiding and ignoring questions, and frequently giving answers they thought were funny or silly.

> **Researcher:** Do you think you two could tell me who makes the rules here at childcare?
> **Colton**: Teachers!
> **Anderson**: Teachers!
> **Researcher**: Teachers? What kind or rules do teachers make at childcare?
> **Colton**: Just say blah blah blah blah blah [laughing]
> **Anderson**: Just go dah dah dah dah [laughing]
> **Colton**: Don't do that, you naughty boy [still laughing]
> **Researcher**: They might say don't do that? You're a naughty boy?
> **Anderson:** You're a dirty girl bleh! [still laughing]
> **Colton**: Poo head! [laughing]

The research activity with Colton and Anderson was concluded when they continued to throw the emoji on the floor. Also of note in the discussion of children's enactment of agency in phase 1, is the two children at two different services (Services E and G) who chose not to participate, and who are not included in the data. Both these children were asked by me and at least one educator at their ECEC service if they wanted to participate, evidencing that these children felt confident in enacting their agency within their ECEC service and making their wants known.

During phase 2, however, many children took more active roles in making decisions about how they would like to participate in the research process. Carter, for example, when asked by his mother if he'd like to do the research activity at his house or his previous ECEC service, said that he wanted to show me his favourite park and do the activity there. Abigail also demonstrated agency in deciding what was important to her when talking to the researcher about her new school. She did this by deciding to wear her school uniform for the activity, even though it took place on a Saturday. Several children, such as Grace, Satriawan, Abigail and Sebastian, decided to bring out school books during the research activity to demonstrate their reading abilities, or the letter and sound work they were doing. They were all very proud of their progress and wanted to share their work. A few children, such as Ned, Cora, and Joshua brought out toys or games during the research activity. Joshua was eager to share his favourite Captain Underpants books, frequently interjecting it into his responses such as the except below (and the excerpt explored in section 6.7.3):

> **Researcher:** What rules were there at child care that there aren't at school?
> **Joshua:** Don't know.
> **Researcher:** Not sure?
> **Joshua:** Same rules.
> **Researcher**: Same rules? Were there more rules at your child care or more at school?
> **Joshua**: What does that say? [pointing to the book he's now holding]
> **Researcher**: [Reading the passage Joshua is pointing to] It says 'Please go pee pee on your socks for warmth.
> **Joshua**: Yes, see they changed rules. They even made a comic.

Here, Joshua is drawing parallels between the question asked (*are there rules at childcare that aren't at school?*) and his favourite book. This could be for a number of reasons such as: Joshua did not have an answer to the question, he would rather talk about his favourite book, or because he wanted to illustrate how rules changing was a normalised process to him. In any case, he exerted control over how he would like to participate in the research activity. Ned also felt confident in deciding which questions he would answer, and how he would like to answer them. Ned had been asking to play a

board game with me since the beginning of the phase 2 research activity, and I had asked him if we could wait until the end of the activity. Ned agreed, and continued to be an active participant, but chose not to engage in answers he felt were unnecessarily long and would delay the playing of his favourite game.

> **Researcher:** Do you think that there were more rules at child care or more rules at school Ned?
> **Ned:** More rules at school.
> **Researcher**: More rules at school?
> **Ned**: And I'm not telling you all of them.
> **Researcher**: You don't have to tell me all of them, there's probably too many.
> **Ned**: It might take a long time.

Anderson was the only participant who resisted most of the phase 2 research process. Anderson chose to engage with the emoji for the first few minutes and answered some of the questions about the feelings the emoji faces were displaying. However, after a few minutes, Anderson began to avoid or ignore questions being asked, and hid the emoji under his paper.

> **Researcher:** Can you tell me about how you like to play at school Anderson?
> **Anderson:** The people [smashes two emoji face together]
> **Researcher**: What's happened to the people?
> **Anderson**: They're hurting their heads.
> **Researcher**: They're hurting their heads? Why are they doing that?
> **Anderson**: They're doing something. … (Inaudible).
> **Researcher**: Why?
> **Anderson**: Because … (Inaudible)
> **Researcher**: Sorry, because why?
> **Anderson**: There's … (Inaudible)
> **Researcher**: Can you tell me what's happening in your picture?
> **Anderson**: There's a volcano.
> **Research**: There's a volcano?
> **Anderson**: And this is a volcano, bumping and bumping.
> **Researcher:** Interesting. Anderson I was hoping you could tell me a little bit about how you play at school. Can you tell me a little bit about your favourite way to play there?
> **Anderson**: You can't see any. [Anderson moves all the emoji under his paper]
> **Researcher**: Have you turned them all over so you can't see them?
> **Anderson**: I'm going mixed them up!
> **Researcher:** How will you tell me a story with them all turned over?
> **Anderson**: … (Inaudible)
> **Researcher:** Can you tell me why you turned them over?
> **Anderson**: I just want to do that.

When asked why he was hiding his emoji, Anderson didn't articulate his reasoning. After two more attempts to engage him with different emoji, I asked Anderson if he would like to end the activity, which he agreed to. Through his interaction with the research process, it was clear that Anderson felt

he had a high level of agency in choosing how he would respond to the questions and research process. While Anderson assented to participate once he arrived at his previous ECEC service, it is important to acknowledge that his parents might not have given him a choice of whether or not he wanted to come. His resistance and challenge to the research process itself may have been his way of pushing back against being co-opted into a research study or working with an adult in what is perceived as a learning or assessment environment after a full day of school.

6.9 What the Findings Tell Us

The findings presented in this chapter indicate that emoji as a visual research method was a useful tool in positioning children as co-constructors of knowledge within QLLR child wellbeing research. This was evidenced through the multitude of ways children chose to participate in the process and share their experiences and understandings of play and rules before and after their transition to school. Children's accounts of play and rules highlight both children's development across the transition to school, and their interactions and experiences with the increased structure and academic focus of their new school environments. Children's largely positive accounts of play and rules after transitioning to school indicate that schools are generally welcoming spaces with teachers who are perceived as caring and supportive adults, and that the increased focus on learning and time spent in learning activities seems to be offset by perceptions of maintained autonomy and opportunities for play.

6.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter reports on the findings from Stage 2 study and discusses the findings in relation to relevant literature and research. Children's accounts of the two child-identified indicators: play and agency, are reported in detail to uncover how children's experience of these indicators changed over time. Additionally, children's enactments of agency throughout the research process are also explored. The following chapter discusses the findings of the Stage 2 study in relation to the research aim and questions that underpinned the research, and the theoretical and practical implications of this research study.

CHAPTER 7 – Methodological, Theoretical & Practical Implications

7.0 Introduction

This chapter begins by revisiting the relationship between the research question and aims which guided this research study, and the research findings reported in Chapters 5 and 6. Key findings across both study stages are discussed in depth to demonstrate how this research extends current methodological and theoretical knowledge of childhood research and young children's wellbeing during the transition to school. Additionally this chapter draws on empirical evidence for furthering our collective understanding of how the findings extend our knowledge of current practices relating to assessment and service integration in the early years. The chapter concludes with discussion of the strengths and limitations of the research, as well as suggestions for how future research come build from and extend beyond the current study.

7.0.1 Research Timeline
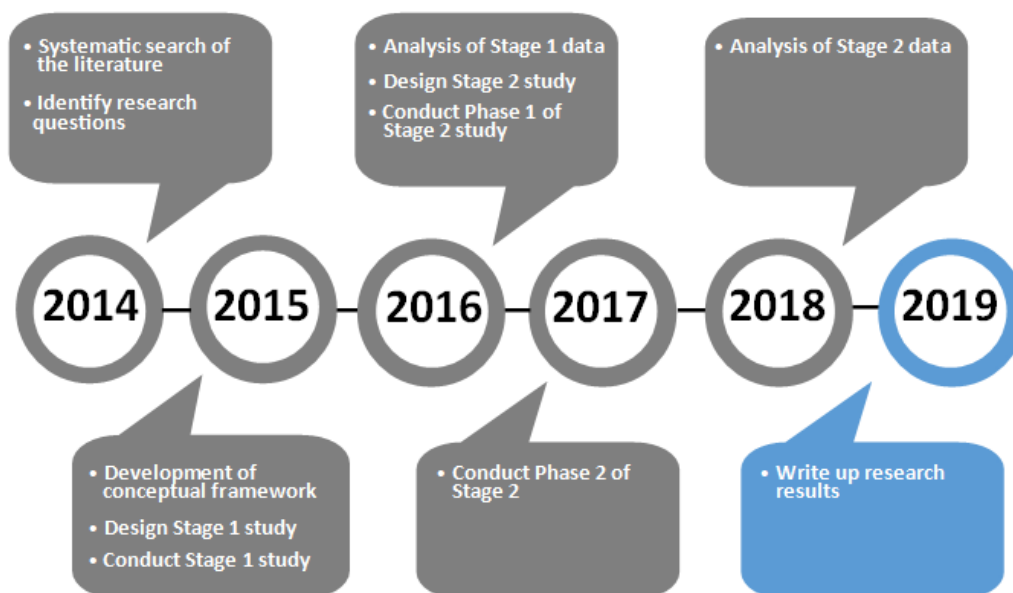
Figure 14. Research timeline - Chapter 7

7.1 Answering the Research Question and Aims

Chapter 1 of this thesis identified the research problem as "Are current conceptualisations and operationalisations of child wellbeing accurate or supportive of young children as they transition to school"? To address this problem, the guiding research question was defined as "How can the inclusion of children's voices and children's understanding of their own wellbeing inform the current conceptualisations and assessment of child wellbeing during the transition to school?". In this context, the following aims were developed:

1. Explore how young children conceptualised their wellbeing

2. Develop child informed indicators of wellbeing derived from young children's experiences and understandings

3. Use child informed indicators of wellbeing to explore children's wellbeing as they transition from ECEC settings to formal schooling

4. Investigate how service integration in ECEC settings impacts children's experiences of wellbeing during the transition to school

In this chapter I reflect on the findings and discussion presented in Chapters 5 & 6 to address the research question and aims set out in Chapter 1 and identify the contribution this thesis makes to knowledge in relation to children's wellbeing during their transition to school.

7.1.1 Aim 1: Explore How Young Children Conceptualise their Wellbeing

Stage 1 of the research process demonstrated that young children's experiences and understandings of their own wellbeing accorded with adult derived child wellbeing measures. This was demonstrated through analysis of children's accounts (as reported in Chapter 5) against six adult derived indicators of child wellbeing: (1) feeling happy, loved, and safe, (2) being healthy, (3) opportunities for learning, (4) material basics, (5) social participation, and (6) family relationships. Indicators that have been widely validated, substantively theorised, and profoundly explored within the child wellbeing literature (see for example Mishra, Ray & Risse, 2018; Cho, 2015; Casas, 2011). The findings demonstrate that young children's accounts accorded with the adult derived measures, and as such, the inclusion of their voices has made an 'indisputable contribution' (Formosinho & Barros Araujo, 2006, p.29) to our understanding of child wellbeing indicators, a contribution that only children can offer on research that directly or indirectly impacts children's lives. In addition to validating current adult conceptualisations of child wellbeing, the young children who participated in this research study also made a significant contribution to knowledge through their identification of two novel indicators of key importance to their wellbeing: play and agency.

7.1.2 Aim 2: Develop Child Informed Indicators of Wellbeing Derived from Young Children's Experiences and Understandings

Stage 2 of the research process explored the two child informed indicators in depth through documenting children's accounts of their experiences and understandings of play and agency across the transition to school. The centrality of play and agency to young children's lives may not be surprising for educational or early childhood researchers, where the importance of these two concepts are well established within theory, practice, and policy. However, at the onset of this research study a search of the social indicators literature showed that there had only been empirical investigations surrounding the importance of agency as a social indicator/domain of wellbeing for older children (Fattore et al. 2007, 2009). Play, on the other hand, had not been explored in relation to child wellbeing indicators, despite leisure being a prevalent part of current conceptualisations of youth and adult wellbeing (Moore & Lynch, 2018). Given the lack of exploration of these two areas of key importance to young children's accounts of their own wellbeing, the findings from this study offer a valuable addition to the current state of knowledge on child wellbeing indicator use.

To uncover how the transition to school impacted children's understandings and experiences of play and agency, data analysis focused on how children's accounts of the two indicators changed (or remained static) across the two phases of the Stage 2 study. To further deepen this line of inquiry, children were asked comparative questions such as *Was there more play at childcare, or at school? Are there more rules at childcare or school?,* during the second phase of Study 2 (post school transition)*.*

7.1.3 Aim 3: Use Child Informed Indicators of Wellbeing to Explore Young Children's Wellbeing as they Transition to School

The findings reported in Chapter 6 suggest that children's transition to school was marked by significant change in relation to their opportunities and experiences of play and agency. Yet, despite this significant change, almost all children's accounts expressed these changes in positive terms, indicating that most children continued to experience high levels of wellbeing for these two indicators post the transition to school. In this section, I discuss these findings within the context of other recent and relevant literature, first for play, and subsequently agency.

When investigating the concept of play across the transition to school in Australia, it has been well evidenced that children generally move from less structured more play-based ECECS to more structured formal schooling environments (Yelland, 2011; Pyle and Luce-Kapler, 2014). This was

indeed the case for the participants in this study, where children's stories and descriptions of their play, learning, and routines at school denoted greatly increased teacher directed learning time, behaviour management strategies, consequences, and an overall more scheduled and structured day. In Australia, and internationally, there continues to be a focus and call for increased play-based learning for young children (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009). This call is grounded in the idea that play is the best medium to support young children's learning and development (Broadhead, Howard & Wood, 2010). Fitting with this call and focus, all the ECECS that child participants attended were play-based in nature and offered children significant amounts of unstructured, child-initiated play with additional teacher-guided learning experiences through the medium of play. Given that the children then transitioned to less play-based and more structured learning environments, the finding that most participants perceived school to have equal or greater amounts of play than their ECECS was unexpected.

A potential reason for this finding may lie in the structure of the school day itself. When talking about how play at school differed from play at childcare, many of the children specifically mentioned the number of scheduled play times at school, such as recess, lunch, and fruit time. At school, children's time for play is clearly defined from times of learning using bells and routines, and largely relegated to outdoor environments instead of the classroom or indoor environments. This contrasts with ECECS, where children generally move freely between child-initiated play and teacher-guided play, and indoor and outdoor environments. The distinct and scheduled nature of child-initiated play times during the school day appeared to contribute to children's perceptions that school had more, or at least equal, amounts of play in comparison to the largely unquantifiable amount of play at their ECEC service; even though the time available across the entire day was less.

There are several other possible contributing factors as to why most of the participants did not perceive school to have less time for play than their ECEC service. Several studies which have examined children's experiences of play in early childhood have found that outdoor play was highly valued by most children (Nicholson, Kurnik, Jevgjovikj, & Ufoegbune, 2015; Einarsdottir 2011). While children also had daily opportunities to play outdoors at their ECEC service, the outdoor areas were comparatively much smaller than the outdoor areas to play at school. In children's accounts of play at their new school, most of their stories included numerous and detailed accounts of the outdoor play areas, including playground equipment, ovals, and nature spaces, and how these were integrated into their play. Their descriptions of outdoor play at school varied greatly from prior to school transition accounts, where children's stories were less detailed, and the physical environment was not a central focus. The greatly increased outdoor play environments and opportunities at school, paired with

regularly scheduled outdoor times, may be a significant factor of why young children perceive that there is more time to play at school.

Another possible contribution to children's perceptions that school offered as much or more time for play is the absence of teacher presence during children's outdoor play time. Several studies of play in early childhood report that children frequently perceived the presence of adults during their play as a limiting and disruptive factor (Glenn, Knight, Holt & Spence, 2013; Rogers & Evans, 2008; Howard, Jenvey & Hill, 2006). Other studies have also reported on the impact of adult presence on young children's play, suggesting that it is a 'cue' that is frequently used by children to differentiate between play and learning (McInnes, Howard, Miles & Crowley, 2010, 2011). In ECECS, educators are greatly involved in children's play through guiding and extending play-based learning opportunities. Conversely, in school settings, teachers are rarely outside during scheduled outdoor play time (recess, lunch etc.) and generally do not engage themselves in children's outdoor play. Teachers being perceived as separate to children's play at school is evidenced in their accounts where stories about outdoor play that involve adults generally mentioned supervision aids, or principals whose function in the account was generally to enforce rules.

A final likely contributing factor to children's perception that school offered equal or more opportunities for play is that young children do not perceive the distinction between play in the same way as adults. While adults may perceive the role of outdoor play as exercise or physical activity, and learning-based play as a way of teaching and assessing learning outcomes, children in this study often blurred this distinction through labelling most kinds of play (child-initiated or teacher-guided) as 'fun' and 'enjoyable'. This is contrary to the findings of a study by Devine (2002) on how seven-to-eight-year olds experience school. She suggests that the timetables and schedules at school "establish boundaries on the nature and extent of children's activity, classifying such activity into worktime and playtime" (p, 309). However, another key finding in her study is that for most of the child participants, "doing work neatly, correctly and getting it finished was important in making them feel happy in school" (p. 310). This finding was similar to the findings of the current study, where children's experiences of happiness resulting from their ability to successfully complete the learning activities given by their teachers may be another reason that the young children in this study frequently described teacher-guided learning similarly to child-initiated play.

While school may have less time designated for unstructured or for child-initiated play, in this study, young children did not perceive all types of learning as distinct from play. It may be that the amount of teacher-guided and play-based activities that children engaged with throughout the school day,

which they identified as generally 'fun' and 'enjoyable', contributed to children's overall perceptions of school offering a lot of time for play. This finding holds with an Australian study by Theobald, Danby, Einarsdottir, Bourne, Jones, et al. (2015), which determined that young children have great respect for their engagement in activities, and do not "trivialize their participation or involvement in activities, whether they named them as 'play' or 'learning" (p. 358). This seems to be especially true in the case of games or activities that involve technology, such as iPads, computers, and smart boards, which were frequently mentioned in children's accounts of play. Because these technologies are not generally available to children at their ECECS, their frequent use at school likely contributed to children's perceptions of learning being play, even though adults would not necessarily categorise learning games as play. These findings are contrary to the some of play literature discussed above, where the presence of adults has been found to be a cue that the purpose of the activity is for learning, not play (McInnes, Howard, Miles & Crowley, 2010, 2011).

Given that all children who talked about technology play in their stories about school described them as 'fun', rather than learning activities, an interesting finding of this study is that young children seem to experience learning games on technology devices as different from other types of learning games and teacher-guided learning activities. A growing body of research has demonstrated that technologies such as iPads can play a positive role in delivering curricula and promoting learning in classroom with young children (see for example Lynch & Redpath, 2012; Flewitt, Messer & Kucirkova, 2015). While this study did not look at the efficacy of devices for supporting children's learning, it indicates that children were highly engaged in the activities due to their perception of it being play, not a learning activity. This suggests that technologies such as iPads and Smartboards appeared to significantly blur the line between play and learning for young children. The combination of play and learning in online or device-based games may offer a reason as to why these technologies have been demonstrated to be a useful learning tool. This fits with findings of Edward's (2013) study on digital play in early childhood, which found strong parallels between play, when understood as culturally and temporally adaptive, and children's technology use. This suggests that when it comes to learning and play, technology use can not be segregated neatly into either category. Interestingly, a recent study by Nadan and Kaye-Tzadok (2019) which investigated middle year children's perspectives of subjective wellbeing, found that the 'virtual arena' (new media and social media) should be further explored as a possible domain of child wellbeing. Findings from the current literature and this study in relation to technology play and child wellbeing evidences the need for further investigations of the impacts of technology play on child wellbeing. Especially, for young children transitioning into schools where technology features heavily in comparison to ECEC environments.

Much like play, children's agency has not received widespread attention in the social indicators literature. At the time of the systematic review (Chapter 2) which underpinned the design of this research study, there were only a few papers and studies (theoretical and empirical) that attempted to address children's exclusion from child wellbeing research and engaged in discussion or investigation of children's agency (see for example Biggeri & Santi 2012; Ballet, Biggeri & Comin, 2011; Fattore et al. 2007, 2009). Of these, only one was an empirical study which conducted participatory wellbeing research with children/young people from a social indicators perspective in a developed country (Australia) (Fattore et al., 2007, 2009). This study by Fattore et al. (2007, 2009) included participants aged eight-to-fifteen years, who identified agency as a key aspect of their wellbeing. For the older children and youth in this study, agency was understood as "the democratisation of everyday life, which could be understood as a condition in which the feelings of mastery, control and self efficacy was experienced" (2009, p. 64). In the time since the systematic review and undertaking of this study, there have been several more studies published which include children's understandings and experiences of agency in relation to their wellbeing.

A study by Moore and Lynch (2018) employed the mosaic approach to conduct participatory research with children aged six-to-eight years to investigate children's conceptualisation of wellbeing through an exploration of happiness. They found that children place a strong emphasis on agency in their understandings and experiences of wellbeing. Another new study offering insights into how children conceptualise their own wellbeing conducted by Steckermeier (2019) which drew on self-reported data completed by eight-year-olds from 16 different countries. A key finding of this study is that children identified safety and agency as two aspects central to their wellbeing. Finally, Hart and Brando (2018) apply the Capability Approach to child wellbeing by examining selected empirical evidence on the connections between children's agency and wellbeing. They highlight the needs to facilitate children's participatory rights as early as possible to support their wellbeing and development. These recent studies on older cohorts of children provide further evidence of the importance of conducting participatory wellbeing research with children. The themes uncovered in these studies such as agency, and on a smaller scale play, share marked similarities to the findings of this study, supporting the claims of this thesis. This thesis adds to this recent literature through its inclusion of participatory research with a younger cohort of children, evidencing that the concepts of agency and play are equally as important to children as young as three-years-of age, and that young children can also tell us about their experiences and understanding of play and agency in their lives.

Another contribution this thesis offers to the literature is an in depth understanding of how children's experiences of play and agency are impacted by the transition to school across a broad range of ECECS

and primary schools. Across the transition to school, children move from the generally less structured and rule oriented ECECS to school settings where their daily school life is highly regimented and can frequently be subjected to "mass routines, discipline and control" (Thornberg, 2008), where adults exercise control over children's interactions, relationships, time and space (Devine, 2002). This transition between very different structures was evidenced in all participants' narratives, through comparison between children's stories of rules and routines pre and post transition. Prior to transition, children frequently needed support or prompts to remember and explain the rules and routines at their ECEC service. After transition, children gave detailed and vivid accounts of the structures, rules, and routines at school which frequently included the consequences associated with breaking or not following rules. While developmental changes likely account for some of this change, there is a substantive body of evidence that suggests that the transition to school reduces children's agency through increased structures and controls (Huf, 2013; Fisher, 2008; Bronstrom, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2002).

Given that agency had been previously explored as a child-identified indicator of wellbeing for older children/youth, it was assumed that transitioning to a school environment which limited many aspects of agency available to young children their ECECS, would have a negative impact on their perception of school, or their wellbeing. However, while almost all participants agreed that there were at least as many, or more, rules at school, all children perceived the rules to be good rules, with no children indicating that there were too many rules, or that the rules were unfair. Additionally, all participants agreed that children should not make rules at school, as they would make 'bad' or 'silly' rules. These findings demonstrate that while children may have experienced less agency at school, they did not appear to perceive this change as negatively impacting on their wellbeing, or enjoyment of school.

In an ethnographic study of English and German students transitioning to school, Huf (2013) also found that while children's overall agency in terms of their control of structures and activities is diminished at school entry, children are active agents within school structures, bringing with them social competencies that allow them to establish new roles as students and contribute to the "new order" (p. 73). Of interest to this study was the difference between the two cohorts in Huf's study. The German cohort came from a variety of ECECS, whereas most of the English cohort transitioned together from the same preschool to the same school. Huff identified that a key finding of this study was how keeping a cohort of children together across the transition to school was an important factor in facilitating children's agency. This finding by Huf (2013) contrasts findings from the present study, where children's understandings and experiences of rules and structures did not greatly vary depending on the level of integration between their ECECS and school, or how many peers

transitioned from the same ECECS to the same school. The findings of this study which suggests that service integration did not significantly impact children's experiences of wellbeing across the transition to school, also challenging dominant discourses in the service integration literature uncovered in Chapter 2.

7.1.4 Aim 4: Investigate How Service Integration in ECEC Settings Impact Upon Children's Experiences of Wellbeing During the Transition to School

There has been a continued and concerted effort to increase service integration in the early years in Australia as well as internationally (Grant, Gregoric, Sumsion, Brinkman, Walsh et al., 2017). This was evidenced in the systematic review that underpinned this study, which uncovered six papers and reports that called for the further integration of ECECS. Also highlighted in the systematic review, were papers that cautioned against the assumption that service integration was an inherently positive or useful process. These papers cautioned that there was little empirical evidence supporting the call for integration of early year services (IEYS) generally (see for example Press, Sumsion, & Wong, 2010; Nichols & Jurvansuu, (2008), or in relation to young children's health and wellbeing (Wong & Sumsion, 2013). In response to these findings, investigating the impact of service integration on the wellbeing of children during the transition to school was identified as an important aim of this study.

The call for IEYS in Australia is not specifically about the transition to school, rather its focus is "provid[ing] access to multiple services to children and families in a cohesive and holistic way…through respectful, collaborative relationships [that] actively seek to maximise the impact of different disciplinary expertise in a shared intent to respond to family and community contexts" (Press et al., 2010, p.53). However, because the transition to school does involve children moving between services and sectors, the creation of integrated services does impact children's transition to school. In South Australia and metro Adelaide specifically, there is a growing number of public IEYS, which are defined as services comprising of two or more early learning, childcare, early development, health, or family services (Government of South Australia, 2017). Increasingly, integrated services include the integration of childcare (birth-to-five years of age) with a preschool and/or primary school by co-locating them on the same site (Wright, 2005), with some schools even combining pre-school and reception aged children together in an extended early years setting (South Australian Government Schools, n.d.). Many independent schools in South Australia also offer an integration of services, by housing an early years learning centre within the school, or on the same site. To account for this in the study design, two of the selected ECECS were integrated services, one public with a co-located childcare, preschool, and primary school sharing a site in a disadvantaged suburb (Service H), and the

other an independent early years learning centre and primary school sharing the same building in an affluent neighbourhood (Service G). The rest of the services were standalone ECECS which still housed a range of care and education models.

Despite the wealth of literature that calls for the integration of services based on their efficacy in supporting and improving outcomes for children and families, in this study, service integration did not appear to significantly impact on children's experiences of wellbeing during the transition to school. Out of the twenty participants, the accounts of eighteen children spoke positively about their transition to school, with most sharing their perception that school provided a lot of time for play and that the rules and routines were 'good' and fair. These eighteen children were from all three transition categories, with children in the no-to-low transition group (children experiencing low levels of change or transition between the services) having no marked difference from children in the moderate group, or most children in the significant transition group. The two children whose accounts did not express their transition to school in a positive, or solely a positive way (Leo and Satriawan) were in the significant transition group. However, the other five children in this group did express their transition to school in positive terms, including Aida, who attended the same ECEC service and primary school as Leo. These findings suggest that for the young children in this study, service integration in and of itself did not have a significant impact on children's experiences of wellbeing during transition.

While the findings of this study did not provide substantive evidence that the integration of services made a significant difference to children's experiences of wellbeing during the transition to school, there are also a series of mitigating factors that likely influenced this result. The first is that while only two of the ECECS included in the study were integrated services (as per the South Australian definition), many of the ECECS and schools offered transition processes to support children and families. Examples of this were ECECS taking children to visit primary schools, having information sessions for parents, primary schools offering transition visits to registered students prior to school entry, and in one case, a school offering an ECEC service visit from a teacher. Additionally, many of the participating children attended neighbourhood preschools which were often informally connected to local primary schools, where most children transitioned to the same school. Due to these factors, over half of the children in the study took part in transition processes or visits during their transition to school. As such, while only three children participating in the study had a transition experience that was highly integrated (and only one child completed their transition within an integrated service), a significant number of children benefited from a less formal integration of services such as transition visits and peer groups transitioning together.

Another reason why integrated services may not play as pivotal a role during transition as expected is that for a variety of reasons, children do not always transition to school within them. At the beginning of the Stage 2 study, four of the twenty child participants attended an integrated service. However, after transition, only one of the four children had remained at the integrated service. The attrition from the integrated services was geographical for one child (Carter) and may have been a combination of geography, personal preference, or financial reasons for the other two (Leo and Aida) (Forsey, 2008). The experiences of these children suggest that while integrated services may be capable of offering additional transition to school support, these benefits may be limited by the amount of children/families that can or choose to stay at the same location across a significant span of time. In analysis of the data in relation to the one child who stayed at the same integrated service during the transition to school, Sadie reported similar amounts of change in relation to the child-informed indicators of play and agency, including the significant differences between the outdoors areas available to her as a reception student. As the ECEC outdoor environment of integrated services are frequently segregated from the school outdoor environment for safety reasons, this may account for why Sadie's experience of the difference of play and agency pre and post the transition to school was in many ways similar to other participants' accounts.

For the two children in this study who expressed negative feelings or uncertainty about the transition to school (Leo and Satriawan), extenuating life circumstances may have been a significant factor impacting on their transition experience, rather than simply the lack of integration between their ECEC service and their new primary school. Satriawan had an unexpected gap in his transition to school experience due to an issue with his visa and was unable to return to Australia until the beginning of term two. Leo and his family are recent immigrants to Australia, and his mother (during the research activity) indicated that her English fluency and not knowing the schooling system in Australia were barriers for her to support her son. Both Satriawan and Leo's accounts demonstrated that they struggled to integrate with friends and into social life at school. Theobald (2015) found that for children who struggle with making friendships or integrating with peers, activities that are meant to be 'fun' are often experienced otherwise due to social exclusion. Moore and Lynch (2018) also found that children associated a lack of friendships with unhappiness and that having friends was consistently valued at school by children.

Leo additionally shared that his teacher didn't know his favourite toy, which he expressed with a considerable amount of disappointment. Fattore et al. (2007) had a similar finding in their study of older children's accounts of wellbeing, where relationships with teachers were identified by children as crucial to their sense of wellbeing. Leo's account did not reflect a strong relationship between him

and his teacher. As Leo's account of play was highly focused on toys, his perception of his teacher's lack of interest in his favourite toy seemed to signal a lack of interest in getting to know him. Howard, Jenvey & Hill (2006) suggest that a teacher's unwillingness to engage in conversation around non education toys may stem from the pressure teachers often feel to engage children in learning disguised as play, which generally excludes toys with no apparent learning value. However, for Leo, the inclusion of his interests and favourite toys at school may have served as a way for his teacher to begin building a relationship with him. Satriawan's account also showed that he continued to be unfamiliar with the routines of school, even when all the other students appeared to know what to do from his accounts (unsurprising given he had missed the first three months of school). His stories about his teacher or the routines are vague, and when asked to clarify, Satriawan frequently says that he forgot. This suggests that Satriawan had not created a strong relationship with his teacher or peers at the time of phase 2 data collection.

The finding that having friends and knowing the rules and routines of school were associated with children reporting high levels of wellbeing were also key findings for a smaller scale study (n=9) which investigated the wellbeing of young children as they transitioned together from a single ECEC service to a primary school in South Australia (Stephenson, 2012). For Leo and Satriawan, increased service integration might have been a protective factor in their transition to school, through potentially lessening the amount of change between peers and rules/routines. Or, perhaps it may have played a supportive role for their mothers and families who both expressed that they had found supporting their sons during the transition to school difficult. In a study which investigated parental experience at a New Zealand ECEC service which focused on building community and parent engagement, parents frequently used terms such as "networking , linking, and getting to know people when talking about themselves and their [ECEC service]" (Duncan, 2012, p. 92). This suggests that ECEC and school settings that focus on parental involvement and engagement make a meaningful difference to relationships with parents and their feelings surrounding their integration into an education community. A study by Guo (2015) on parent and teacher relationships for minority families in ECECS and schools also concluded that parental involvement and engagement was an essential factor in teachers building knowledge about children's familial and cultural backgrounds and supporting their needs and interests.

The role of friendships as a supportive mechanism for school transition was a theme that also permeated children's accounts of how they like to play. This accorded with the findings of the study by Moore and Lynch (2018) where "having friends to play with was consistently important in their discussions [of play]" (p. 132). However, children's stories about the friends they liked to play with

post transition were equally often about new friends, even if they transitioned to school with peers from the same ECEC service. This finding also supports the conclusion that for Leo and Satriawan, the two children who had and continued to have a difficult transition to school, there were factors beyond the integration of services that impacted their ability to develop friendships and feel a sense of belonging at school.

Despite extensive searching, no further published studies or reports on the impact of service integration in Australia could be found since the completion of this study's systematic review in 2014. Additionally, to date, no published studies have specifically investigated the impact of service integration on the transition to school. As such, the findings of this study work towards filling the continued gap in empirical evidence on IEYS. When considering the question of whether service integration is evidence based, however, Sumsion et al. (2012) caution that we must also consider that the purpose of the operation of IEYS and question what outcomes are desirable "for whom, and are they well understood and agreed upon" (p. 50). Sumsion et al. (2012) also ask if all voices are being heard in relation to the provision of integrated services, and suggest that the exclusion of marginalised voices, particularly those of children, raises the question as to whether Australia's strong policy interest in service integration is an opportunity, or danger to those who depend on these services. Nichols and Jurvansuu (2008) also highlight the challenges in the conceptualisation of the purpose of integrated services. They suggest that the interdisciplinary nature of integrated services, reflected within different and sometimes contradictory policies across different sectors (such as health and education), has created ongoing tensions between "community development and strength-based orientations… [and] more hierarchical service-centred conceptualisations" (pg. 127-128). In response to these cautions, the findings of this thesis in relation to service integration are considered in relation to the users of ECECS and schools (children and families), integrated service providers, and interdisciplinary understandings of integrated services.

Considering the call for integrated services from adult perspectives, it is possible to see why they have evaded further critique. From an ECEC service perspective, integrated services may intuitively seem to make sense; a one-stop-shop where families can access services and reduce the need to negotiate between sectors and disciplines to access the care, health, and educational needs of their children and support their overall wellbeing (Nichols & Jurvansuu, 2009). From a public health standpoint, integrated services that include health services offer the opportunity to more easily reach often difficult to access populations, improve help seeking behaviour for parents, and the support the protection of children (Jackson, Nicholson, Doust, O'Donnell, & Cheung, 2017; Department for Families and Communities, 2004; Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and

Indigenous Affairs, 2004). From a school perspective, stronger ties between preschool and school are generally perceived to benefit children and families during the transition to school and create safer and more productive school communities and improved educational outcomes (Nichols & Jurvansuu, 2009). However, from the perspective of child participants in this study, the integration of services did not appear to make a significant impact on children's experiences of wellbeing during the transition to school. A reason for this may be that children perceive transitions differently than adults, and that regardless of the amount of integration, the move from an ECEC setting to a more structured classroom setting is a significant transition for all children. This was evident in Sadie's account where her transition to school amounted (geographically) to a move to a classroom next door. However, her account evidences as significant a change as those experienced by many of the other children.

Another possible fallacy surrounding assumptions regarding the efficacy of service integration is that children and families will stay or would choose to stay at the same integrated service over a sustained period of time. This assumption does not consider that the most vulnerable children and families, who are generally understood to be the target of integrated services, may be the most housing insecure, meaning that they may be more likely to move frequently (Nicholls, 2014). Coupled with high housing costs in most Australian cities, an increasing number of individuals and households are unable to save for a deposit or secure a mortgage on a home (Beer, Bentley, Baker, Mason, Mallett et al., 2015). These factors coupled with the precariousness nature of private rental accommodation in Australia has contributed to increased housing relocation for younger adult Australians (Beer, Bentley, Baker, Mason, Mallett et al., 2015), which in turn may impact many young families. Additionally, the assumption that parents would generally choose to stay within an integrated service environment also negates the reality of parents in Australia who have been largely repositioned from 'service recipients' to 'choosing agents' within the neoliberal paradigm of a two-tiered education system (Jovanovic & Fane, 2016). This repositioning has resulted in Australian parents increasingly 'shopping around' for what they perceive to be the best educational environment for their children, rather than simply attending their local school (Forsey, 2008). Due to these mitigating factors, many of the benefits of service integration in the early years may be undone by families' circumstances or choice(s) about their children's education and care.

The lack of empirical support for integrated services in the data, as well as the attrition of participants from the integrated ECECS involved in this study, suggests that service integration may not be an essential focus in supporting child wellbeing, despite claims that it does just that (AMA Task Force on Indigenous Health, 2013; Atkinson, Doherty, & Kinder, 2005; Eastman, Newton, Rajkovic, & valentine, 2011; Mustard, 2008; Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services Division, 2003; Schmeid et

al., 2011; Sims, 2011; The Centre for Community Child Health, 2008). In this study, children who had the opportunity to attend transition visits at their new school while still attending their ECEC service appeared to receive the same benefits as children who attended an integrated service or had a highly integrated transition experience. Given the interdisciplinary challenges of service integration (Nichols & Zannettino, 2008), the geographical challenges and economic costs of relocating and integrating services, and the likelihood that many children and families will move between services, the findings of this study suggest that simpler solutions, such as transition processes and transition visits, may also be a viable solution to supporting child wellbeing during the transition to school. The findings also coalesce with the assertion by Nichols and Zannettino (2008), that if we, as Australian society, continue down the path of service integration in the early years, we need to bring in more diverse research perspectives (which this study argues includes children's perspectives) and participate in interdisciplinary collaborative inquiry to better understand the challenges and impacts of service integration on children and families.

7.2 Methodological, Theoretical and Practical Contributions to Knowledge

In the previous section, I sought to address the research question and aims that underpin the research study reported in this thesis. In this section, I offer a discussion of how the design, facilitation, and findings of this study offer novel and important methodological, theoretical, and practical contributions to current knowledge.

7.2.1 Methodological Contributions

This research study began with my interest in 'pushing back' against assumptions in the child wellbeing literature that young children's "limited cognitive, language skills and attention spans" (Hymel, et al., 2011, p.270) preclude them from participating in child wellbeing research. To do this, I drew on the image of the child derived from child-citizen theory, that young children are recognised and understood to be experts on childhood by virtue of being children (Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Pyle & Danniels, 2015; Cook & Hess, 2007). With this understanding of young children's capabilities and expertise, I worked to position children as co-creators of knowledge, who hold knowledge and understandings that are no longer available to adults because of the passage of time. This view and positioning of the child holds that young children do not need to be assessed for readiness (cognition, language, attention or otherwise) to share their experiences and understandings or participate in

research. Rather, researchers need to assess their methods and tools for conducting research *with* children to ascertain whether the methods are appropriate to the abilities and interests of children.

A methodological contribution this thesis makes to the wellbeing literature is the validation of a rigorous qualitative research method that facilitates the meaningful participation of young children within a child-centred participatory research process. This was demonstrated in Stage 1 of the research process, where emoji were used as a way of limiting adult/researcher voice and allowing children to share their ideas and experience without being asked direct questions, or about concepts pre-determined by the researcher. Given the variety and complexity of children's stories, responses, and questions, it is clear that not only are three-to-five-year old children cognitively and linguistically capable of engaging in research, but also that emoji are an effective tool to facilitate this work. These findings suggest that if young children are found incapable of participating in a research process, the issue likely lies with the process, methods, or theoretical grounding of the study, not children themselves.

Emoji are one option in a growing suite of visual participatory methods, many of which have been repeatedly demonstrated to support participatory research with young children, such as drawings, photographs, and more recently the mosaic approach. Developed by Clark and Moss (2001), the mosaic approach uses a suite of tools in addition to drawings and photographs such as bookmaking, tours, and observations to create a whole picture of the child's viewpoint. Tools such as drawing can pose specific methodological challenges with young children (Wall, 2017), specifically surrounding fine motor control and the frustrations young children may feel when their drawing doesn't 'look like' what they would like it to. While methods such as drawing are often seen as useful for childhood research because it is an activity that children are familiar with, this does not necessarily extend to very young children, such as three-year-olds. Additionally, several studies which used drawing in participatory research with children found that it can be challenging for adults to interpret children's drawings, as experiences and conceptual tools available to adults can impact adults' abilities to set aside their own interpretations, which may be different than those of children (Close, 2007; Horstman, Aldiss, Richardson, & Gibson, 2008). An advantage emoji has over other visual methods that require children to create representations of their thinking and ideas is that children's fine motor or artistic capabilities do not impact on their ability to participate, a key consideration for young children. With emoji, children select a representation that fits with their understandings or experiences, or that they find interesting or meaningful, rather than having to create it. This aspect of emoji greatly increased the inclusivity of the method, as the findings evidenced that children with special needs and children who are English as additional language (EAL/D) learners were all able to participate in the research process.

While the pre-determined nature of the emoji may be perceived as a limiting factor, in relation to drawing for example, the findings of the study did not suggest this was a concern. This was evidenced in children's wide and varied interpretation of the emoji symbols, the ways in which they combined or displayed the emoji they used in their stories and explanations, and how some children used their environment and other items or belongings combined with emoji to create specific pictures or representations of their understandings and experiences. Through children's engagement with emoji, the emoji became an open-ended provocation for discussion and co-construction of knowledge.

A final methodological contribution this study makes is adding to our understanding of how young children enact agency within a child-centred participatory research process. Almost all children who assented to take part in this study were enthusiastic participants who responded to the prompts and materials I supplied and responded to my questions about their stories and experiences. Despite children's general eagerness to participate, however, children enacted agency throughout the process in a myriad of ways, such as correcting and disagreeing with other children or myself, developing their own protocols for sharing stories, bringing other materials (toys, books, games, school uniform) into the research activity, and determining the location of the activity itself. Many children also engaged in acts of resistance during the research process, such as hiding or throwing emoji, using toilet humour, sharing ideas that were meant to be funny rather than truthful, and standing or jumping on furniture. Additionally, one child resisted the entire research process in Stage 2, phase 2, through avoiding answering questions, hiding emoji, and giving answers that were meant to be funny or silly. Due to young children's longstanding exclusion from childhood wellbeing research, investigating how young children enact agency within participatory research is an essential component in addressing their exclusion. The development and refinement of research methods, protocols, and considerations for engaging young children meaningfully within the research process is an essential piece to this work.

Devine (2002) argues that this is indeed essential work as it is when children's voices "are framed in terms of belonging and active participation [that] children will be empowered to define and understand themselves as individuals with the capacity to act and exercise their voice in a meaningful manner on matters of concern to them" (p, 307). While this thesis evidences that young children can co-construct knowledge through sharing their experiences and understandings of wellbeing, children's acts of resistance during the research process are also noteworthy. These acts of resistance and assertions of agency are essential to explore in relation to conducting participatory research with children, as they support us in understanding how young children conceptualise and experience their participation. It is also important not to gloss over the potentially challenging aspects of working with young children, and to recognise and value acts of resistance for what they tell us about children and

their experiences, rather than discount acts because they don't support the research question or aims. Devine (2002) asserts that it is important to recognise and interpret children's processes of reacting, resisting, and accommodating as this is how children construct their identities related to their own rights and status.

It is also important to connect children's resistance within the research process to children's wider experiences in a generationally ordered society. Alderson (2002) asserts that there are many instances and situations where young children exercise agency and exert power or persuasion over adults. Punch (2001) claims that children frequently negotiate and renegotiate adult imposed boundaries and the limits placed on them. When we consider that acts of resistance, challenge, and accommodation are frequent and pervasive experiences and expressions in the lives of young children, their presence within the research process may be a way of telling us that the research methods and protocols we are using are appropriate and meaningful for children. When children participate in these acts, it may be an indicator that they feel confident to exercise agency within the research process in the same ways they do in other aspects of their lives. Fattore et al. (2007) argues that imbuing children with the opportunities to choose and have choice allows them to assert their agency and self-identity, which should be an essential goal of participatory research with children. The emoji method and protocols used in this study offered children many opportunities to enact agency throughout the research process, including acts of accommodation, resistance, and control. An analysis of the ways in which children used (or chose not to use) the emoji during the research process informs current understandings of how young children engage in participatory research.

The findings in this thesis suggest that young children can and should be given opportunities to inform our understandings of childhood wellbeing, and that the barriers to young children's participation are not young children themselves. Rather, barriers lie in the erroneous assumptions about young children's capacity to co-construct knowledge, and a history of methods in child wellbeing research that are not appropriate for use in participatory research with young children. Between the two stages of this study, over 100 three-to-five-year-old children were able to offer novel insights and ideas about their experiences and understandings of their own wellbeing using the emoji. This demonstrates not only the capacity of young children to participate as co-researchers in wellbeing research, but also of emoji as a useful tool for conducting participatory wellbeing research with young children.

7.2.2 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis contributes new knowledge to the current state of the literature on young children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing by adding to the small number of studies which have investigated child wellbeing through children's perspectives. Analysis of the findings demonstrated that the inclusion of young children's voices offers a novel contribution to the literature through increased confidence in the validity of adult derived indicators. Of equal importance is the additional contribution young children's voices made to this study, and the wider literature, through the identification of two child-informed indicators of wellbeing. Indicators that had not yet been explored for young children and had continued to receive scant attention for older children.

These findings challenge the current status quo in childhood health and wellbeing research, where young children have been largely excluded from current constructions and operationalisations of child wellbeing, both implicitly and explicitly. The exclusion of young children from research on children and childhood is a phenomenon that continues to impact more than just health and wellbeing research. A systematic review by Zhang (2015) found that almost half of all published early childhood research in Australia and New Zealand from 2005-2015 did not include child-related data, and that a third of these articles did not find it necessary to offer a justification as to why young children's voices were excluded. This thesis offers evidence that young children can in fact contribute to knowledge and participate in child wellbeing research. However, an additional and related question that this thesis also sought to answer is whether it is important for young children's voices to be included in wellbeing research if they are in fact capable of doing so.

The UNCRC (1989) is resolute in its assertion that children have the right to have their voices heard in matters that affect them. The measurement of child wellbeing in Australia is widely used by policy makers to identify the need for and allocate funding to establish and sustain programs developed to support children's wellbeing. Because these processes do impact upon young children, young children have a right to have their voices included in the research that informs these policy decisions. Despite the continued wide-spread exclusion of young children, there has been growth in participatory research with older children and youth. Older children's inclusion in participatory research has been supported by claims that children's participation in society renders them more capable and involved citizens (Miller, 1997) and empowers them to develop a positive sense of self (Roberts 2002; Bruce 2005).

While these claims hold true for older children, younger children's capacities to engage meaningfully in wellbeing research have not been fully explored. Pascal and Bertram (2009) assert that claims

supporting older children's contributions are generally founded on the purpose of preparing older children for adulthood, not valuing the voices of children in their own right. The perspective that children's active engagement in research or social life is only to support their well-becoming negates children's experiences and influences on their 'here and now', where they are active citizens who have rights and responsibilities which they practice in their daily interactions with the world (Biesta, Lawy and Kelly 2008). Wall (2017) argues that despite an increasing number of researchers documenting young children's ability to contribute insightful and complex ideas and understandings when appropriate methods are used, research with young children continues to be underdeveloped. She states that while visual methods have been recognised as an important enabler for the inclusion of young children within participatory research processes, the "extent to which they truly allow the involvement of young children (and how young [a child] this extends to)" continues to be a crucial question (Wall, 2017, p. 318). However, If children's current wellbeing - not just their well-becoming - is in fact important, then we need to acknowledge that young children's engagement in matters that affect them is not only essential to our understanding of how young children perceive and experience the world, but just as importantly, that young children's active participation in social life works to support their wellbeing.

Child participants in both stages of the multi-stage research study reported in this thesis demonstrated that young children have complex and nuanced understandings of their own wellbeing, and that they can communicate this to each other and an adult researcher within a participatory research paradigm. In the field of child wellbeing and social indicator research where children and youths' perspectives are becoming more valued and sought after, this thesis has extended the literature by contributing to the inclusion of children as young as three years of age to the current knowledge of child wellbeing.

7.2.3 Contributions to Practice

Lastly, this thesis makes a significant contribution through the investigation of young children's accounts of wellbeing in relation to current child wellbeing frameworks and assessment tools. As such, the findings offer insight into whether current measures are meaningful and applicable to young children. The findings from the Stage 2 study extend our understanding of these child-identified indicators of child wellbeing during the transition to school. This is important for policy, given that child wellbeing continues to be key area of interest in relation to health and education policies in Australia, with many existing policy frameworks and reports committing to a focus on child wellbeing

through 2020 and beyond (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2018; Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2018; Council of Australian Governments, 2009).

The need to further our understanding of child wellbeing to better support young children is highlighted in the latest report on the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), a national assessment for children in their first year of school. The AEDC was completed again in 2018, as it has been every three years since 2009 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). While the AEDC has been instrumental in identifying areas of vulnerability for young children and where supports are needed, the latest AECD report shows that tool is showing fewer changes between data cycles with each subsequent data collection (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019), suggesting that a leveling off of sensitivity the of instrument is occurring. This appears to be especially true for the physical health and wellbeing domain, as it has remained the most stable across all data cycles, despite continued poor physical health and wellbeing outcomes for many Australian children, specifically for those in rural and remote areas, and those who are EAL/D learners or culturally and linguistically diverse (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). A finding of the systematic review (Chapter 2) was that the physical health and wellbeing domain of this instrument was identified as having the lowest internal consistency of the five domains (Janus et al. 2011). This, coupled with remaining questions about the discriminant validity of the physical health and wellbeing domain (Hymel et al., 2011), may shed light as to why there is a levelling off of the sensitivity of the instrument in its ability to accurately and comprehensively asses young children's health and wellbeing. As such, the parameters currently being used to assess young children's wellbeing with this tool, such as school absences, hunger, tiredness levels, and coordination (Janus & Offord, 2007), do not appear to give sufficient insight into young children's previous development and current health and wellbeing. This suggests that work needs to be done in rethinking the combination of indicators necessary to assess child health and wellbeing in more holistic and nuanced ways. Meisels (1999), suggests that if we want to capture children's 'readiness' for school (the goal of the AEDC and EDI), we need to use an 'interactionist approach', one which takes into account dimensions of children's biological, social, and environmental factors in its assessment of their readiness. The findings of this study suggest that young children's perspectives on their own wellbeing may serve as a mechanism for informing and refining our understanding of children's wellbeing by engaging with dimensions of the biological, social, and environmental factors that impact upon children previously unexamined.

There has been progress in relation to the refinement of the AEDC, EDI, and a suite of related population-based health assessments since this study's systematic review. Australian researchers who developed the AEDC tool from the Canadian Early Development Index (EDI) have been trialling

other assessments to support the identification of vulnerable Australian children to determine the allocation of supports and resources for children and families at risk. One such initiative was to test the linkage of 22 perinatal predictors of vulnerability with the AEDC data for 13,827 South Australian children to determine if child vulnerability could be predicted reliably earlier than school entry (Chittleborough, Searle, Smithers, Brinkman & Lynch (2016). They suggest that opportunities for screening and interventions to support young children beyond infancy but before school entry, such as preschool, be investigated further.

During this same period, building from the success of population-based measure such as the AEDC, an Australian Middle Childhood Survey[8] (MCS) of mental health and wellbeing was developed (Government of New South Wales, 2018). The MCS is a self-reported assessment of mental health and wellbeing that was piloted through administering the assessment to a cohort of 27,808 eleven-year-old children who had participated in the AEDC in 2009 (Laurens, Tzoumakis, Dean, Brinkman, Bore et al., (2017). The study by Laurens et al (2017) reported that an identified a strength of the MCS tool was that it provided access to children's perspectives of their own experiences, "which may be particularly important for phenomena that are less readily judged by other informants" (p. 13).

Recently, there has also been the development and publication of two child-reported questionnaires designed to provide "fast and simple assessments of global and emotional well-being" for children as young as six-years of age (Smees, Rinaldi & Simner, 2019). The study by Smees, Rinaldi and Simmer (2019) sought to investigate whether children as young as six-years-old could accurately report on their own wellbeing using a self-reported questionnaire, and whether a brief questionnaire could be sufficiently psychometrically robust. The findings provided evidence that children aged six years and older are able to accurately report their general wellbeing and that these self-reports are psychometrically robust. While these two questionnaires were limited in scope and did not include more subjective elements of wellbeing such as happiness, the findings add further evidence of younger children's abilities to engage in wellbeing assessments (Smees, Rinaldi & Simner, 2019) and the importance of them having the opportunity to do so. The continued developments (summarised above) in the child wellbeing literature for population-based wellbeing assessments, and prior to school assessments that include children's voices suggest that the findings from this thesis may provide useful methodological and conceptual support for thinking about how these gaps can be addressed. However, despite these advances, the challenge of including young children's voices at a population-based level remains daunting, especially given the underpinning of population-based

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[8] It is of note that despite the internationally accepted definition of early childhood is birth-to-eight-years of age, the MCS defines middle childhood as ages six-to-twelve.

measures such as the EDI and AEDC which were constructed on the assumption that young children are not capable of participating in such assessments. This thesis works to challenge assumptions about children and their capacity through investigating child wellbeing from an interdisciplinary approach that draws on understandings from health, education, and social policy to demonstrate how interdisciplinary work in the early years can be used to support the further development or extension of population-based health measures.

In this way, the emoji methodology employed by this study may extend current literature and thinking about what types of assessment are possible with young children, given the efficacy of emoji as a tool for children to share their experiences and understandings of wellbeing. As the MCS is a self-reported online survey, and emoji are a technology-based tool that young are comfortable working with, the findings of this study suggest that it may be possible to incorporate child-reported data into wellbeing assessments, even for younger, pre-literate children. As such, an emoji or technology based assessment that support young children in reporting on their own wellbeing could be a innovative addition to large scale population-based measures to both combat the 'leveling off' of the sensitivity of these measures, and give a more accurate and nuanced understandings of young children's wellbeing at the start of formal school.

Additionally, the findings of this thesis suggest that the inclusion of young children's voices and perspectives is not only necessary for ensuring children's rights, but that they may also serve to support the development of assessment measures that are more meaningful, holistic, and sensitive to the lived experiences of children. The creation of the MCS, however, has encouragingly demonstrated that children's voices are becoming more valued in population-based wellbeing measures and, given the successful administration of the instrument to almost 30,000 primary school children in South Australia, that it is indeed possible to do this work on a large scale. However, despite progress in including children's voices within the population-based assessment, children did not have input into the design or implementation of the MCS tool. Additionally, as it relates to this thesis, young children do pose different challenges than older children when it comes to participating in large scale surveys, as they are predominately pre-literate. This would also work towards the need to better support the wellbeing of children and families in Australia, as there continue to be very real areas of challenge, specifically around the wellbeing of children in disadvantaged populations, and in relation to child mental health (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2018; Redmond, Skattebol, Saunders, Lietz, Zizzo, G., et al., 2016). Incorporating young children's perspectives into wellbeing measures may also help to counter concerns about the cultural insensitivity of population-

based measures such as the AEDC (McCormack & Verdun, 2015), and better inform the development of policies, resources, and supports for children and families.

Another key finding in relation to the assessment of children's wellbeing during the transition to school evidenced in the data is the importance of when the wellbeing assessment takes place. Previously, the consensus in the literature surrounding young children's wellbeing during times of transitions was that children's experiences of transition can have a lasting impact on long term school success, future wellbeing, and self-esteem (Bronstrom, 2000; Dockett & Perry, 1999; Margetts, 2006). The study by Stephenson (2012) on child wellbeing during the transition to school, however, challenged this finding by documenting that even children who struggled at times during the transition process were found to be "well and functioning effectively in the school environment" (p. 216) by the end of their first year of school. The findings from this thesis largely corroborate Stephenson's findings, as by term two, eighteen of the children in this study were reporting high levels of wellbeing at school. Satriawan, one of the two children not reporting a high level of wellbeing, had missed the first term, and was thus still early in his post school transition process despite phase 2 data collection taking place in term two. Satriawan's experiences in relation to his wellbeing may also align with the experiences of children in Stephenson's study, as Satriawan's experiences of school may have changed significantly once he was more familiar with the rules and routines of school and had more time to make friends. The potential impact of when in the transition process children are assessed on wellbeing also suggests the need to carefully plan 'snapshot' assessment measures (such as the AEDC) for times that are sensitive to the experiences of young children. To do this, we need to know more about how children experience these transitions in relation to their own wellbeing. Children's further participation in child wellbeing research will be an invaluable contribution to the creation of further knowledge about how they experience wellbeing and if, when, and how it should be assessed.

A final practical contribution this thesis offers in relation to practice is insight into the impact of service integration on child wellbeing during the transition to school. This thesis offers, for the first time, empirical evidence (however limited) in relation to the efficacy of service integration for children transitioning to school in Australia. While service integration may offer a host of benefits for families and service providers, the findings from this study suggested that the impacts of service integration did not appear to be a significantly more supportive mechanism than other transition to school support processes currently employed in many South Australian schools. Given the movement of children and families across ECECS and schools in South Australia, due to both geographical relocation and increased choice in relation to school enrollment, this finding is important as it suggests that there

may be less expensive and less challenging solutions to supporting children's transition to school than service integration.

7.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

This study explored child wellbeing during the transition to school through engaging a diverse cohort of young children in participatory research grounded by a citizen-child approach, an approach that emphasises the importance and value of including the voices of those who are the subjects of research. As young children have been largely excluded from child wellbeing research, a strength of this research study is its reporting on the ability to co-construct wellbeing knowledge with young children, and with the finding that young children have important insights and contributions to share. Despite young children's meaningful participation within the research process, this research study did not meet the criteria of participatory action research (PAR), an approach to community based research, frequently used in the discipline of public health, which necessitates those being researched to be active participants throughout the research process (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). While this is a limitation of the study, finding a way to include young children's meaningful participation within research when PAR is not possible, is also arguably a strength of the study given that young children have been previously excluded due to this challenge. As outlined in Chapter 3, this study drew on the 'pockets of participation' approach advocated by Frank (2011), to ensure rigour within the study design and children's engagement in the research process.

The design and use of the emoji method employed in this study contributed to the positioning of children, rather than the researcher, as expert on their own wellbeing also contributes to the growing suite of tools and methods for conducting participatory research with children. A strength of the multi-stage nature of this research study is that it supported the development of the method from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the study, allowing for reflection and refinement of the method before and during the QLLR phase. This increased confidence in the method and the utility of using emoji for research with young children. However, a limitation in relation to this method is that while the child participants had a significant amount of agency in how they responded to, manipulated, and used emoji to share their experiences and understandings, they were limited in that emoji were the only materials made available to them. This limitation also reinforces the importance of recognising and attempting to limit the power differentials between researcher and participants in participatory research. While the emoji method was designed and refined to offer young children choice, control, and agency within the process, the fact that the materials were chosen without children's input may have limited their engagement. Stephenson (2012) suggests that choosing activities for children to support their

engagement in the research process may run the risk in inadvertently limiting the languages or modes they may have preferred to use and their capacity to share their thoughts. While some children in the study chose to use emoji in unique ways and supplement the research activity with belongings and resources available to them, this may have remained a limitation for these and other participants.

It is also important to acknowledge that there are challenges to conducting respectful and participatory research with any population, including adults. In their systematic review of participatory health research with children, Huang et al. (2016) argue that the principles and issues associated with conducting effective ethical research, such as recruiting, negotiating the consent, protecting the privacy, and building rapport remain regardless of population. As such, young children are one of many minority or vulnerable population groups which required deliberate and careful consideration when designing and facilitating participatory research. Yet, there are added complexities when working with children, such as having to work with 'gate keepers' (adults such as parents, schools, health services that must give permission to access child participants) and increased ethical concerns about the health, safety, and privacy of children (Huang et al. 2016).

A limitation of the study is the generalisability of the findings to different contexts and cohorts of children. Due to the contextually bound nature of childhood and how it is shaped by political, economic, cultural, and environmental contexts (Mayall, 2000), the findings of this study can only make claims in relation to the context in which it is situated. To mitigate this limitation, ECECS recruited to participate in the study where mapped across SES and service integration levels, to ensure that child participants came from a diverse range of SES backgrounds and service types. Given this effort in capturing diversity, a strength of the study is the diversity of the participating services in relation to the landscape of metro Adelaide children, families, and ECECS. However, a limitation of the study is in the number of participating children at each service type, and the final number of participants who completed both phases of the Stage 2 study (n=20). Despite originally planning phase 2 of Stage 2 with eight children (out of thirty-one) at a fully integrated service, only one child (out of the twenty who completed both phases) stayed within that integrated service during the transition to school. All other participants attended separate ECECS and primary schools. Despite this limitation, however, two other children's transitions to school were considered to fit in the no-to-low (highly integrated) transition category due to ECEC service-school partnerships. While this is a limitation in some regards, it also contributed to an interesting finding about how the mobility of families and how a two-tiered user choice education system may promote children and families changing ECECS and

schools more frequently. This is potentially an important contribution given the continued call for service integration in Australia. Overall, the sample size for this study was large enough to be classified as having a medium sized subject pool (Baker, Edwards, and Doidge, 2012) which, when further supplemented with participants observations, can be "extremely valuable and represent adequate numbers…for studying hidden or hard to access populations" (Baker, Edwards, and Doidge, 2012, pg. 9). As such, the size and diversity of the participants and service types does offer valuable insights to the research question and aims despite the above mentioned limitations.

A final limitation is that despite the citizen-child theoretical perspective employed in this research study, analysis of any data required me, the researcher, to interpret the knowledge shared by the participants. It must be recognised that researchers and other professionals who work with young children use conceptual tools and discourses available to us as adults when interacting with, responding to, and making meaning of what children share with us - tools and discourses which differ from those of children (Fleer, 2006). Given my background as an early childhood educator, I drew deeply from my experiences of working with young children and was very intentional in the way I worked to limit the use of adult understandings and conceptual tools in interpreting what children said. I did this by avoiding the introduction of my own ideas, judgements, or experiences in responding to children's ideas and stories. Instead, I simply repeated back what children said, and waited for them to affirm my understanding, or correct the information or emphasis if I did not understand it in the way that they did. However, it is impossible to guard against all possible researcher influences and the way in which adult conceptual tools are used in the analysis of data.

Despite the limitations recognised here, the thesis offers insights into young children's capacity and interest in engaging in participatory research, and further knowledge in relation to the current state of the literature on child wellbeing and service integration during children's transition to school.

7.4 Directions for Further Research

This thesis adds to the growing body of recent literature that young children are capable and important contributors to our knowledge about child wellbeing, and the inclusion of their voices offer important contributions to the state of the literature. Yet, wellbeing research *with* young children, including this study, has been relatively small scale. In this thesis I have worked to position young children's experiences and understandings of wellbeing in relation to large scale, population-based measures. However, further research is needed to determine the scalability of including young

children's voices in population-based measures. The findings of this thesis from a small scale qualitative study in addition to the creation and use of larger scale and population based quantitative assessments for middle aged children such as the Middle Childhood Survey (Laurens et al. 2017) and the child-reported questionnaires for emotional wellbeing (Smees, Rinaldi & Simner, 2019), suggests that investigating the use of mixed methods research for furthering our understanding of young children's wellbeing may be a fruitful avenue for further research. A mixed method approach may offer opportunities to integrate young children's voices and accounts with larger scale data collection approaches in ways that both serve to engage young children's voices meaningfully in the research process and capture a wide population base of children. This approach may support the further identification and implementation of policy and practice that is responsive to young children and meets the needs of children, families, and communities. This model for mixed method research with young children could also offer opportunities for childhood research beyond wellbeing and the transition to school.

Findings in relation to the child-identified indicators of play and agency also suggest that further research is needed to understand how children experience these concepts across transitions. The impact of technology play on children's overall understanding and experience of play is an unexpected finding in relation to the current play literature, warranting further investigation. Another unexpected finding in relation to children's agency literature, was how older children sometimes expressed displeasure about the amount or rules at schools, or about specific types of rules. This was in contrast to the findings reported in this thesis, where all participant accounts evidenced children's acceptance and support of the rules and routines at school. This suggests that further research on when children begin to perceive school rules as impacting negatively on their agency is warranted.

Finally, this research study has attempted to redress the well-recognised dearth of empirical evidence in relation to the efficacy of integrated services. While the findings of this thesis offer clear insights into how service integration was not a significant factor in relation to child wellbeing during the transition to school for participating children, the small scale nature of this study can only contribute to filling this gap, not redressing it. Further research in relation to the role of service integration on the wellbeing of children and families both broadly, and during the transition to school is needed, specifically in relation to children and families impacted by disadvantage, or who are new to Australia. Future research in this area will need to consider the criteria by which the efficacy of integrated services is assessed, as findings from this study and the wider literature indicate that children, their parents, and ECEC service providers experiences these structures differently.

7.5 Concluding Statement

Completing this thesis has afforded me the opportunity to investigate the questions I have wondered about in relation to young children and their wellbeing since the beginning of my teaching career thirteen years ago. These questions, guided by the systematic review of the literature that underpinned this research study, solidified into a research question and aims that I set out to address in undertaking this work. At the conclusion of this thesis, while there is still much work to be done, I sought to carefully investigate the question: *How can the inclusion of children's voices and children's understanding of their own wellbeing inform the current conceptualisations and assessment of child wellbeing during the transition to school?* and have contributed methodological, theoretical, and practical insights to the current state of knowledge on children, childhood, and children's wellbeing.

I feel, however, that the most important contribution of this research study is perhaps that it has provided a platform from which young children's voices in relation to their own wellbeing can be valued and heard. I hope that in completing this thesis, I have represented and honoured these children's significant contributions to the best of my ability and made a call for young children's continued and sustained engagement in child wellbeing research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Fane, J. (2019). Child wellbeing: Contested views. In Y. Andrew and J. Fane (Eds.) *The Sociology of Early Childhood: Young Children's Lives and Worlds.* New York, New York: Routledge.

Appendix 2

Mackenzie, C., MacDougall, C., Fane, J., & Gibbs, L. (2018, September). Using Emoji in Research with Children and Young People: Because We Can?. In *3rd World Conference on Qualitative Research* (Vol. 1).

Appendix 3

Fane, J., MacDougall, C., Jovanovic, J., Redmond, G., & Gibbs, L. (2018). Exploring the use of emoji as a visual research method for eliciting young children's voices in childhood research. *Early Child Development and Care*, *188*(3), 359-374.

Appendix 4

Fane, J. (2017a). Conducting a Qualitative Systematic Review of Interdisciplinary Research - Investigating Children's Health & Wellbeing during the Transition to School. *SAGE Research Methods Cases*, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473981089

Appendix 5

Fane, J. (2017b). Researching with Visual Methods: Eliciting Children's Voices in Child Wellbeing Research. *SAGE Research Methods Cases*, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473997844

Appendix 6

Fane, J. (2017c). Using emoji as a tool to support children's wellbeing from a strength-based approach. *Learning Communities Journal,* 21(Special Issue November 2017) pp. 96-107. https://doi.org/10.18793/LCJ2017.21.08

Appendix 7

Fane, J., MacDougall, C., Jovanovic, J., Redmond, G. & Gibbs, L. (2020). Preschool aged children's accounts of their own wellbeing: Are current indicators applicable? *Child Indicators Research.* DOI: 10.1007/s12187-020-09735-7

Appendix 8 Systematic Search PRISMA diagrams

Appendix 9 Data Extraction Table

Appendix 10 Child Health and Wellbeing Instruments

Appendix 11 Stage 1 Member Checking Storybook

Appendix 1 – Publication 1

Fane, J. (2019). Child wellbeing: Contested views. In Y. Andrew and J. Fane (Eds.) *The Sociology of Early Childhood: Young Children's Lives and Worlds.* New York, New York: Routledge.

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Appendix 2 – Publication 2

Mackenzie, C., MacDougall, C., Fane, J., & Gibbs, L. (2018, September). Using Emoji in Research
with Children and Young People: Because We Can?. In *3rd World Conference on Qualitative
Research* (Vol. 1).

Using Emoji in Research with Children and Young People: Because We Can?

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Abstract. Participatory and rights based research with children and young people emerged over the last few decades. The participatory tradition describes children as human beings with a right to participate in research on questions important to their lives. Visual methods such as drawing, mapping and photography have been adapted from positivist traditions in childhood research and from qualitative research in general. More recently, digital technology has been rapidly changing and expanding, affording a myriad of new possibilities for researchers. This paper considers the use of new technologies, specifically emoji, in conjunction with other visual methods such as video and digital interactive mapping, to improve participant engagement and interaction with the research topic in ways that are salient for children and young people. Using three case studies, the paper reports on the theoretical development, application and experiences of researchers using these technologies.

Keywords: interactive mapping; emoji; participatory; young people; children; qualitative methods.

1   Introduction to Participatory Research With Children and Visual Methods

It is not so long ago that children were predominantly subjects in research: studied but not heard, researched on but never with (Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller, 2005). Critical and progressive movements opened up new ways of understanding the broader phenomena of children and childhood and research could no longer uncritically adopt 'adultist' methodologies. Qualitative researchers were well placed to embrace these new approaches and drove fundamental change to involve children respectfully and ethically as legitimate social actors with agency. Participatory qualitative research strives for genuine consultation, participation with children as valued partners or even being in charge.

The Children's Rights movement added further impetus by articulating the need to involve children and to take seriously their views and perspectives, not as icing on a kindly research cake but as a fundamental human right. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child became an article of faith for many childhood researchers (summarised from MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018, pp. 618-619).

A recent review (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018) of the possibilities for visual methods in participatory research with children noted how children's health and social care were both changed by the observational documentary film work of James and Joyce Robertson comprising a harrowing account of the near mental destruction of a young girl who spent eight days in hospital for a minor operation (http://www.robertsonfilms.info). Despite the health establishment vilifying the film it was central to the landmark Platt Report in 1959 which shaped paediatric care until the present day.

Visual methods developed from film and photography to incorporate digital technology in the qualitative methods toolbox. Photovoice, or the closely-related photo-elicitation, involves researchers providing children with a camera to take photographs relevant to the research, taking care to minimize directions about what adults think is important. Researchers can ask children to provide a caption or description and there is usually a follow up interview or focus group encouraging children to discuss their photos, either in a free discussion or in response to prompts. The review authors expected visual methods to move with the digital times and embrace new concepts such as emoji (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018).

Emoji are a type of graphic symbol which express concepts and ideas pervasively used in mobile communication and social media (Novak, Smailović, Sluban, & Mozetič, 2015) . Emoji descended from the emoticon, a shorthand form of a facial expression created using a standard keyboard, for example :-). Rather than keyboard shorthand, an emoji is an ideogram which can be used to represent a facial expression, but has been co-opted to represent feelings, gestures, objects, animals, food and drink and activities which are all commonly used in electronic communication and social media (Novak et al., 2015).

In this paper we consider the use of new technologies, specifically emoji, in conjunction with other visual methods such as video and digital interactive mapping, to improve participant engagement and interaction with the research topic in ways that are salient for children and young people. Using three case studies, the paper reports on the theoretical development, application and experiences of researchers using these technologies as qualitative data collection methods in different contexts. We bring the studies together to suggest theoretical and practical possibilities for the use of emoji as an emerging visual method that could be used for qualitative data collection in diverse contexts. Each of the three studies obtained ethics approval from approved institutional ethics committees and relevant formal consent from all participants.

2 Three Studies Using Emoji

2.1 Emoji experimentation - Informing Research Planning

Authors 2 and 4's use of emoji started during the planning of structures to enable the participation of children in setting the research agenda of a research team at the University of Melbourne dedicated to right's based, participatory research with children. While the team's research and evaluation projects were invariably participatory, team members were seeking ways to involve children more broadly in priority setting.

Guidance from the literature about how to involve children at the higher levels of research planning is mixed (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018). The team decided to experiment by making a professionally produced video involving children in schools in which the researchers had conducted projects. The objective of the video was to ensure that the team's research remained relevant to contemporary Australia and would be informed by children's accounts of their interests and activities. There were five primary schools involved, located across Victoria including Melbourne, the coast and in regional and rural Victoria[1] (Jack Brockhoff Child Health and Wellbeing Research Program, 2017).

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[1] In Australia, the terms regional, rural and remote are used to define non-urban areas according to population size, distances between localities and access to services. For the purposes of this paper, *regional* refers to non-urban centres with a population over 25,000 and good access to services, *rural* refers to non-urban localities with a population fewer than 25,000 people and reduced access to services, whereas *remote* refers to areas with a population less than 5,000 people with restricted access to services (Roufeil & Battye, 2008).

The emoji option arose because in previous studies we had used a photo ordering method to stimulate discussions about playgrounds and physical activity in primary schools. That method was as follows:

The researcher leading the group discussion placed 17 A5-sized photographs on a table; these photographs were different from the photo documentation used to verify playground features. They represented a variety of situations and environments, e.g., families, school playgrounds, grass ovals, sports equipment, classrooms, lunch boxes, and chocolate fundraising. The researcher asked the children as a group to put them in order of what they considered the most healthy, down to the least healthy. Children simultaneously shared their thoughts, negotiated with each other, and discussed their reasons for the position in which they placed the photos. The first researcher used prompts and asked the children to clarify the reasons for their choices. The second researcher took notes of what was being discussed, in addition to the audiotape recording the session (Willenberg et al., 2010, p. 212).

We concluded that photo ordering added to our findings on the basis that it led to an unanticipated outcome of detailed discussion among the children about their perceptions of playground surfaces, design and equipment and stimulated discussion between children. This had the added benefit of reducing the power imbalance between the researcher and the children because the bulk of the discussion was between the children. In the decade since that study was conducted there have been rapid advances in technology rendering emoji commonplace in the lives of children. We resolved to experiment by asking whether the more contemporary emoji, used so extensively in young people's communication, would resonate with children's digitally native lives and prove effective in stimulating interest and discussion. We therefore designed the data collection for the video to include interviews and focus groups involving a mix of verbal discussion and responses to a range of enlarged laminated emoji and pictures of common objects on the table, and a child-led tour of their favourite places in the school grounds.

When we showed the final video to a range of people we received many comments about how the use of emoji sparked discussion, increased energy levels and provided more nuanced data than from focus groups or interviews. As a result we re-analysed the video comparing the children's engagement and accounts between conventional verbal methods and the use of emojis. Children were polite and engaged with verbal methods and provided descriptive information about their activities and preferences. Particularly in group settings, successive children often built on the accounts of those who started the conversation.

By contrast, the introduction of emoji stimulated an immediate change in body language with children sitting up, showing more emotion in their faces and speaking in more animated tones. They were more likely to turn their bodies towards other children when speaking and there was a noticeable increase in the to and fro of debate among children. Particularly evident were the differences in content of their accounts which, in response to emoji, were richer with reflections about emotions and feelings. One boy chose a smiley face to describe how he felt about his neighbourhood, saying *'on the holidays when I walk around see how people are kind and if anyone needs help they help you straight away without anyone telling them.'* This was particularly notable because he came from a migrant background and there had recently been anti-migrant debates getting a lot of coverage in the media. A girl chose a more indeterminate expression because '*I am forgetful and forget to do things I am asked to do.'* Rather than build on the accounts of preceding children, they were more likely to debate and draw out points of difference, often referring to the emoji and their statements as if to claim ownership of their accounts.

Children were also asked to select one of a number of pictures of objects and activities such as sport, a bicycle, a house, and a tree. The tree was chosen by one boy because '*I like nature and riding my bike and I like how trees go off in different directions.*' A girl's reason for choosing a tree was '*I like nature, I love trees because they make me feel calm.*' A picture of a computer prompted a boy to say '*I chose this because it reminds me of my aunty. We talk to her using Facetime because she lives in another country.*' One girl chose the image of a bicycle because '*I love riding my bike. I ride it up and down the driveway because I'm not allowed to ride to the park by myself.*'

Our conclusions were that emoji and pictures added interest and engagement and provided a window on emotions and feelings. As a result, we were confident that the method had promise and its effectiveness should be explored when a suitable research question arose.

2.2 Emoji as a Method - Wellbeing and Transition From Kindergarten to School

Having concluded that emoji were a promising tool for visual methods with children, for our next study Author 3 first reviewed the literature, then evaluated the processes and outcomes of using emoji to engage young children. She found that engaging young children in learning about and through digital technologies has become increasingly commonplace in early education and care environments as these technologies have become increasingly a part of children's lifeworlds. Digital literacy is the ability to use a range of technologies to find information, solve problems or complete tasks, and has been identified in Australia as a key educational outcome for all children (Department of Education and Training, 2015). Digital literacy has become an important component of our current conceptualisation of literacy, including the interpretation and use of symbols, icons, logos and multiple sign systems such as video clips (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2006).

Visual research has a strong link with technology, and new technologies can contribute to and inform our knowledge about social worlds and actors (Cipriani & Del Re, 2012). Emerging technologies have the potential to produce 'new, innovative, reflexive, and theoretically informed' research (Pink, 2003). As young children's voices have been largely excluded from child wellbeing research (J Fane, MacDougall, Redmond, Jovanovic, & Ward, 2016), the use of digital technologies may offer opportunities for children to participate in research in ways previously thought impractical or impossible. The increased focus on technology within curriculum and designs for learning in early childhood education (Marsh, 2005), supports the use of emoji as a research method for engaging young children in investigations of their experiences and understandings of wellbeing (see Jennifer Fane, MacDougall, Jovanovic, Redmond, & Gibbs, 2016).

Visual materials are not simply read as if they contain an internal meaning that the viewer can listen to (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015). Instead, interpreting visual materials requires attending to both internal (the image's content) and external narratives (the social contexts and relations within which the image is embedded at any moment of viewing) (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015). While emoji were selected by Author 3 due to their ability to engage children in thinking and explaining their understandings and experiences of emotions, as demonstrated in the first case study, the key strength of emoji as a research tool it that the interpretation, or external narrative, rests solely with the participant. As such, the use of emoji permitted the introduction of the research method with very limited instructions or ideas from the researcher, limiting the influence of the researcher or the research agenda on children's interpretation of the visual material.

The study involved 78 children (49 boys and 29 girls) aged three to five years across eight long day care centres in Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. The study commenced with multiple visits at each site to build relationships. The researcher (author 3) conducted 13 focus groups with four and nine children in each group. She started by explicitly stating to participants that adults need children

to explain to them what children know about feelings and emotions, and that these important ideas will be used to teach adults.

Emoji were the sole data collection tool, and were enlarged to 10cm by 10cm and laminated so they could be manipulated by children. Triplicates were used so that multiple children could choose the same emoji, facilitating children's engagement with their picture of choice. The researcher began each focus group by distributing five different emoji faces representing feelings through facial expressions to the child participants (see figure 1). Children were first asked to identify the feeling or emotion being portrayed by the five faces. The only verbal prompts given by the researcher was 'can you tell me what feelings you see?'. From this prompt, the children participating as co-researchers in this study generated 24 different feelings, emotions, and ideas. Of particular interest was the volume and diversity of the responses in relation to the more ambiguous straight mouthed emoji (see figure 1). Not only did the straight mouthed emoji garner the most ideas, it also facilitated the greatest amount of discussion between participants, generating disagreements and negotiations between children about their individual interpretations of the emoji.

Once children had shared all the ideas they wanted with the researcher, the researcher gave each focus group 13 other emoji pictures, chosen to represent common objects, environments, activities, or iconography that young children would be familiar with. Once child participants had the opportunity to explore the new emoji, they were asked to pick one and tell a story about the one they chose. The researcher engaged with every child's response throughout the interview, asking clarifying questions if the response was not understood by the researcher, and repeating the child's idea or story to ensure the researcher had correctly understood. The focus groups were concluded once all child participants had finished telling the researcher what they wanted to share.
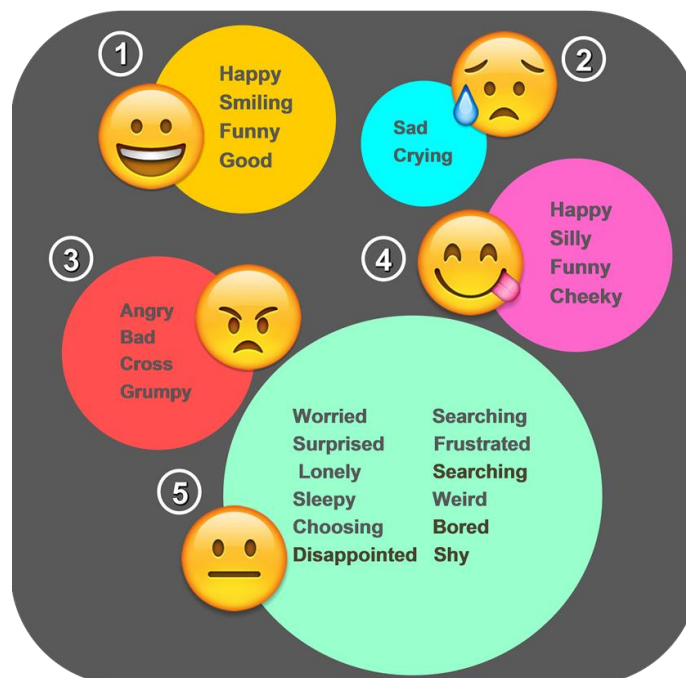
Figure 1. Ideas elicited by emoji (source, author 3)

2.3 Emoji and Apps – Using Emoji to Label Interactive Maps

The third use of emoji arose during a study in Adelaide, Australia using an ecological framework to chart the social networks of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds aged 13-21 years. This study involved testing another digital possibility: using tablet-based interactive mapping to describe and discuss the functions of social networks. Technological advances mean that we can now explore young people's everyday mobilities without needing to travel, hence the term virtual mobile methods (MacDougall and Darbyshire, 2018).

The rationale for using this method was that the lives of young refugees have been disrupted in space and time opening the possibility for multiple and transnational networks. Geographical mapping has been used by scholars from a broad range of disciplines to explore where young people go and how they interact with their environment in their everyday lives (Badland, Oliver, Duncan, & Schantz, 2011; Freeman, van Heezik, Stein, & Hand, 2016; Nansen et al., 2015). Generally, studies with young people using maps have been local (e.g. within a 5 km radius of their home and/or school), hard copy maps on which participants can add layers, for example marking places they like and places they do not like (Badland et al., 2011; Jung, 2015). Author 1 and her colleagues anticipated that social networks and the places that hold meaning for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds would very likely be transnational (Williams, 2006). Thus, they anticipated that hard copy maps would be too limiting for the study purposes.

Interactive mapping techniques have been used to explore young people's use of space, such as the Visualisation and Evaluation of Route Itineraries, Travel Destinations, and Activity Spaces (VERITAS) mapping system which utilises the Google Maps application in conjunction with interview/survey questions (Bhosale et al., 2017). In addition, a few studies have used Google Earth to explore the extent to which young people can use these systems and to investigate their mobility (Danby, Davidson, Ekberg, Breathnach, & Thorpe, 2016; Islam, Moore, & Cosco, 2016). VERITAS systems have mainly been used to understand where and how young people move through physical space, rather than exploring who they connect with by virtual or physical means (Chaix et al., 2012).

New digital technologies have to some extent democratised the realm of map literacy, which was historically accessible only to the wealthy and powerful (Gordon, Elwood, & Mitchell, 2016; Panek, 2015; Powell, 2010). Young people's map literacy and spatial awareness is evident in geographical studies which have shown they are able to interpret maps and can describe correctly their movements using maps (Badland et al., 2011; Jung, 2015). Nevertheless, there remains a digital divide, whereby the exposure to technology, including the use of personal computers, smart technology (e.g. smartphones and tablets) and access to the internet, remains inequitable across the social gradient (Alam & Imran, 2015; Newman, Biedrzycki, & Baum, 2012).

Prior to using this virtual mobile method, Author 1 piloted it with three young people (aged 14-17) who regularly undertook independent travel on public transport, which the researchers anticipated would be the experience of their study sample. Author 1 asked the pilot participants to drop pins (place markers) on places of importance or those where they spend substantial time (e.g. home, school, local park, friends' houses). She then asked participants to label their places, using stars (asterisks) to indicate how much they liked the places, with one asterisk meaning 'do not like'. One of the pilot participants immediately accessed the emoji keyboard option rather than using asterisks, providing a more extensive range of possibilities to signify their feelings about places. Author 1's experience was similar to Jung (2015), who had asked children to write and draw on hard copy maps places they liked and disliked, yet they chose to use smiley-face stickers. Author 1 therefore changed the study design to ask participants to use emoji to label places rather than asterisks to indicate their feelings about the places they selected (for an example, see figure 2).
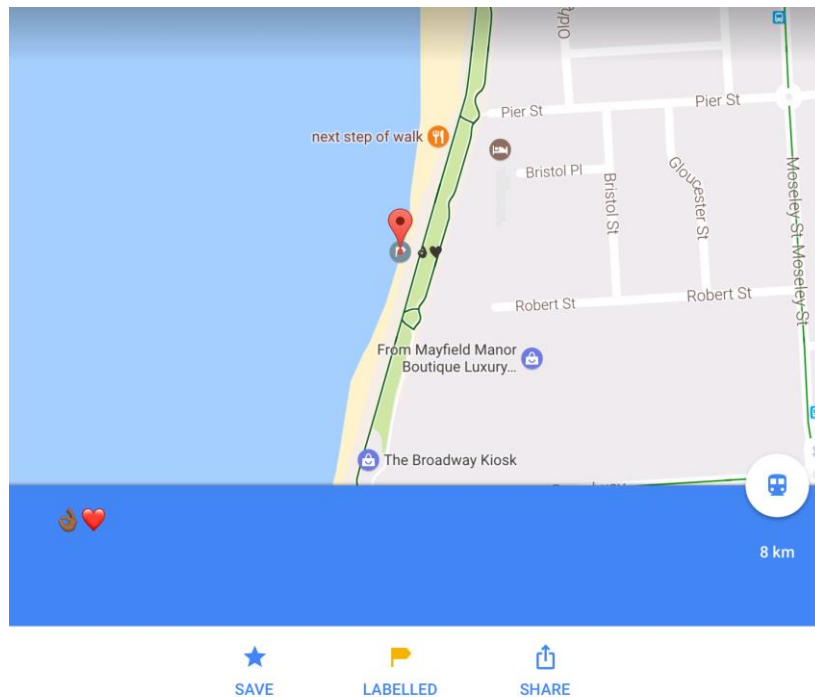
Figure 2. Using emoji to label feelings about places and the capacity to choose skin tone

Author 1 and colleagues conducted mapping interviews in groups of two or with individuals, depending on which they preferred, with each participant using an individual tablet. The researchers found that the first thing participants wanted to do was bring up street view and show the researchers their homes. One of the two-participant groups chose to start by locating their home village and town in Africa, immediately demonstrating the global possibilities of using web-based interactive maps. For all participants, this method provided space to talk about who lived there, who they were in regular contact with, how they travel around and who they travel with. Participants could lead the interview from their preferred start-place. One of the participants accessed the tablet dictation application to find places so that he did not need to type in addresses.

The participants used public transport extensively in their resettlement city, some with multiple connections to get from home to school or to visit friends, demonstrating the importance of time in daily life. Rather than drop a pin at their bus stop (which is what we had expected) participants used street view, taking us on a virtual journey from home to their bus stop, while describing how long the walk was, who they went with, how long each bus or train ride was and how long the overall journey would take. This lead to in-depth discussions that included the time they had to be at their bus stop/railway station to make all their connections, which was affected by how many people lived in their households, who they travelled with and what time they had to get up in the morning due to shared bathroom use.

The researchers continued the map-interview with prompts for participants to drop pins in their various places they went in their everyday lives, as well as how they travelled to those places. The researchers learnt that the participants lived far from the places they visited (including each other) which meant that using an interactive map was highly useful. Had they used a local area map, participants would not have been able to include all the places they go.

Toward the end of the interview, where participants had not already done so, the researchers asked participants to show them where they lived prior to arriving in Adelaide. Again, as soon as participants

found their places, they opened them in street view, or opened photos that were embedded in the maps. In this way, the interactive map platform provided opportunities for participants to discuss their (often harrowing) journeys to Australia, their transnational networks and ways of maintaining communication, in their own terms and at their own pace.

Whilst participants had no trouble using interactive maps to find places and use street view, we discovered that they required more assistance than the pilot participants with selecting the label function, locating emoji in the drop-down label box and saving their places. We sat with participants so they could seek our help finding and using the label function as needed. We found that using this technique, when the participants were satisfied that they had saved all their places, they spontaneously chose one of their saved labels and offered to describe why they chose that place and why those emoji. A function that smart technology keyboards allow for is to choose the skin colour that users prefer, which participants accessed without prompting (see figure 2). One of the participants also spontaneously showed us changes over time by including multiple emoji that represented how he felt at different time points, as he described below (see figure 3):

Do you want me to explain why I chose these labels?
[A1: yes please]
[This is my soccer club] I put the monkey hiding his face because when I first went there I was shy and then after a few days I was really happy and so I put a smiley face. And then after a few days I loved it. I met 3 Congolese which is good. […] I made friends with one Congolese guy because his mum picks him up and his mum is my auntie's friend and when she comes there sometimes she takes me home. Sometimes I go to their house. They have become my friends because of soccer (Zlatan, Congolese refugee background, 15 years).
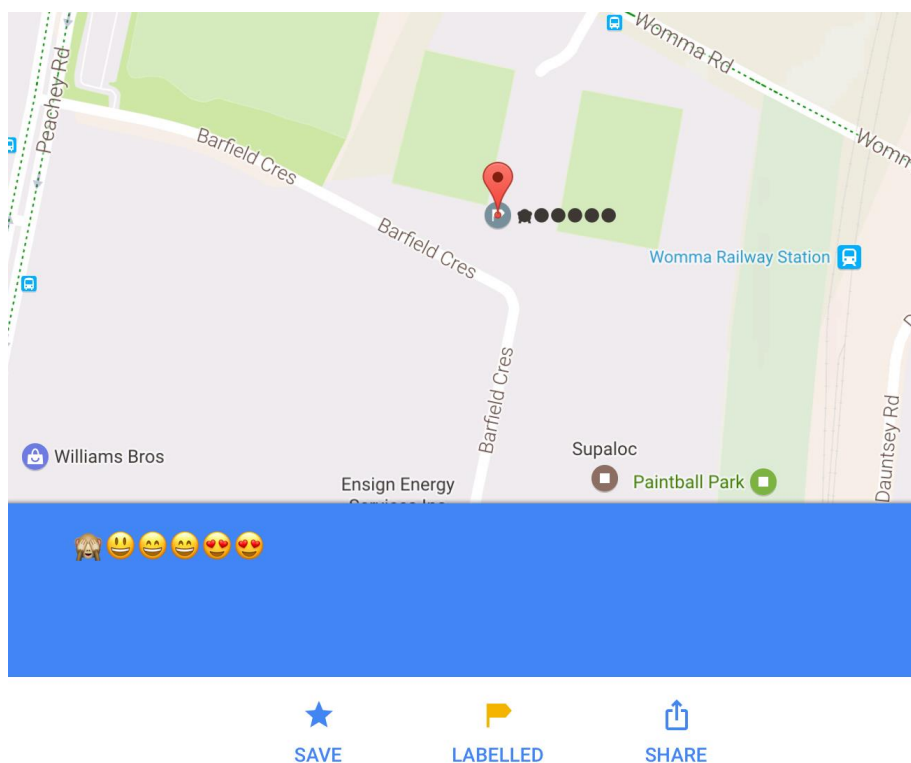
Figure 3. Using emoji to demonstrate changes over time (Source, Author 1, Google Maps)

Using this method meant that participants could show us their places in the order they preferred and that they could decide when and whether they talked about sensitive topics, illustrated by the same participant in his account below:

This is where I lived before Australia. It was [place] - it's actually a small country. [In the beginning I was really happy there but then place] was horrible because they were fighting because the President doesn't want to get out of power so there was a small war. They used guns, they killed people - it was horrible (Zlatan, Congolese refugee background, 15 years).

To summarise, Author 1 and colleagues found web-based interactive maps effective and appropriate for research with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and we contend that the method has the potential for broader application, for example in studies with any highly mobile populations (such as fly-in, fly-out workers) or those with transnational networks. The researchers also found that using emoji to label places provided a way for participants to provide rich descriptions of changes in how they felt about places and their associated networks over time that did not require high levels of spoken or written English language literacy. We therefore conclude that using web-based interactive maps and labelling with emoji, in conjunction with interviews, is a valuable addition to the qualitative researcher's toolbox (Darbyshire et al., 2005).

3   Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, the three studies demonstrate the contribution of methodological reflexivity to ensuring that methods made possible by advances in technology add analytical substance. Our reflections raise important points in the consideration of emoji as a fruitful methodological tool in rights based, participatory research with children. The first is that emoji is a tool that requires little instruction or front loading prior to use with participants. This helps the emancipatory aims of qualitative research with groups whose voices are largely excluded in the creation of knowledge because the traditional use of more structured questioning (such as in questionnaires and structured interviews). Traditional methods can serve to limit the responses and the autonomy children and young people have in sharing what they feel is important and relevant. Similarly, traditional methods may also exclude the experience of people who do not share the same first language of the researchers, or who may have difficulty in written or verbal literacy in that language. The limited need for researcher instructions and guidance in using and encouraging children and young people to interact with the emojis as a visual research method supported the positioning of children as meaning makers and knowledge generators through the limiting of adult voices within the research process.

The second key point is that while all the emoji allowed children and young people opportunities to interpret the internal and external narratives of the symbols in a variety of ways, the increased ambiguity of the symbol resulted in a greater amount of ideas, disagreement, and negotiations generated. As the number of emoji available for use on electronic devices continues to increase, as well as the diversity of the symbols available, opportunities to use emoji as a methodological tool across a variety of research disciplines and topics will continue to expand. Children and young people's engagement within the research process in this study indicated that the use of emoji did work to shift hierarchical power balances between the researcher and the young person and leave space for young study participants to determine what was important for the researcher to know, and enact control over their participation in the research process.

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Appendix 3 – Publication 3

Fane, J., MacDougall, C., Jovanovic, J., Redmond, G., & Gibbs, L. (2018). Exploring the use of emoji as a visual research method for eliciting young children's voices in childhood research. *Early Child Development and Care*, *188*(3), 359-374.

Appendix 4 – Publication 4

Fane, J. (2017a). Conducting a Qualitative Systematic Review of Interdisciplinary Research - Investigating Children's Health & Wellbeing during the Transition to School. *SAGE Research Methods Cases*, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473981089

SAGE researchmethods cases

Conducting a Qualitative Systematic Review of Interdisciplinary Research: Investigating Children's Health and Wellbeing During the Transition to School

Abstract

In 2014, I enrolled as a PhD candidate within the discipline of Public Health with the aspiration of conducting research on young children's health and wellbeing as they transition to school. Initial review of the literature on young children's health and wellbeing highlighted two key aspects of the field: (a) there is no shared or agreed upon definition of child health and wellbeing or how to measure or assess it, and (b) the field of child health and wellbeing crosses distinct disciplinary lines, specifically with the fields of health and education. During the initial review of the literature, it was clear that the interdisciplinary nature of the field would pose significant challenges for a systematic review of the literature. Vast theoretical and methodological differences spanning the education and health divide in early childhood research would require a review strategy that was rigorous, yet flexible enough to meet the complexities of this field.

This case study provides an account of how the Critical Interpretive Synthesis method was used to complete a systematic review of literature spanning across the disciplines of health and education. Specific attention is given to clearly outline the processes and challenges of the systematic review of diverse literature and systematic review protocols. This case outlines the step-by-step process used to undertake a rigorous systematic review of literature using the Critical Interpretive Synthesis method, and reflects on important considerations and challenges that were encountered throughout the process.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this case, students should be able to

- Understand the challenges of completing a systematic review across interdisciplinary research and diverse research methods
- Define and describe the process for completing a systematic review of literature using the critical interpretive synthesis (CIS) method
- Employ various methods described to complete a systematic review, or add rigor to a literature review

Research Context and Overview: Young Children's Health and Wellbeing During the Transition to School

In 2014, I enrolled as a PhD candidate in the discipline of Public Health to explore the ways in which young children's wellbeing during the transition to school is conceptualized, operationalized, and assessed. This interest stemmed from my previous work as a kindergarten teacher who supported the transition of up to 44 children each year, and my current work in early childhood and health teacher education. The transition to school is widely accepted as an ideal point in time to assess children's "school readiness," and is a contested, yet widely used, concept which seeks to measure areas of child development such as academic skills, social and emotional development, and health and wellbeing. Despite the interest and prevalent use of school readiness or developmental instruments internationally for assessing a wide range of development areas including elements of health and wellbeing, these concepts are rarely defined and have even less consensus. The lack of clarity around these terms and their use is also exacerbated by the range of disciplines with interests in child health and wellbeing, such as education, health, early childhood development, psychology, economics, and social and behavioral sciences. An initial review of the literature illuminated the complexities and diversities of this field in regards to both theoretical perspectives and

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research designs, making a review across interdisciplinary literature challenging.

To demonstrate my understanding of the field and rigor in the review of the current state of child health and wellbeing across the transition to school literature, I chose to complete a systematic review for my PhD thesis rather than a more traditional literature review. Coming from an early childhood education background where systematic reviews are rarely used, attempting to systematically review diverse and interdisciplinary literature was a daunting task. However, through preliminary search of systematic review methods, a systematic review framework that could accommodate diverse and interdisciplinary literature, the critical interpretive synthesis (CIS) method, was located. In 2014, I began what became a yearlong process of systematic searching, analysis, and critique of the current conceptualizations of children's health and wellbeing using the CIS method, culminating in the systematic review of the state of the literature is this area.

Throughout this case study, I will outline the step-by-step process taken in the systematic review of interdisciplinary literature, and considerations and processes that postgraduate students, early career researchers, or researchers new to systematic reviewing can employ in completing their own systematic reviews, or adding rigor to other literature review designs.

Systematic Review—A Brief Overview

The Cochrane Collaboration, a global network of independent researchers and professionals in health care, have produced rigid protocols for systematic reviews and maintain the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (Bero & Rennie, 1995). As defined in the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions, systematic reviews attempt to do two things: (a) seek to collate all evidence that fits pre-specified eligibility criteria in order to address a specific research question and (b) aim to minimize bias by using explicit, systematic methods which include transparent, procedural explanation of the search strategy, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and analysis of findings (Higgins & Green, 2011).

While systematic reviews of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are considered "gold standard" within the systematic review literature of disciplines such as medicine and health (Robinson & Dickersin, 2002), RCTs are inappropriate or improbable in many areas of health research. This has led to a wider variety of systematic review methods being used across health disciplines. Regardless of the area of research, a systematic review of the literature can be completed; however, the process will differ considering the field of literature and research area. To begin a systematic review, the first step is to ascertain the purpose of the review and the type of literature/research to be included. There are broadly two types of systematic reviews: aggregative reviews and interpretive reviews.

- *Aggregative reviews* are concerned with assembling and pooling data. They are summative in nature and use a defined research question and hypothesis to synthesize empirical studies considered to be "combinable." Aggregative reviews are used almost exclusively for the synthesis of quantitative research such as RCTs (Egger, 1997; Noblit & Hare, 1988).
- *Interpretive reviews* are concerned with a synthesis of research/literature that involves both induction and interpretation, allowing theories and concepts to emerge during the review. Interpretive reviews use a preliminary research question to guide the review; however, the research question may be further

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developed, refined, or refocused during the review process. Interpretive reviews are generally used for qualitative research. Rather than summarizing what is known, an interpretive review interprets and questions "what is known," treating the literature itself as an object of scrutiny (Dixon-Woods, Cavers, et al., 2006; Eisenhart, 1998).

Research Practicalities

When beginning this systematic review, preliminary scoping of literature surrounding the health and wellbeing of children as they transition to school was completed to uncover key ideas, theorists, key words, and databases for systematic searching. Such preliminary searches uncovered empirical research using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods; numerous editorials and commentaries; case studies; program and early intervention evaluation; reviews of the literature; and government documents—in other words, extremely diverse literature. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the field, and the diverse methodologies and theoretical underpinnings in the area of young children's health and wellbeing during the transition to school, an interpretive systematic review framework was chosen. An interpretive design was necessary to define an explicit and transparent process for combining and analyzing literature that, according to the criteria of an aggregative review, would not be "considered combinable."

In response to the challenges presented by the scoping searches, an interpretive review framework was sought which would allow for the synthesis of substantively disparate literature. However, methods for completing interpretive reviews have been less developed and remain a more complex and sometimes contested territory than aggregative reviews (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Despite these challenges, a variety of methods and frameworks have been published which demonstrate how interpretive reviews can use systematic and transparent protocols to produce rigorous reviews (e.g., see Dyba, Dingsoyr, & Hanssen, 2007; Popay, Rogers, & Williams, 1998; Popay et al., 2006; Thomas & Harden, 2008). Due to the complexity of creating a systematic search protocol and comparing and analyzing findings in an interpretive review, finding an existing framework to support the development and analysis of your review is a helpful and arguably necessary strategy for those new to systematic review. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the literature to be reviewed for this review, the CIS method created by Mary Dixon-Woods, Debbie Cavers, et al. (2006) was selected. Regardless of the systematic review framework chosen, the key tenet of a systematic review is that its processes are clearly defined, and continuously documented in order to ensure that the review is transparent and replicable.

Research Design—A Critical Interpretive Synthesis

The use of the CIS method allows for the production of a mid-range theoretical account of the evidence and existing theory that is neither too abstract (so as to lack applicability) nor too specific (that explanatory scope is limited). The CIS method positions a research question(s) as a compass rather than an anchor, where formative and guiding questions and outcomes are developed throughout the review process into an iteratively (continuously) defined research question. Uniquely, the CIS method offers an interpretive approach which can be applied to a "whole corpus of evidence (regardless of study type) included in a review" (Dixon-Woods, Bonas, et al., 2006, p. 2), a necessary consideration when attempting to complete a review that crosses the diverse nature of early child research and policy perspectives.

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In addition to a preliminary research question(s) acting as a compass rather than an anchor, and the ability to synthesize disparate forms of literature, the most distinctive characteristic of the CIS method is its goal of being critical. As the CIS method treats the literature itself as an object of scrutiny, a systematic review using this method questions the ways in which the literature "constructs its problematics" or the nature of the assumptions that underpin the literature, and the conclusions to which it has come (Dixon-Woods, Bonas, et al., 2006). In this way, the CIS method moves beyond a simple summary of the data reported to a more fundamental critique, allowing for the questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions, and disparity within multi-disciplinary literature.

The CIS method was used as a guiding framework to produce a mid-range account of the current conceptualizations and operationalizations of child health and wellbeing during the transition to school. The next section will outline step by step how this systematic review was completed using the CIS method.

Method in Action

Step 1—Formulating the Guiding Research Question and Identifying Outcomes

To begin the systematic review using the CIS method, a preliminary research question needs to be identified to act as a compass and guide the review. The preliminary research question for this review was

- How and in what ways do traditional (non-integrated) and integrated approaches to school transition impact and support early childhood health and wellbeing?

Primary and secondary outcomes are also identified as a way to add rigor to a review (Cochrane Collaboration, 2011). Outcomes were used to determine the scope of information that would be considered meaningful to the intended audience, yet not necessarily reported in individual studies, used to facilitate the screening of papers during the review process. The primary outcome was identified as

- How is health and wellbeing assessed during the transition to school?

Secondary outcomes were identified as:

- How do different transition models impact or support children and families?
- What are the different models of school transition?
- How can we measure/assess health and wellbeing across transition?
- How can child health and wellbeing be supported across transition?

The outcomes were chosen to move from descriptive questions, to ascertain the current state of the literature, through to normative questions to guide the critique of the literature. With the guiding research question and outcomes identified, the next step in the systematic review process, systematic searching, begins.

Step 2—Searching the Literature

As with all systematic reviews, the CIS method requires a transparent account of the search protocol and findings so that the process is reproducible. Structured, protocol-driven search strategies across electronic

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databases are a highly utilized and effective strategy for finding "comparable" papers during systematic review. However, relying only on electronic database searches can be limiting for a systematic review which attempts to cross multi-disciplinary and/or methodological divides (Dixon-Woods, Cavers, et al., 2006).

When completing a systematic review, thought needs to be given about what types of literature or documents are to be included. The CIS method illustrates how a multi-strategy search protocol can be used to locate relevant literature from a wide variety of sources. Following the CIS method, this review used diverse search strategies such as searching websites, combing reference lists, and contact with experts in addition to systematic database searching.

To begin systematic database searching, the first step is to identify relevant electronic databases, key words, and inclusion/exclusion criteria for the searches. This is done through preliminary scoping or searching of the literature. Through preliminary scoping, the following criteria were established to begin this review's systematic search protocol:

1. Electronic databases to search: ProQuest and Informit
2. Key words: ("early childhood") AND education AND (health OR well-being) AND ("transition to school") AND (childcare OR "integrated centres")
3. Additional criteria: peer-reviewed material from 1998 onwards

To document the process and findings of the systematic database searches, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) diagrams (a systematic searching tool) were used. Below (Figure 1) is the PRISMA diagram for the first systematic database search.

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Figure 1. Initial search of ProQuest database.
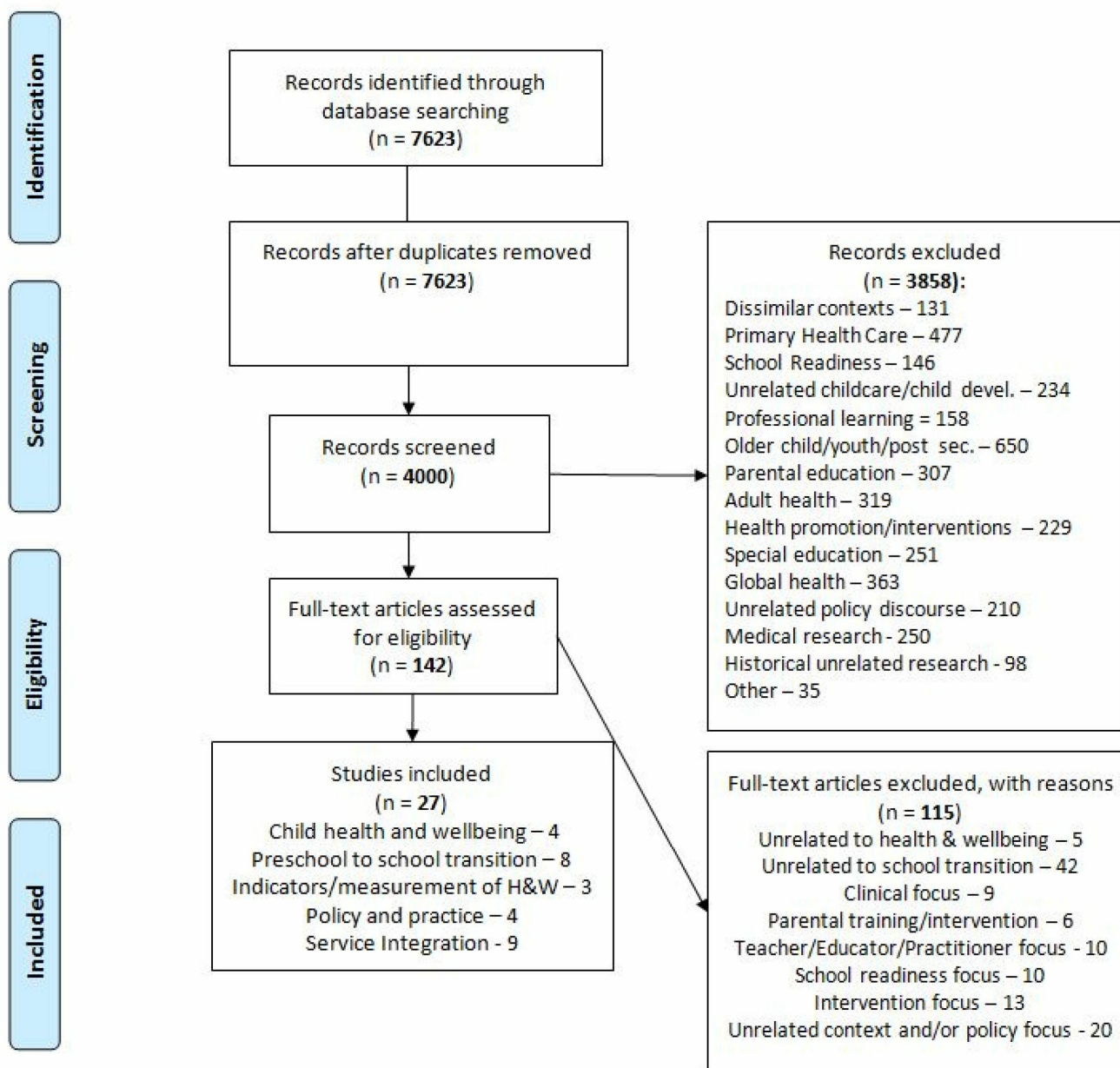
A PRISMA diagram is used to demonstrate the systematic search procedure in the most transparent way possible. As evidenced in Figure 1, the PRISMA diagram states the

1. Search strategy (key words and conclusion/exclusion criteria)
2. Number of records found (7623)
3. Number of records screened by title/abstract (4000)
4. Number of records excluded by title/abstract and why (3858)
5. Number of records screened by full text (142)
6. Number of records excluded after full text screening and why (115)
7. Number of records included and why (27)

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As the first database search identified 7623 records, it was apparent that the search terms were too broad. In response, a secondary search of the same database (ProQuest) was completed with narrower search criteria retrieving an additional 22 records (see the web resource section at the end of this case for the complete record of PRISMA diagrams used in this systematic review). Next, a search of the database INFORMIT (see link in web resource section) was completed retrieving nine records. After the initial three database searches, the included records were comprehensively catalogued and the reference lists of each of the included records were combed to identify further relevant papers and authors. From this process, another 43 records were identified and included.

While only two database searches were identified in the initial search protocol, it was clear from the 43 relevant papers found in reference list searching that further database searching was needed. To find where the gaps in the current search strategy may be, the 43 papers found through reference list searching were analyzed. Analysis of the 43 papers revealed a gap in the literature surrounding integrated services. To address this gap, a further systematic search for integrated services literature was conducted in INFORMIT (see web resource link). From this search, four relevant papers were also included.

Despite continued analysis of the 43 papers not found through initial database searches, there remained 10 papers for which a gap in the search strategy remained unidentifiable. To address this gap, two further searches were completed in the databases ERIC and Web of Science, selected due to their relevancy to the research question and outcomes. These searches yielded only three records, and after combing the remaining reference lists, only one additional record was found. As only one new record was found, it is reasonable to conclude that saturation, a subjective determination that new data will not provide any new information or insight (Creswell, 2002), can be assumed. As saturation was determined, systematic searching was concluded. In total, the systematic searches uncovered 109 papers relevant to this review (see Figure 2).

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Figure 2. Search protocol and included records.

Start of systematic search	**PROQUEST** initial search (7623 papers) secondary searches (1873 papers) **49 papers included**	**INFORMIT** initial search (253 papers) **9 papers included**
REFERENCE LISTS initial combing **43 papers included**	**INFORMIT** secondary search (68 papers) **4 papers included**	**ERIC** (188 papers) **3 papers included**
WEB of Social Science (63 papers) **0 papers included**	**REFERENCE LISTS** secondary combing **1 paper included**	**End of systematic search** **109 papers inlcuded**

Step 3—Sampling

Once saturation of the literature has been determined, sampling of the included records takes place to further refine the inclusion/exclusion criteria for the papers to be included in the systematic review. The role of sampling for interpretive reviews differs from aggregative reviews in the way in which the "field to be known" is constructed. While both types of reviews limit the number of papers to be included, interpretive reviews require both purposive sampling and theoretical sampling to develop the concepts and theories emerging from the analysis of the included literature (Dixon-Woods, Cavers, et al., 2006).

For this review, purposive sampling was used initially to select papers that were highly relevant to the research question and primary/secondary outcomes (109 records). Theoretical sampling was then used to remove papers identified as not of suitable quality or relevance to this review. Theoretical sampling may also include the addition of further papers through the other search mechanisms identified in the protocol, such as web searches, theses database searches, leading author/expert in the field searches, and so on.

Step 4—Determination of Quality

Determining the quality of the included records is an essential component of refining the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the review, regardless of review type. However, a measurement of what defines quality varies greatly between aggregative and interpretive reviews. Aggregative reviews generally define quality through a hierarchy of design methods (such as RCTs vs case-control studies) and structured quality checklists.

Conversely, interpretive reviews synthesizing a variety of research methods (such as quantitative, qualitative, reviews, commentary/theoretical papers) are faced with a variety of challenges in the determination of quality (Dixon-Woods, Cavers, et al., 2006).

As outlined in the CIS method, a two-pronged approach is used to determine quality. First, criteria were chosen for both quantitative and qualitative research studies to determine whether the primary papers (empirical studies) found through systematic searching were of appropriate quality to be included in the review. In this review, the following criteria were used:

- For quantitative studies, the PICO(T) framework was used to determine quality (Higgins & Green, 2011).
- For qualitative studies, the eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research (Tracy, 2010) were used.
- For mixed-methods studies, a mixture of the two criteria was used according to the data being evaluated.

Second, records needed to be evaluated by their relevance to the research question and outcomes. This is an important element of the CIS method creating

1. A critique of the assumption that any and all papers determined to fulfill criteria can contribute equally to a synthesis,
2. A focus on an "ongoing critical orientation" and critique of the literature rather than an attempt at a critical appraisal of un-combinable studies,
3. A way to assess the relevancy of both primary and secondary papers to determine their weighting in the review.

Weighting the papers in terms of rigor and relevancy is additionally an important element in interpretive reviews to ensure that the review accurately reflects the state of the literature. In this review, a grading system that allowed for the design of a weighting for a diverse range of literature (empirical research, re-analysis of empirical research, commentary and editorial work, and reports and policy documents) was sought. In this review, a four-point grading scale, proposed by Attree (2004), was used to achieve this result (see Table 1).

Table 1. Grading scale used for the review based on Attree's (2004) grading scale.

Grade	Criteria
A	Primary papers of rigorous quality with the highest level of relevancy to the research question/outcomes
B	Primary papers of rigorous quality relevant to the research question/outcomes
C	Secondary papers which provided useful information and demonstrated relevancy to the research question/outcomes
D	Papers that were excluded during the determination to quality process outlined above

The grading of papers facilitated the emergence of prominent themes during the iterative nature of the analysis. All papers underwent the above two-pronged approach to determining quality and relevancy. Of the 109 papers included at the end of the systematic searching, 54 were excluded leaving 57 papers included in the systematic review and undergo the next step in the systematic review process, data extraction.

Step 5—Data Extraction and Coding

A rigorous and transparent data extraction process was employed in this review. The purpose of data extraction is twofold. The first is to identify themes, theories, instruments, disagreements, and so on within the literature, and as a vehicle for scrutiny of the included papers. The second is to create the most transparent process possible for the analysis of the literature. A data extraction proforma was created to ensure that each paper underwent the same analysis process (see Table 2). The proforma was created in relation to the research questions and outcomes, such as the specific inclusion of instruments/measurement tools which was highly pertinent to this review.

Table 2. Data extraction proforma.

Details	Purpose/aims	Sample/method	Frameworks	Instruments	Key findings	Critical analysis
*Author/Year *Title *Country *Paper type *Grade *Key words	*Purpose of the research *What is the research aiming to learn, inform, or challenge	*Who is being researched? *Sample size *Methods used	*Theoretical or conceptual frameworks informing research	*Instruments of measurement tools employed	*Key findings according to author(s) *Key findings for the systematic review *Calls for further research	*Strengths and weaknesses of the paper *Underlying assumptions/positions employed by the author *Discrepancies in relation to the wider literature

Through the process of searching and creating inclusion criteria for the literature included in the review, the preliminary research questions were refined throughout the continued investigation of the literature. From this iterative process, the preliminary research question was developed into its final iteration which was used to guide the extraction of data. The finalized research question that guided the analysis and critique of the literature was

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- How can social indicators and socially critical ways of viewing health and education be used to inform practices and support the health and wellbeing of children transitioning to school?

During data extraction, each paper underwent a rigorous process which included thorough initial reading of papers, and the re-reading and re-evaluation of papers as themes emerged during iterative analysis (the complete data extraction table for this review can be viewed via a link to online supplementary materials). During this process, themes, categories, and discrepancies in the literature were analyzed and coded systematically and continually.

Coding is a process of using words or short phrases that "symbolically assign a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute" to a portion of data (Saldaña, 2012, p. 3). Through initial coding, re-reading, and re-inspection of the raw data (the included papers), and secondary coding of the information contained in the data extraction table, categories describing explicit segments of the data were created. Figure 3 outlines the initial and secondary codes identified, and how the analysis took "shape" through categorization of the findings. For further information on the creation of categories during the coding process, see Rossman and Rallis (2003).

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Figure 3. Data categories and codes.

Category: Family & Transition	
Code: PARENTS	Code: TRANSITION PRACTICES
Code: FAMILIES	Code: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Category: Integration	
Code: PARTNERSHIPSS	Code: INTEGRATED SERVICES
Code: INTERAGENCY	Code: SERVICE PROVIDERS

Category: Readiness	
Code: SCHOOL READINESS	Code: PRESCHOOL
Code: SKILLS	Code: SUCCESS

Category: Measurement/Assessment	
Code: MEASURMENT	Code: VALIDITY
Code: ASSESSMENT	Code: PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIEs

Category: Policy	
Code: NATIONAL/ INTERNATIONAL	Code: IMPLEMENTATION
Code: POLICY	Code: EVIDENCE BASED

Category: Health and Wellbeing	
Code: HEALTH	Code: WELL-BECOMING
Code: WELLBEING	Code: DEVELOPMENT

Category: Child Voice	
Code: VOICE	Code: METHODS
Code:PARTICIPATION	Code: EXCLUDED

Category: At Risk	
Code: SPECIAL NEEDS	Code: LOW SES
Code: INDIGENOUS	Code: NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING

Step 6—Conducting the Analysis

Through the recursive and reflexive processes employed in the revisiting, questioning, and problematization of the papers, early categories were further refined into seven prominent and distinct themes which formed

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the basis of the findings and discussion sections of the review. Rather than the explicit descriptions of data segments used to create the above categories, themes are phrases which describe more subtle and tacit processes uncovered in the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The seven finalized themes below were presented in order of prominence in the literature:

1. Conceptualizations of health and wellbeing for young children: Australia and internationally
2. The measurement of health and wellbeing of children transitioning to school
3. Parents and families as actors and agents in supporting the transition to school
4. Service Integration in early childhood education and care
5. School readiness and "ready schools" within the context of health and wellbeing
6. A focus on those most at risk during transition
7. The voice of the child in their own wellbeing

The distinctive characteristic of the CIS method is its movement beyond a summary of the data reported to a "more fundamental critique which may involve questioning taken for granted assumptions" (Dixon-Woods, Cavers, et al., 2006, p. 4). Thus, during analysis, application of the CIS method required going beyond a summary of thematic findings to a critique of the literature that is dynamic, recursive, and reflexive. Within each of the seven themes, a critique of the assumptions, perspectives, and contradictions were discussed. Contradictions within individual studies and the literature as a whole played a key role in the discussion section of the review. The discussion section was used to highlight three key findings of the systematic review:

1. The continued tension between pervasive developmental perspectives of wellbeing and the less frequent holistic (encompassing aspects such as personal and social needs) definitions found in the literature. This was a key finding as the literature as a whole made substantive claims that developmental views were no longer prominent within the current research and policy landscape. This finding demonstrated the need for further theoretical development of holistic indicators for child wellbeing, and questions whether it is appropriate for wellbeing to be positioned within current understandings of school readiness/transition.
2. Service integration continued to be a focus within the literature with the vast majority of included papers making claims of the positive impact of service integration on young children's health and wellbeing. Despite this focus, there is in fact scant empirical evidence to support these claims. Further empirical evidence is needed to substantiate, refute, or moderate claims of the efficacy and importance of service integration in the early years.
3. There continues to be a dearth of children's perspectives and understandings of their own wellbeing within current child wellbeing conceptualizations. This was evidenced in both the implicit and explicit positioning of children either incapable or unnecessary contributors to this field of research in the vast majority of included papers. This finding is important in light of substantive recognition for the need of those being researched to play an active role in the research process (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006), and three decades of research evidencing the capability of children to participate in the research process and the value this brings to childhood research (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Clark, 2005; Pascal & Bertram, 2009). This finding indicates that further investigation of children's perspectives on wellbeing

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can offer new insight into or necessary corroboration of current conceptualizations of child wellbeing.

The critical lens employed within the CIS approach formed the basis of the analysis of the systematic review, evidenced by the key findings discussed. It also served the secondary purpose of identifying gaps in current knowledge within this research area. As a chapter in my thesis, a clearly evidenced gap in current knowledge and according calls for further research were an essential element of the systematic review as they presented the rationale for my research project.

Step 7—Writing the Review

This systematic review formed the literature review chapter of my thesis. Whether completing a systematic review for a thesis or a journal article, the systematic review process is similar; however, the style and brevity with which it will be written will vary. While there is no one formula for writing an interpretive systematic review, they are generally written with the following (or similar) components:

1. Background/Introduction
2. Objective/Aims
3. Search Methods
4. Selection Criteria
5. Data Extraction/Data Collection
6. Analysis
7. Findings/Results
8. Discussion/Author's Conclusions

While the headings will vary depending on journal style or thesis formatting, headings that indicate the systematic search protocol and structure of the review are essential in clearly communicating the transparency, rigor, and value of your review to the reader.

Practical Lessons Learned

As my previous education and degrees were in the field of education, completing a systematic review (an uncommon style of literature review in education) was a challenging task. While I received guidance from my supervisors, and completed a large amount of independent research to identify systematic review processes and methods, the greatest lesson I learned was that while there are many different ways to complete a systematic review, the most important aspect is that the protocol that is chosen is *reasonable*, *explicit*, and *transparent*. This was helpful in the fact that it provided me with freedom to tailor a systematic review protocol to the challenges of my research field, but also gave me clear parameters of what was required.

Another important lesson learned from this process was the need to keep detailed documentation at every step of the process, and for every decision made. While the researcher has the license and agency to make decisions from a wide variety of methods and processes about a systematic review protocol, it is essential that this is clearly documented so that an independent researcher could complete the same process and come to similar findings.

Conclusions

A systematic review as the basis for my PhD research project was instrumental in providing me with detailed knowledge of the "state of the literature" in my research area. It also helped in imbuing me with confidence in regards to my understanding of the nature of field and previous research in this area. This experience greatly shaped and continues to guide my research process, playing an integral part in the design of my research question, aims, and methodology. While systematic review is not the only, or necessarily, best option for a review of the literature in a thesis, aspects of a systematic review such as a clear documentation and processes for evaluating and weighting literature can add rigor and demonstrate in-depth understanding within traditional literature reviews. As evidenced in this review, the CIS method is also a useful framework for researchers working in, or investigating, literature and research that span across disciplinary lines.

Exercises and Discussion Questions

1. What is the purpose of a systematic review and how does it differ from a literature review?
2. List two key points of difference between an aggregative and interpretive systematic review.
3. An important aspect of the critical interpretive synthesis (CIS) method is that it is iterative in nature. In your own words, define the concept of an iterative research design and give an example of how the iterative nature of this systematic review informed and/or guided the case study review protocol.
4. Think about a literature review you've done in the past, are currently working on, or about to begin. What aspects of systematic review could be incorporated into your work to demonstrate rigor in your review process?

Further Reading

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Web Resources

Link to PRISMA diagrams: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B57KznIMSKUdMzEtc25jV0UzR00/view?usp=sharing

Link to Data Extraction Table: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zBaC6nK_vi1kVOVMxy0NdOBRR7xLIiO_zO9pWZbBxfs/edit?usp=sharing

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Appendix 5 – Publication 5

Fane, J. (2017b). Researching with Visual Methods: Eliciting Children's Voices in Child Wellbeing Research. *SAGE Research Methods Cases*, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473997844

Researching With Visual Methods: Eliciting Children's Voices in Child Wellbeing Research

Abstract

In 2014, I enrolled in a doctoral program within the discipline of Public Health with the aspiration of conducting research on young children's wellbeing as they transition to school. In undertaking a systematic review of the literature on young children's health and wellbeing, it was evident that current conceptualizations of child wellbeing were derived almost exclusively from adult understandings, excluding the voices of children and how they understand and experience being well. This case provides an account of how visual methods were used within a child-centered research design to elicit children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing. Conducting research *with* children, rather than *on* children, presents many methodological challenges as hierarchical power relations between adults and children habitually operate to exclude children and their voices from matters that affect them. This case study elucidates the challenges of conducting child-centered research with young children, and how visual research methods set within a child-centered research design allows children's understandings and experiences to become "centre-stage" within the research process.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this case, students should be able to

- Articulate an argument for why including children's voices in childhood research is important
- Identify barriers and challenges for conducting child-centered research with children
- Examine and explain the role of visual methods within the research process

Project Overview and Context

A systematic review of the literature on children's wellbeing during the transition to school identified that current conceptualizations of child wellbeing were informed only by adult-derived understandings, excluding the understandings and experiences of young children. To address the gap in knowledge about child wellbeing deriving from the exclusion of children's voices, the research question became, "How can the inclusion of children's voices and children's understandings of their own wellbeing inform the current conceptualizations and assessment of child wellbeing during the transition to school?"

To investigate this research question, three key aims were identified for the research study:

1. Ascertain how young children conceptualize being well;
2. Use child-identified indicators of wellbeing to explore previously unmeasured facets of child

wellbeing from children's perspectives as they transition to school;

3.Explore how organizational structures, transition practices, and collaboration between preschool and school settings impact upon child wellbeing during the transition to school.

Due to the first aim being an essential component for investigating Aims 2 and 3, my PhD research study was divided into two phases. The first was a preliminary study which sought to elicit children's understandings and experiences of being well to create child identified indicators of wellbeing, and a secondary longitudinal study which would track children's transition to school using these indicators.

The study's focus on children's perspectives of wellbeing rather than studying children's wellbeing in relation to adult derived indicators was informed by child right's discourses stemming from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989). Since the UNCRC, there has been increasing calls from researchers and disciplines working within childhood studies to move from research *on* children to research *with* children—research where children's experiences and understandings are sought and valued (Christensen & Prout, 2002; Corsaro, 2005; Mayall, 2008). However, despite widespread recognition that children's active participation in the research process is essential, the "how to" remains far from straightforward and continues to pose theoretical and methodological challenges for researchers conducting research with children (Clark, 2011; Fraser, 2004; Punch, 2002). While there are many theoretical and methodological challenges researchers may grapple with in conducting child-centered research, dependent on the research question and child cohort, some questions or challenges may include

- What aspects of the research process are children included in (i.e., design, data collection, analysis)?
- Are children positioned as active or passive participants in the research process?
- Are children's voices weighted equally with adult voices in the research process?
- Are children speaking for themselves, or are they being spoken for?
- Will the researcher be able to interpret children's voices with credibility and veracity?
- Does the researcher have the necessary background knowledge and experience to work with children in a child-centered design?

Conducting research *with* children requires the researcher and research process to position children as the knowers and framers of knowledge, not objects of scrutiny. The belief that children are experts in their own experiences and understandings and whose voices should be heard and taken into account is referred to as "child voice." The concept of child voice is underpinned by the belief that children have both the capacity to actively contribute to

research, and the right to do so (Cook & Hess, 2007; Thomson, 2009). While childhood research seeks to inform what we know about children, children's largely excluded status from current knowledge about children and childhood continues to privilege adult knowledge and understandings while silencing those of children. The concept of child-centered research *with* children seeks to redress this exclusion, using approaches which attempt to give children increased control during the research process and generation of knowledge. This includes the use of methods which are "in tune with children's ways of seeing and relating to their world" (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998, p. 337).

This case study reports on the methodology that underpinned the preliminary research study, specifically, the use of visual research methods to elicit young children's understandings and experiences of their own wellbeing within the research process.

Research Design

An essential aspect of designing the preliminary study was to ensure that the research design and methods used positioned children as active and equal participants within the research process. To support this process, visual research methods were selected due to their ability to limit researcher input and allow space for children to identify what they feel is important to communicate to the researcher about "being well."

The use of visual materials in the research process stems from the sub-discipline of Visual Sociology and is grounded in the idea that "valid scientific insight can be acquired by observing, analysing, and theorising its visuals manifestations" (Pauwels, 2010, p. 546). Visual materials used within the research process can be either found materials (materials selected by the researcher for their use), or materials generated by participants during the research process (Drew & Guillemin, 2014). As found materials are not created with the researcher's intent in mind, their utility as a research tool is only as useful as their purposeful selection in regards to both the research question and the participant cohort. In this study, my participant cohort was 3- to 5-year-old children, and my aim was to limit adult perspectives and elicit children's voices. This necessitated the careful selection of found visual materials that would enable children to negotiate and renegotiate the meaning of the visual material as a means of sharing how they experience and understand being well.

Visual research methods such as drawing, photographs, videography, modeling clay, drama and puppets have become widely used in child-centered research with young children (Clark, 2011; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Lipponen, Rajala, Hilppö, & Paananen, 2015). However, the use of visual materials in research methods also includes the study of the role that semiotics

(sign/symbol systems) play in conveying meaning in societies, and their ubiquitous, complex, and evolving use (Emmison & Smith, 2000; Harper, 1998; Harrison, 2002). Visual research methods have a strong link with technology, and researchers working with visual materials have continued to explore the use of new technologies to inform our knowledge about social actors and worlds (Cipriani & Del Re, 2012). As emerging technologies change the way societies and individuals use, create, and share sign and symbol systems, they have the potential to produce "new, innovative, reflexive, and theoretically informed" (Pink, 2003), visual materials which may have potential for use as a visual research method. As the exploration and engagement with technologies and digital literacies becomes increasingly common place in early education and care environments, these new types of literacies, such as interpreting and responding to symbols, icons, and logos, have been combined with more traditional forms of literacies such as reading, writing, and speaking and are known as multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). With the increased focus of technology and digital forms of literacy in early-years policy, curriculum, and practice, the concept of multiliteracies may offer fertile grounds for selecting new types of visual materials for use in for research with young children.

In choosing a found visual material to form the basis of a child-centered visual research method with 3- to 5-year-old children, careful attention was paid to choosing a visual material that children would be familiar and/or comfortable with, and that would allow for limited research input or instruction so that children were able to express their ideas and understandings with minimum guidance from the researcher. Knowing children's increased exposure to multiliteracies in early learning and care, school and home environments, emojis, a technology-based symbol system widely used in digital and social media communication, was selected as a relevant and innovative visual material for child-centered visual research.

"Method" in Action

The emojis displayed in Figure 1 were used as the visual materials within the preliminary study. Emojis were used as the sole data collection tool and were modified for use with young children by enlarging them to 10 cm × 10 cm and laminating them so they could be manipulated by children. Triplicates of each emoji were used within focus group interviews so that multiple children could choose the same emoji if they wanted, facilitating children's engagement with their picture of choice.

Figure 1. Emojis used in the research study.

Participants

Participants were 78 children (49 boys and 29 girls) aged 3-5 years across eight long day care centers in Adelaide, South Australia. The eight centers were chosen to represent a theoretical sample of the diversity South Australian Early Childhood Education and Care Services (ECECS) for preschool-aged children in relation to socio-economic status and site type (i.e., standalone long day care center or integrated long day care center and primary school).

Ethics

Ethical research with young children is facilitated by a multi-step procedure for ensuring that both the research design and protocols are suitable, reasonable, and prioritize the safety and security of child participants. This study's research ethics protocol was as follows:

1. Ethics approval for the study was sought and granted by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at my university.
2. Written consent to conduct research within early childhood education and care sites was obtained from center directors.
3. All parents of preschool-aged children attending each of the eight sites were given written information about the study and asked to sign a consent form if they gave permission for their child to participate in audio-recorded focus groups.
4. Children whose parents had signed a permission form were asked to give their assent to

participate and have their ideas recorded. When I asked for children's assent, I clearly explained what the research activity would entail, and took into account both verbal and non-verbal cues to ensure children did or did not assent to the research, and had any questions about the process answered.

Procedure

To facilitate young children's interaction with the emojis, visual research methods were combined with the use of focus groups. A total of 13 focus groups were held across the eight early learning and care sites, each containing myself, the researcher, and four to nine children. Child focus groups were used in conjunction with visual research methods to facilitate and encourage group interaction, which can yield further insight through supporting children in trying out new ways of thinking (Ronen, Rosenbaum, Law, & Streiner, 2001). The length of the focus group varied from 12 to 21 min, dependent on children's participation, comfort, and interest. During the focus groups, the children and I were seated on the floor in a circle. I started the focus group by explicitly stating to participants that adults need children to explain to them what children know about feelings and emotions, and that these important ideas will be used to teach adults. This positioning of children as experts, with both language and seating, within the research process was an important part of challenging and dismantling the hierarchical arrangements that elevate the views and understandings of adults over children.

I began by giving child participants five different emojis representing feelings through facial expressions (Emojis 1-5 in Figure 1). Children were first asked to identify the feeling or emotion being portrayed by the five faces. Next, children were asked to pick one of the emojis and tell a story about why someone might feel that way. The idea of storytelling was used to give children opportunities to share personal feelings without having to identify themselves as the person feeling the emotion, or to be able to try out or express new ideas. Once children had shared all the ideas they wanted, I gave each focus group 13 other emoji pictures, chosen to represent common objects, environments, activities, or iconography that young children would be familiar with (emojis 6-18 in Figure 1). Once child participants had the opportunity to explore the new emojis, they were asked to pick one and tell a story about the one they chose.

During the focus groups, I was careful to engage equally with all children by ensuring that each child had a chance to speak and contribute, if they chose to do so, before asking children who had shared ideas if they wanted to share more. This was difficult to manage at times as some children would frequently try to interrupt or speak over other children. However, explaining to children that I did want to hear their ideas but was listening to their peer at the moment helped to remind them that participating in the focus group required them to listen

actively to the contributions of others. This facilitation on my part worked to ensure that all children's voices, not just the dominants ones, were heard.

When listening to children, I engaged with every child's response throughout the focus group and repeated back what each child said to ensure I understood correctly. I also asked clarifying questions if I did not initially understand the response. The focus groups were concluded once all child participants had finished telling me what they wanted to share. Detailed field notes of the focus groups and previous site visits were recorded, and all focus groups were audio-recorded. The audio-recordings were transcribed verbatim and included additional contextual information from the recorded field notes. A directed content analysis, an approach to qualitative content analysis deriving from relevant theory or research findings within the greater literature of the phenomena under study (a priori analysis), was used to analyze the focus group transcripts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Member Checking in Participant-Centered Research

It is important to note that ontological orientation of the study steadfastly adhered to a rights-based approach which sought to uphold children's right to participation and being heard about issues that affect them. However, it must be noted that even within this approach, the analysis of data required myself (an adult) to interpret the knowledge and ideas shared and generated by children. As such, it must be recognized that researchers and other professionals who work with young children use conceptual tools and discourses available to us as adults when interacting with, responding to, and making meaning of what children share with us—tools and discourses which differ from those of children (Fleer, 2006). As a key aim of this research study was to elicit children's voices in child wellbeing, I needed to know whether my interpretation of the children's experiences and understandings was correct. This is where the role of member checking comes in.

Member checking is the process in which a researcher takes the findings (interpretation of data) back to the participants, or a similar sample of participants, to check aspects of the study such as whether description is complete, themes are accurate, and interpretations are fair and representative (Creswell, 2002). The visual materials which children engaged with within the focus groups were also used for member checking the analysis of data.

To ensure that children's voices were correctly interpreted, a member checking process was used. As 3- to 5-year-old children are generally unable to read, presenting the findings of the focus groups back to children for them to member check posed a challenge. To overcome this challenge, I created visual material, in the form of a storybook (see web resources), to present my analysis of their ideas back to 3- to 5-year-old children who agreed to take part in the

member checking process. To do this, I re-visited each of the eight sites and asked attending 3- to 5-year-old children whether they would like to read a story with me that I created from their ideas. As I read the storybook, I asked children for feedback and clarification as to whether the ideas in the book represented their experiences and/or understandings, and whether anything was missing. The vast majority of 3- to 5-year-old children who were asked to participate in the member checking process were eager to do so, and shared their ideas and feelings throughout the reading of the story, and afterward when I asked them whether they had other ideas that had not been included. Through this process, along with blind coding of the transcripts by my supervisory team, it was determined that the findings of the preliminary study were trustworthy, a concept outlined by Guba (1981) as credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable, from both child and interdisciplinary perspectives.

Practical Lessons Learned

Designing a research study and trying out a new and innovative visual material has taught me more lessons than I can count. However, the two most practical and important lessons I learned throughout my use of child-centered visual research methods are described in detail below.

Support Peer Interaction

Using a focus group format of up to nine young children who were eager to share their ideas required a concerted effort from me to support children in taking turns and ensuring that all children had equal opportunity to be heard. This presented a challenge when wanting to support children's interaction with each other during the focus groups (a child-centered process), to avoid children solely interacting with the researcher (a researcher centered process). As the intention of using a child-centered method was to obfuscate the power of the researcher in controlling the research process, careful attention needed to be paid to ensure that the focus group environment encouraged different and/or contradictory ideas. Throughout the focus groups, a key strategy I used to overcome the potential for the research process to become researcher centered, or for only dominant child voices to be heard, was to encourage discussion between children and to reinforce the idea that there can be many different answers. To do this, I used questions and phrases such as

- Does anyone else have an idea or story about this emoji?
- That's an interesting idea/story. Can you tell me more about it?
- That idea is different to yours isn't it? I really like all the different ideas you have.

By using this language and reinforcing the idea that children could share ideas with each other and disagree, the focus groups contained many instances where children built on from ideas

shared by their peers. This was beneficial in terms of helping children who struggled with the concept of storytelling, as they could use language modeled by their peers and add their own ideas to it. It also supported children in using different ideas or stories for the same emojis. Using questions and statements that supported the idea that there are no right or wrong answers also encouraged divergent views, where participants freely expressed disagreement with what their peers shared. Moving the focus from children's interaction with the researcher to children's interaction with each other generated new ideas and information. This supported all children's voices in being heard, a central tenet to child-centered research.

Checking Back

Empowering children to take an active role in the research process required their voices to be not only heard, but interpreted correctly. However, between the often noisy and sometimes chaotic environments of early learning and care sites, and young children's frequent propensity to speak quietly, it was frequently challenging to hear what children were saying. To navigate this challenge, I used a "check back" mechanism which involved repeating what each child said to ensure that the idea or story was understood correctly. In many instances, I did not understand correctly what the child was saying in the first instance, so checking back was essential to ensure I correctly responded to their story, idea, or question. Using a check back mechanism also gave children the opportunity to correct me when needed. Across the 13 focus groups, there were over 15 incidents where a child(ren) corrected my understanding of what they had said, or corrected the emphasis of their story. The check back mechanism then acted as both a tool for correcting misunderstandings, but also as a gauge of children's confidence in asserting their role as equal partners in the research process and taking control of how their voices were heard and understood.

Conclusion—A Reflection on the Method

Reflecting on children's engagement in the research process and the findings from the data, I found the use of emojis as a visual material a valuable tool in child-centered visual research with children. While there were many examples of this documented both in field notes and in the data, two key examples of this were as follows:

- As per the research protocol, very little input was needed from the researcher to engage children in manipulating the emojis and sharing their ideas and experiences through storytelling. For example, the five facial emojis alone (Emojis 1-5 in Figure 1) generated over 24 ideas about feelings and emotions. Children's ability to engage with the emojis with limited instructions and information from the researcher facilitated children exercising agency and control within the research process, giving them the ability to dictate what

information they deemed was important to contribute to, and share with the group.

- Analysis of children's understandings and experiences of "being well" generated through the use of emojis contributed to an increased understanding of child wellbeing in two important ways. The first is that the data increased confidence in currently used adult-identified domains of wellbeing, as these domains were also identified by children within the focus groups. Second, in addition to adding confidence to current adult derived operationalized domains of child wellbeing, children identified two additional domains currently left unexplored: *opportunities for play* and *feelings of agency and control*.

This study sought to position children as the knowers and framers of knowledge to understand how young children understand and experience wellbeing. Evidence of children exerting agency and control within the research process, children's confirmation of existing knowledge, and the generation of new knowledge suggests the efficacy of emojis for facilitating child-centered research with children. It is important to acknowledge that visual research methods, including emojis, do not in and of themselves present solutions to the complex methodological and theoretical challenges of conducting childhood research with young children. However, their use within an ontological framework that positions children as capable and necessary contributors to knowledge of childhood can contribute to negotiating the shift of power and control from researcher to participants, thus supporting children's voices in being heard, being authentically captured, and being used to inform matters that affect them.

Exercises and Discussion Questions

1. In the case study, I use the phrase "research *with* children, rather than *on* children." What are some key distinctions of this approach?
2. I chose to use emojis as a found visual material for use as a visual research method. What other visual material(s), either found or created during the research process, could have been used with my participant group to explore their understandings and experience of being well.
3. When describing the procedure for obtaining ethical approval for this study, both consent and assent are mentioned. What is the difference between these two concepts, and why is assent important in child-centered research?
4. The case study highlights a variety of design, procedural, and reflexive processes used to ensure that the research process was child-centered, rather than researcher centered. List the key processes that reflect a child-centered approach with the case.

Further Reading

Child-Centered Research With Children

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Web Resources

PDF copy of the storybook created for member checking: https://drive.google.com/drive/my-drive?ths=true

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Appendix 6 – Publication 6

Fane, J. (2017c). Using emoji as a tool to support children's wellbeing from a strength-based approach. *Learning Communities Journal,* 21(Special Issue November 2017) pp. 96-107. https://doi.org/10.18793/LCJ2017.21.08

Using emoji as a tool to support child wellbeing from a strengths-based approach

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Keywords: emoji, children, child wellbeing, strength-based approach, child-centred research

Abstract

The assessment, measurement, and support of child wellbeing has garnered a substantive amount of research due to its widespread acceptance as the foundation of healthy development and future health and wellbeing. Despite this sustained interest, current understandings have derived almost exclusively from adult conceptualisations of wellbeing, contributing to the implicit and explicit exclusion of children's voices in child wellbeing research, policy, and practice. This has resulted in a fundamentally deficit view of children in relation to their health and wellbeing, where child health and wellbeing are benchmarked along developmental trajectories relating largely to skills and school readiness. Despite the pervasiveness of developmental perspectives of health and wellbeing in childhood, however, both national curricula, the Early Years Learning Framework (birth-to-five years of age) and the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education learning area (AC:HPE) (foundation to year 10) (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) highlight the need for children to be active and engaged participants in their own and others' wellbeing, and position children as beings who bring with them personal, relational, and community strengths and assets. This paper reports on a study that used emoji as a child-centred method for eliciting young children's (n=78) perspectives of their own wellbeing. The findings of the study suggest that a range of young children are able to articulate their own understandings and experiences of wellbeing using emoji, and the value of this tool as a strengths-based approach for meeting curricular outcomes and supporting child wellbeing. This paper provides a rationale for the use of child-centred tools to re-position child wellbeing from a deficit to a strengths-based approach through the facilitation of children's exploration and communication of their own understandings and experiences of wellbeing.

Introduction

Increasingly, for young children, defined internationally generally as birth-to-eight (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), the concept of wellbeing has been operationalised to identify areas of need and risk in order to support the healthy development and wellbeing of young children (Fane, MacDougall, Redmond, Jovanovic, & Ward, 2016). This construction of child wellbeing has led to the pervasive use of standardised assessments and large scale quantitative measures derived by adults, for young children, which have greatly informed knowledge, practice, and policy relating to child wellbeing. However, their almost exclusive use has implicitly and explicitly positioned and reinforced the idea of young children as having too limited "cognitive, language skills, and attention spans" (Hymel, LeMare, & McKee, 2011, p. 270) to participate in the construction of knowledge surrounding child wellbeing. Yet, despite the continued exclusion of young children's

voices and understandings of wellbeing within child research, there continues to be growing recognition of the need to reframe children's role within current conceptualisations of child wellbeing (Ballet, Biggeri, & Comim, 2011; Biggeri & Santi, 2012; Fattore, Mason, & Watson, 2009; Fegter & Richter 2014; Mashford-Scott, Church, & Tayler, 2012).

The reframing of children's role within research and educational contexts requires recognising children as active citizens who, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989, p. 14) and stated in the guiding principles (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2014), "have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account…[and] seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds…either orally, in writing, in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice" (retrieved from: http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30177.html). However, if young children's views, understandings, and opinions are to be sought and listened to, tools and approaches which acknowledge and allow opportunities for the elicitation of children's understandings and experience are required. In this way strengths-based approaches and tools that position children as knowledgeable and capable contributors to knowledge are essential in redressing their continued exclusion from our knowledge of children and childhood.

This paper reports on a research project which sought to investigate young children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing. The research project stems from the findings of a systematic review of young children's wellbeing during the transition to school (Fane et al., 2016), in which a key identified finding was that current conceptualisations of young children's wellbeing are almost exclusively derived from adult perspectives. To redress the exclusion of young children's voices in current constructions of child wellbeing, this study piloted the use of emoji as a strengths-based, child-centred research method to elicit young children's views and understandings of their own wellbeing. Emoji were determined to offer significant value to the growing suite of tools for constructing young children as co-researchers within child-centred and participatory research paradigms (Fane, MacDougall, Redmond, Jovanovic, & Gibbs, 2016). This papers reports on the findings of the study in relation to the potential of emoji to support young children's engagement with both national curricula and to support their wellbeing within education and care contexts. The discussion centres on how emoji can be used within a strengths-based approach as a tool in research, classroom, and educational settings for supporting young children's current and future wellbeing, and to increase our knowledge of child wellbeing through the inclusion of children's perspectives.

Literature review

The use of visual research methods within child research may be seen to simply mimic activities children may do in the home or early childhood education and care settings (for example drawing, photography, using clay). However, there is a tradition of visual methods from the sub-discipline of visual sociology; the study of visible domains in social life, including the visual languages and sign systems through which we communicate (Emmison & Smith, 2000). One of the core tenets of visual sociology asserts that the habitual activities of social life reveal what may be hidden or taken for granted in the inner mechanisms of ordinary life (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004). As technology and media become an increasing part of young children's everyday experiences and environments, they offer a potentially fruitful avenue for examination of how methodology can react or respond to technological and social change.

Visual research has a strong link with technology and new technologies can contribute to and inform our knowledge about social worlds and actors (Cipriani & Del Re, 2012). Emerging technologies have the potential to produce "new, innovative, reflexive, and theoretically

informed" research (Pink, 2003, p.191), through its ability to accommodate different audiences and purposes. However, purposeful selection of visual materials requires careful attention to the visual material's likely impact on the intended audience (Jewitt & Van Leeuwen, 2001). Exploration and engagement with technologies and digital literacies are becoming increasingly common-place in early education and care and school environments. These types of literacies, known as multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), offer fertile grounds for new visual methods for research with young children. The concept of multiliteracies extends traditional concepts of reading, writing, speaking, and listening to include symbols, icons, logos and multiple sign systems such as video clips (Department of Education and Children's Services, 2006). Contemporary sign symbols found in electronic and digital mediums may be relatively new, but their roles and use in conveying knowledge is indeed the oldest form of literacy (Chandler, 2007). The increased focus on multiliteracies and technology within curricula and designs for learning in early childhood education (Marsh, 2005) supports the use of emoji as a research method for engaging young children in how they understand and make meaning of their world. In this way, emoji offers both a practical and insightful approach to eliciting young children's voices in childhood research.

Method

Participants

Participants were 78 children (49 boys and 29 girls) aged 3-to-5 years across eight early learning and long day care centres in metropolitan Adelaide, South Australia. The eight centres were chosen to represent a theoretical sample of the diversity of South Australian early childhood education and care services for preschool aged children in relation to socio-economic status (Australian Governement Commonwealth Grants Commission, 2012), and site type (standalone long day care centre or integrated long day care centre and primary school).

Ethics

Ethical research with young children is facilitated by a multi-step procedure for ensuring that both the research design and protocols are suitable, reasonable, and prioritise the safety and security of child participants. This four step process included ethics clearance from the researcher's university ethics committee, permission from centre directors, parental/guardian consent, and children's assent.

Procedure

The research design endeavoured to create sensitivity and proximity to build mutual trust and respect through repeated interactions with all child participants during multiple site visits. The final visit, and the focus of this paper, entailed the use of emoji as a visual research method in 13 focus groups across eight early learning and care services. All focus groups were audio-recorded and detailed field notes were recorded by the researcher at the end of each interview.

Emoji a type of graphic symbol, originating from Japan, which express concepts and ideas pervasively used in mobile communication and social media (Novak, Smailović, Sluban, & Mozetič, 2015), were used as the sole data collection tool. Emoji are the descendent of the emoticon, a shorthand form of a facial expression created using a standard keyboard, for example :-) . Rather than keyboard shorthand, an emoji is an ideogram which can be used to represent a facial expression, but has been more widely co-opted to represent feelings, gestures, objects, animals, food and drink and activities (Novak et al., 2015). Emoji were

modified for use with young children by enlarging them to 10cm by 10cm, cutting them out individually, and laminating them so they could be manipulated by children. The researcher began by giving child participants five different emoji representing feelings through facial expressions (emoji 1-5 in Figure 1). Children were first asked to identify the feeling or emotion being portrayed by the five faces. Next, children were asked to pick one of the emoji, and tell a story about why someone might feel that way. After the participants had shared all the ideas they wanted with the researcher, the researcher gave each focus group 13 other emoji pictures, chosen to represent common objects, environments, activities, or iconography that young children would be familiar with (emoji 6-18 in Figure 2). Once the participants had the opportunity to explore the new emoji, they were asked to choose one and tell a story about it. The researcher engaged with every child's response throughout the focus group, asking clarifying questions if the response was not understood by the researcher, and repeating the child's idea or story back to ensure the researcher had correctly understood.

Figure 1. *Emoji used in child focus groups.*

Analysis

A directed content analysis, an approach to qualitative content analysis deriving from relevant theory or research findings within the greater literature of the phenomena under study, was employed (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). During this initial coding phase, data that could not be coded using one of the predetermined codes were identified with a descriptive code to be analysed later, to determine if it represents a new category, or subcategory of an existing code (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Data which did not fit within these existing six codes and identified with descriptive codes were then re-analysed and coded in a secondary round. This secondary round resulted in the further refinement of the descriptive codes into two additional categories.

The findings section reports on the ways in which the use of emoji in an educational context served as a strengths-based approach to supporting young children in exploring, sharing, and in some cases defending their own understandings of health and wellbeing. The discussion section will relate these findings to the two national curricula and why the use of innovative tools to engage student's in strengths-based approaches to child wellbeing are essential to the work of teachers and schools.

Results

Eliciting children's voices and understandings

When given the five facial emoji (emoji 1-5 in Figure 1) and the verbal prompt "can you tell me what feelings you see?" at the beginning of the focus groups, the children generated twenty-four different feelings, emotions, and ideas (see Figure 2). Figure 2 illustrates the range of responses of what feelings were generated by the children in response to emoji 1 through 5. Of particular interest was the volume and diversity of responses for the straight-mouthed emoji (i.e. emoji 5) that children shared. This emoji (i.e. emoji 5) also generated the most discussion between participants, and in four focus groups, generated disagreements and negotiations between children as to what feeling was being depicted. For example, the following excerpts from two separate focus groups highlights how children interpreted emoji differently and communicated their understandings to the researcher.

Focus Group 2

> **Researcher:** [talking to Maisy[1] who is holding the straight-mouth emoji] What is that feeling?
>
> **Maisy:** Frustrated
>
> **Researcher:** Oh frustrated, that's an interesting idea
>
> **Violet:** No! That's bored!
>
> **Researcher:** [speaking to the Violet] There are perhaps a lot of different emotions it could be, do you want to tell me a bored story in a minute? Right now I want to hear about Maisy's frustrated story. [turns to Maisy] When might you feel frustrated?
>
> **Maisy:** When my friend got sick
>
> **Researcher:** If your friend was sick. That would be frustrating. That's a really good idea, thank you. [turns to Violet] Violet did you want to tell me a story about feeling bored?
>
> **Violet:** It's angry because, I changed my mind cause.... that boy pushed him, pushed him over
>
> **Researcher:** Oh, somebody pushed someone, and that would make you feel angry?
>
> **Violet:** Yes

Focus Group 3

> **Researcher:** Does anyone have any ideas for what this feeling is? [holding up the straight-faced emoji]
>
> **Tom:** Um straight
>
> **Researcher:** The mouth is a straight mouth? Yes? [Tom nods], but how are they feeling?
>
> **David:** Angry
>
> **Researcher:** Maybe angry? That's a good idea.
>
> **Tom:** No! Not angry! Because, because it hasn't got a sad face, look, upside down is a happy face [pointing to the emoji to indicate that the angry face has a downturned mouth and the happy face has an upturned mouth]

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1.   Pseudonyms are used to protect participant identity

In addition to generating the most discussion and disagreement, the straight-mouthed emoji (i.e. emoji 5) generated three to six times more feeling ideas than emoji 1 through 4 (see Figure 2). This suggests that while all the emoji allowed children opportunities to interpret the internal and external narratives of the symbols in a variety of ways with little adult/researcher input, the increased ambiguity of the symbol resulted in a greater amount of ideas, disagreement, and negotiations generated.

Figure 2. *Ideas generated by three- to five-year-old child participants using emoji as a visual research method.*
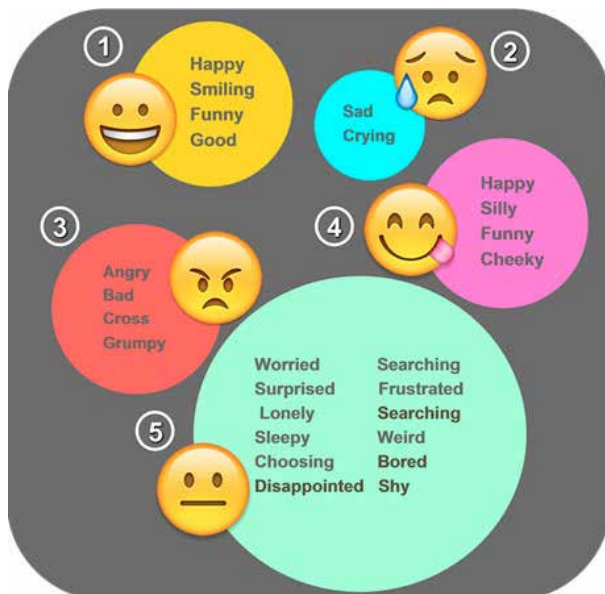
Supporting English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) speakers

All 78 children who participated in the focus groups were willing to pick up emoji of their choice at the researcher's request. The vast majority of children readily gave verbal responses to the researcher prompts or engaged in conversation and discussion with their peers about the emoji and the feelings and stories being shared. Instead of, or in addition to using verbal language, children used a variety of communication techniques including body language, noises/sounds, matching pictures together, and pairing pictures with their friends/peers. For children who were cautious about participating verbally, or had limited spoken English language abilities, the emoji offered a variety of ways for children to engage in the research process once they felt comfortable or had the language/vocabulary to express their ideas. The excerpt below is an example of how Ling, an EALD speaker, negotiated her participation in the research process using the emoji and a variety of non-verbal and verbal responses.

Focus Group 6

> **Researcher:** Can everyone pick up an emoji? [all children in the focus group select an emoji] Ling, which one did you pick? Which feeling is that?
>
> **Emilio:** Angry! Angry!
>
> **Ling:** [no verbal response]
>
> **Researcher:** That's an interesting idea Emilio. [speaking to Ling] Could this be an angry face? [Ling nods]

Multiple voices: Angry!

Researcher: Ling do you have a story you'd like to share about why someone might feel angry?

Oscar: Cause someone called him silly

Researcher: Oh that's a good idea Oscar, but I'm wondering is Ling has an idea. Do you have a story you'd like to share? [Ling doesn't respond]. Should I come back and ask after? [Ling nods] Thanks Ling, I'll come back to you later to see if you want to share any ideas.

[Later on in the focus group]

Researcher: Who else would like to share an idea or story? Ling, would you like to tell me about the one you're holding?

Ling: Heart, that's heart [emoji 8]

Researcher: A heart. Thanks Ling. Would you like to tell me a story about the heart or how it might make someone feel?

Ling: [shakes head]

Researcher: Thanks Ling

Ling was eager to select an emoji and share her choice with her friends. She also readily responded to questions using non-verbal cues in the beginning of the focus group. The emoji offered a variety of ways for her to participate and share her ideas and feelings with her peers and the researcher without the need to communicate verbally in English. As EALD speakers commonly experience being excluded from the research process (Frayne, Burns, Hardt, Rosen, & Moskowitz, 1996), children, who already as a group have been largely excluded from research, (Chaplin, 1994; Harrison, 2004; Klerfelt, 2007), who are EALD speakers are likely to be even further silenced. Later on in the focus group, however, after watching and listening to her peers respond, Ling did respond verbally to identify the emoji she had chosen. Ling was visibly proud of her verbal contribution to the group, and when another child chose the same emoji afterwards she indicated that they were the same while repeating "that's heart". The emoji were used in a variety of ways by Ling and other children to convey children's ideas and the images' importance to them, presenting opportunities for children to engage in the research process in the ways they wanted and/or were able to.

Supporting children with special needs

Several children seemed challenged by the concept of telling a story about a feeling, especially for the more ambiguous emoji, often waiting to let another child go first to tell a story about a particular emoji and use the previous example to build upon. Marcus, a child with special needs, actively participated from the beginning of the focus group, however, when prompted to tell a story, would instead re-identify the emoji he had chosen. While recent years have seen an increasing involvement of young children with special needs within childhood research, they have often been relegated to, or have occupied passive roles, with their participation being largely tokenistic (Gray & Winter, 2011; Shier, 2001). Marcus' engagement with the emoji, however, was far from passive. Despite the initial challenges for Marcus in moving past description to storytelling, by the end of the focus group Marcus was able to communicate an example of how he might feel and offer a significant insight into how he conceptualises feeling well.

Focus Group 9

Researcher: Great ideas, everyone. Marcus, can you tell me a story about this one? Why somebody might feel happy or silly?

Marcus: Silly

Researcher: Can you tell me a story about why someone might feel silly?

Marcus: There's a silly one and an angry

Researcher: Interesting ideas, they're showing different feelings. Thanks Marcus, I really appreciate your ideas.

Marcus: I want this one [referring to emoji Number 4]

Researcher: You'd like to hold that one?

Marcus: Yeah

Researcher: Ok, you hold onto that one, and I'll come back to you to see if you'd like to tell me a story about that feeling.

[Later on in the focus group]

Researcher: Reid, can you tell me a story about feeling sad?

Reid: This week

Researcher: Did you feel sad this week? Can you tell me what made you feel sad?

Marcus: I've been sad

Lee: A creature bite you

Researcher: Lots of interesting ideas…[interrupted by Marcus]

Marcus: I've been sad!

Researcher: I want to hear your ideas in a minute Marcus, but I'd like to let Reid finish his story? Reid when did you feel sad?

Reid: Someone hit me

Researcher: You would feel sad if someone hit you? That would make me feel sad too, thanks for sharing Reid. Marcus, did you want to tell me your story about when you felt sad?

Marcus: I missing my mum

Researcher: [didn't quite understand what Marcus said] When you were with your mum?

Marcus: I tell me mum

Researcher: You would tell your mum if you are feeling sad? That's an excellent idea. What would your mum do if you tell her you're feeling sad?

Marcus: And gives me medicine

Researcher: She gives you medicine? If you are sick?

Marcus: Yes

During the focus group children were prompted on a number of occasions to pick an emoji, describe their choice and tell a story. The extract above shows how this supported Marcus to move from a simple description of the emoji to connecting his own experiences and feelings through storytelling. In this way, the repeated, yet open-ended nature of the emoji and the focus group procedure allowed opportunities for participation for children who were easily able to communicate their ideas and stories verbally, and children who required further support and modelling from peers.

Discussion

Through analysis of the data, it is clear that the use of emoji in educational contexts strongly supported young children in exploring and expressing their understandings of wellbeing. A key reason for this is due to the open ended nature of the use of emoji symbols, which allowed opportunities for young children to construct meaning and share their understandings with their peers, educators and researcher without concern for identifying the 'correct' answer, or sharing what they thought the researcher was asking of them. The use of open ended tools not only supported participant's engagement through the use of child led/initiated learning, a key tenant of early childhood education programs in Australian and internationally (Thomas, Warren, & deVries, 2011; Wood, 2009), but also aligns with the aims and key strategies of both national curricula in regards to the use of strengths-based approaches which "affirm that all students and their communities have particular strengths and resources that can be nurtured" (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013, retreived from: *http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/health-and-physical-education/key-ideas)* and are highlighted as a key strategy for supporting child health and wellbeing.

The Early Years Learning Framework (Australian Government Department of Education, 2009) outlines the key practices which underpin good pedagogical practice in early childhood. One of these practices, entitled 'Responsiveness to children', requires educators to "value and build on children's strengths, skills, and knowledge…[including] children's expertise, cultural traditions, and ways of knowing" (Australian Government Department of Education, 2009, p. 14). Similar language is found in the AC:HPE (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) where five interrelated propositions shape both the content and pedagogies underlying the curricular document.

The use of emoji as a tool to engage young children in developing their understanding and communication of key curricular concepts like safety, relationships, and feelings stem from a strengths-based approach because they offer children opportunities to communicate their understandings without having to start from adult conceptualisations of these concepts. This imbues children with affirmation of their understandings as distinct from that of adults and that these understandings are valued. As a shared goal of both curricular frameworks is the use of a strengths-based approach to support child health and wellbeing, emoji offer a tool that works across contexts for children of varying ages and would allow for continued engagement with key concepts, offering a flexible system for children to communicate feelings and needs to peers and teacher/educators. While this paper reports on the use of emoji within a research study, its applicability to early years learning contexts and schools is clear when mapped across both curricula. The continued focus on child led/ initiated learning provides a strong rationale for the use of emoji to move understandings of child wellbeing from a deficit to a strengths-based approach.

Conclusion

Findings of this study highlight the potential of emoji for supporting children in engaging with both national curricula from a strengths-based approach, alongside supporting their overall wellbeing. As child wellbeing continues to be framed in largely deficit terms from adult perspectives, there is a significant need to redress young children's exclusion from present constructions to broaden current knowledge and understanding of child wellbeing. In addition, and of key importance, is also how using a strengths-based approach to child wellbeing can also support the work of teachers/educators and schools/early learning and care environments in creating learning environments supportive of child wellbeing that value children's knowledge and input. The open-ended nature of emoji not only supports a strengths-based approach, but also offers a high level of flexibility for its use across educational contexts, and ages and abilities of children. The use of child-centred visual materials, underpinned by a strengths-based approach to defining, engaging with, and supporting child wellbeing, offers not only new and innovative approaches to meeting curricular outcomes, but also in re-defining current constructions of child wellbeing which impact significantly on the early childhood and education sectors and the work of teachers and educators.

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Appendix 7 – Publication 8

Fane, J., MacDougall, C., Jovanovic, J., Redmond, G. & Gibbs, L. (2020). Preschool aged children's accounts of their own wellbeing: Are current indicators applicable? *Child Indicators Research.* DOI: 10.1007/s12187-020-09735-7

Preschool Aged Children's Accounts of their Own Wellbeing: are Current Wellbeing Indicators Applicable to Young Children?

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Abstract

Despite increased efforts within child wellbeing research to include children's perspectives in our knowledge of child wellbeing, young children's voices continue to be largely excluded. As the transition to school is widely understood as a key time to assess child wellbeing, preschool aged children are a frequent target of child wellbeing indicator use, making their exclusion from child wellbeing knowledge problematic. This study sought to redress preschool aged children's exclusion from child wellbeing indicator research through investigating their perspectives of wellbeing. Using a citizen-child approach to participatory research, three-to-five-year-old children attending eight diverse early childhood education and care services in Australia shared their experiences and understandings of wellbeing. Children's accounts were compared to adult derived child wellbeing frameworks to determine the way children's accounts accorded and differed from current conceptualisations. The findings evidenced that young children's accounts further validated current adult derived child wellbeing indicators. Additionally, children's accounts uncovered two novel indicators yet to be explored in relation to child wellbeing social indicator frameworks: opportunities for play, and young children's agency. The role of agency and play in children's conceptualisations of wellbeing are considered in light of contemporary empirical research and will be of keen interest to those education and public health professionals and policy-makers concerned with improving child wellbeing outcomes.

Keywords Child wellbeing · Child voice · Young children · Early childhood · Play · Agency

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1 Introduction

In 2005, Ben-Arieh argued that a substantive shift was happening in the field of measuring and monitoring children's wellbeing; the 'new' role of children being active participants, rather than subjects of research. A decade and a half later, there have been a growing number of studies which have sought to include children's perspectives of their own wellbeing though participatory research with children and youth (see for example Moore and Lynch 2018; Steckermeier 2019; Ahmed and Zaman 2019; Fattore et al. 2009; Crivello et al. 2009). However, young children, defined internationally as birth-to-eight-years of age (Copple and Bredekamp 2009), continue to be largely excluded from child wellbeing research. This exclusion is particularly true for children under six years of age, who continue to be implicitly and explicitly excluded from current constructions and operationalisations of child wellbeing (Esser et al. 2016; Zhang 2015; O'Hare and Gutierrez 2012). Reasons given for their exclusion have generally coalesced under three themes: (1) their perceived lack of cognitive and language abilities (Hymel et al. 2011), (2) that collecting data from children is too difficult (Bradshaw et al. 2007); or (3) that proxy measures (such as adult assessments of children's school achievement) are required due to children's lack of maturity (Axford 2008). However, in other research disciplines such as early childhood education and childhood studies, preschool aged children have been meaningfully engaged in co-constructing knowledge with adults using participatory research paradigms, evidencing their capacity to contribute to knowledge about children and childhood (see for example Katsiada et al. 2018; White and Pettit 2004; Darbyshire et al. 2005; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012).

Child wellbeing is an important indicator of life long wellbeing, education attainment, fulfilment, and productivity (Land and Michalos 2018). The assessment of child wellbeing has been deemed to be of key importance due to the strong link between children's early life experiences and adult health, social wellbeing, and economic outcomes (Kamerman et al. 2010) As such, measuring and reporting on child wellbeing is viewed as an "investment in the future" (Thomas 2009a), offering insight into both children's current wellbeing and their well-becoming (Ben-Arieh et al. 2001). The transition to school is widely accepted as a key time to measure children's wellbeing, as it can provide a snap-shot of children's early development (Brinkman et al. 2012). For preschool aged children, there has been widespread international use of standardised assessments using child wellbeing indicators at a population level to identify areas of need and ways to support children's healthy development (Janus et al. 2011; Sayers et al. 2007). A recent systematic review of young children's wellbeing evidenced a vast array of published child health and wellbeing assessments, including 87 instruments or tools designed to assess at least one aspect of young children's wellbeing (Fane et al. 2016). While these standardised assessments and large scale quantitative measures have greatly informed knowledge, practice, and policy relating to children's wellbeing; none of the child wellbeing assessments uncovered in the systematic review were developed using the perspectives, experiences, or understandings of young children. With calls for the inclusion of "new" domains of child wellbeing from children's perspectives unmet (Ben-Arieh 2012), there is a continued need to locate young children's perspectives within current social, temporal, and cultural conceptualisations of child wellbeing (Fattore et al. 2019). Given the ongoing contestations and complexity of child

wellbeing, this work will require "new perspectives and new approaches" (Ben-Arieh and Frønes 2011 p. 469). As preschool aged children are a frequent target of child wellbeing measurement, redressing the exclusion of preschool aged children in wellbeing research is arguably an area of key importance.

This paper reports on the initial findings of a research study which sought to investigate *how the inclusion of young children's voices and understanding of their own wellbeing can inform the current conceptualisations and assessment of child wellbeing during the transition to school.* We explore these findings to offer a preliminary investigation of child-identified indicators in relation to wider childhood wellbeing literature, and how the inclusion of these indicators may offer a more nuanced and holistic view of child wellbeing.

2 Defining and Operationalising Child Wellbeing

Despite the sustained interest, theorisation, and empirical research in child wellbeing from a social indicators perspective, the definition of child wellbeing remains poorly defined and strongly contested (Gillett-Swan and Sargeant 2015; Foregeard et al. 2011). There is widespread agreement, however, on the importance of measuring and assessing child wellbeing to support children's current healthy development and their future well-becoming (Maccagnan e@@t al. 2019; Redmond et al. 2016). The sustained interest in measuring child wellbeing through social indicators is also attributable to the "movement toward accountability-based public policy" (Ben-Arieh 2005, p. 573) which necessitates the collection of data to provide reports of children's lives and experiences, as well as the outcomes of deliberative efforts to ameliorate child wellbeing (Land and Michalos 2018). Social indicators or domain approaches continue to be the most widespread approach for operationalising child wellbeing in measurable and assessable ways (Nadan and Kaye-Tzadok 2019; Ben-Arieh et al. 2014). As such, child wellbeing is frequently expressed and operationalised through the creation of indicators, domains or dimensions such as: health, safety, feeling loved and happy, successful social relationships, opportunities for learning and development, and material/economic basics (Maccagnan et al. 2019; Mishra et al. 2018; Cho 2015; Thomas 2009b).

For young children, there continues to be broad agreement in the importance and use of diverse social indicators as a way of gathering a "point in time snap-shot" of their early development (Brinkman et al. 2012). The transition to school (when children are generally aged between four-to-six years) has been identified as a crucial time to assess child wellbeing and development (Janus et al. 2011; Sayers et al. 2007). Yet, while child social indicators are meant to provide meaning to statistical data and empirical support for theories and models, they also raise a host of validity and reliability challenges, as well as conceptual issues (Ben-Arieh 2012). Even with the large scale use of validated measures for assessing child wellbeing, there continues to be a lack of consensus on the selection, use, and application of social indicators to childhood wellbeing research (Land and Michalos 2018).

The longstanding exclusion of children from current constructions and operationalisations of wellbeing has resulted in two significant concerns highlighted in the wellbeing literature. The first is that without children's meaningful participation

in informing or confirming current wellbeing measures, the utility of current constructions in relation to the population on which they are applied has yet to be investigated (Ben-Arieh 2008). Secondly, the exclusion of children's voices from matters that affect them is equally problematic in relation to the rights of children, which are arguably a central tenet of children's wellbeing (Valentine 2011). This deficit approach to children and their capabilities also assumes that adults can and should speak on behalf of children and that children's perspectives are not needed or useful in ascertaining if adult conceptualisations are an accurate or meaningful assessment of child wellbeing.

2.1 Children's Perspectives of their Own Wellbeing

As outlined in the UNCRC (1989), article 12, "children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account" (UNICEF, n.d). This right necessitates the work of adults meaningfully listening to children and involving them in decision-making processes. Community participation, community connectedness, participation in positive activities, and the development of skills have been identified as important indicators of children's wellbeing (Australian Reasearch Alliance for Children and Youth 2013; Land et al. 2007; Australian Institue of Family Studies 2014). As such, there is a strong rationale for engaging children in age and developmentally appropriate opportunities to contribute to and inform current understandings of child wellbeing, which can also additionally serve as a mechanism to further support children's wellbeing.

Despite this strong rationale for children's inclusion, however, White and Pettit (2004) have noted that the inclusion of children's voices within social indicator research has followed a markedly different trajectory than that of mainstream childhood research. There is an increasing number of empirical studies and measurement tools engaging in participatory wellbeing research with children over the age of eight years (see for example Gillett-Swan 2014; Redmond et al. 2016; Ahmed and Zaman 2019; Akkan et al. 2019; Laurens et al. 2017), but the continued exclusion of young children as active participants within childhood research has been well documented (Huang et al. 2014; Zhang 2015; O'Hare and Gutierrez 2012). While young children's exclusion is frequently attributed to their classification as pre-literate within research paradigms that privilege the written word (Harrison 2004; Klerfelt 2007), there have been a small number of empirical studies which have involved young children and their voices in child wellbeing research.

The work of Crivello et al. (2009), offered the first empirical research into young children's wellbeing through their investigation of what children and adults living in poverty across several developing countries "understand by child wellbeing and how these understandings change over time" (p. 69). The younger cohort were children aged six years, who along with a cohort of children aged twelve years, were engaged in the research through participatory methods such as drawing and body mapping. While the findings of this study evidenced the capacity of young children to contribute to wellbeing research, Crivello et al. (2009) highlighted key methodological challenges they faced when working with the younger cohort, noting that the research methods used were better suited to working with the older children. Stephenson's work (2011; 2012), offered an example of a highly detailed study into child voice and child wellbeing by exploring the transition to school of a small cohort of four-to-five year

old children moving together from the same pre-school setting to the same primary school using the jigsaw method, a participatory research approach. The findings of this study highlighted three key areas that were significant to children's wellbeing during the transition to school: the individuality of the child, the context into which transition was occurring, and the interaction between these two. The work of Simmons et al. (2015) engaged multiple cohorts of children, including children aged six-to-eight years within Australian Catholic schools. In this study, children were invited to "draw, imagine, and discuss an ideal school that promoted their wellbeing" (p. 129). Data were generated through children's participation in focus groups (which included verbal, written, and drawing, activities and an interactive online survey. The younger cohorts' ideas and imagining centred on concepts such as happiness, fun, and safety, and caring and trusting relationships, with a few children in this cohort engaging in thinking around 'having a voice'.

Building from this body of work, there have been several recent studies that have explored young children's wellbeing. A study by Moore and Lynch (2018) employed the participatory mosaic approach (Clark 2001), to conduct research with children aged six-to-eight years investigating children's conceptualisation of wellbeing through an exploration of happiness. They found that children place a strong emphasis on agency in their understandings and experiences of wellbeing. Hart and Brando (2018) applied the Capability Approach to child wellbeing by examining selected empirical evidence on the connections between children's agency and wellbeing. They highlight the needs to facilitate children's participatory rights as early as possible to support their wellbeing and development. A final new study offering insights into how young children conceptualise their own wellbeing, conducted by Steckermeier (2019), drew on self-reported data completed by eight-year-olds from 16 different countries. A key finding of this study is that children identified safety and agency as two aspects central to their wellbeing.

This body of work has made strides in redressing young children's exclusion from wellbeing research. With the exception of Stephenson (2011, 2012), however, participatory wellbeing research with young children has focused on children aged six-to-eight years of age. Despite extensive searching of the literature, Stephenson's research is the only published empirical study that has investigated preschool aged children's wellbeing from children's perspectives. Additionally, it is the only published study which investigates young children's experiences of their own wellbeing during the transition to school, a pivotal time to assess children's wellbeing and development. As such, Stephenson's study plays an important role in evidencing the capacity of pre-school aged children to participate in wellbeing research. However, the small scale and heterogenous nature of the cohort (six children from the same preschool transitioning to the same school) suggests that there is arguably more work to do in understanding how young children understand and experience wellbeing.

2.2 Challenges to Including the Perspectives of Young Children in Child Wellbeing Research

Despite the numerous arguments for the reframing of young children's role within current conceptualisations of wellbeing outlined above, there is a need for caution in relation to the assumption that the inclusion of children's perspectives is

inherently positive or valuable without thought as to how this may occur (Lipponen et al. 2016). An essential question when considering the inclusion of young children's participation in wellbeing research is whether the research process can both uphold children's right to be heard and be sufficiently rigorous to have the potential to inform social indicator use.

There continues to be very real challenges to this work, however, as little previous research has inquired into the complexity of involving a diverse and robust sample of young children in participatory wellbeing research from a social indicators perspective (Fattore et al. 2019). What is still missing from the current landscape, are child-focused approaches which explore child-identified domains of wellbeing focused on young children's current lives. However, doing this work, and including young children's experiences and understandings of wellbeing in the formation and use of social indicator research requires a fundamental reimagining of the role young children can play in the creation of knowledge (Ballet et al. 2011; Fattore et al. 2009; Crivello et al. 2009; Mashford-Scott et al. 2012). This role would need to focus on the empowerment and agency of children in being active in defining and measuring their own wellbeing and well-becoming (Ben-Arieh 2008; Biggeri and Santi 2012).

3 Methods

This research study employed a citizenship approach to conducting research with children which recognises the need for the (co)construction of knowledge about childhood with children, and the recognition of children's right and capacity to contribute to knowledge and decisions that affect their lives (Morrow 2003). Citizen-child theory, developed from a citizenship approach, recognises and seeks to problematise and work to reduce power relationships between the child and researcher, as well as address power dynamics between the child and wider social structures and research traditions (Macdougall and Darbyshire 2013). A citizen-child theoretical perspective underpinned the design of this research study where three-to-five year old children were positioned as experts in their own lives and co-constructors of knowledge.

3.1 Sample

In Australia, 95% of preschool age children (ages four-to-five years) are enrolled in pre-school education in an early childhood education and care (ECEC) service such as preschools and childcare centres (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). Due to this high level of population-based enrolment, ECEC services were identified as key sites and partners for conducting participatory research with young children. Since the early 2000s, Australia has moved towards the linking of early years services to support the health and wellbeing of children and families through the creation of Integrated Services (Wong and Sumsion 2013). The rationale behind this shift is that the integration, or 'joining up', of services creates a more comprehensive and cohesive system of support for children and families (Dockett et al. 2011). In Australia, Integrated Services are spaces where one or more early years service is combined or linked such as a childcare centre that houses health services, or a childcare centre or preschool co-

located with a primary school. For this research study, twelve childcare centres were identified as potential research partner sites by mapping them against SES status categories and Level of Service integration to reflect the diversity of childcare services in Metropolitan Australian cities. The Australian Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) rating scale was used to determine SES categories. The SEIFA scale ranges from 1 (least advantaged) to 7 (most advantaged) (Australian Government Commonwealth Grants Commission 2012). Services were also categorised from 1 to 3 based on their level of integration with other early year services (such as preschools, health services, or primary schools. For this study, childcare centres were categorised as a 1 if there were no linkages or partnerships with other services, a 2 if there were some linkages or partnerships, and a 3 if there was full service integration or a co-location of services. Eight of the twelves centres selected and approached agreed to participate, encompassing all four geographic zones of the Metropolitan area. Figure 1 (below) demonstrates the diversity of the eight participating childcare services by SES and service integration levels.

All three-to-five year old children attending the eight participating centres were invited to participate in the research study and were distributed study information and consent forms. Prior to the research activity (child focus-groups), the first author explained to all children with parental consent to participate in the study what they would be asked to do in the focus group and why. Children were then invited to participate and were asked for their assent to audio record the focus groups. 78 preschool aged children (49 boys and 29 girls) with parental consent assented to participate in the research study and took part in 13 focus groups across the eight childcare centres.

3.2 Procedure

Child-centred research that aims to understand the views and experiences of children requires building relationships that value children's knowledge and creates sensitivity,
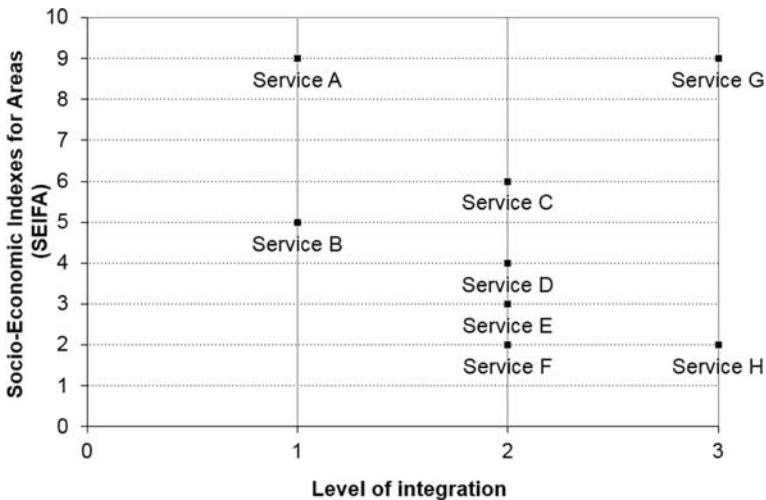

Fig. 1 Distribution of services by SES and integration

proximity, and analytic distance from the phenomena under study (Pálmadóttir and Einarsdóttir 2015). In this study design, the researchers endeavoured to build mutual trust and respect through the use of repeated visits and interactions with all child participants. The first visit to each of the eight childcare centres entailed meeting with the director, staff, and touring the centre to familiarise with the centre layout, age grouping, routines, and service foci/priority areas. During the second visit, the lead author led a group activity with assenting children involving brainstorming, identifying, and acting out different types of feelings using drama, song, and manipulatives (large hula hoops and cut-outs of eyes, mouths, tears, tongues) to create large emoji faces. These visits allowed the lead author to build relationships with the childcare centre and children through play, exploration, and in the communication of ideas.

Child focus groups were used to engage young children in the study based on Lewis' (1992) rationale for using this technique with children: (1) to test a specific research question about consensus beliefs, (2) to obtain a greater depth and breadth of responses than occurs in individual interviews, (3) to verify research plans or findings, and (4) to enhance the reliability of interview responses (p. 414). Focus groups have a unique ability to facilitate and encourage group interaction, yielding further insight and supporting children in trying out new ways of thinking (Ronen et al. 2001). Focus groups have also been identified as an insightful method for conducting participatory research with children as the verbal data they provide can highlight children's agency (Darbyshire et al. 2005). Additionally, group time is a familiar learning format for young children attending ECEC services, and using structures which children feel comfortable in facilitates children's involvement and make it easier for children to express uncertainty, seek clarification, or question the researcher (Lewis 1992). Each of the 13 focus groups contained the lead author (a qualified early childhood teacher) and between four-to-nine children. The number of participants per group depended on the number of children aged three-to-five at each service who had parental consent and assented to participate on the day. Larger sites had two to three focus groups per centre. The length of the focus group varied from 12 to 21 min, dependent on children's participation, comfort, and interest. During the interviews, the children and the lead author were seated on the floor in a circle in either a quiet corner of the three-to-five-year old room, or a separate quiet space within the ECEC service. Some focus groups had an early childhood educator join, dependent on the service's preference or children's preference/needs. Data consisted of audio recordings for all focus groups, transcribed verbatim, with additional contextual information added from field notes.

To avoid the use of adult conceptualisations of wellbeing which generally underpin the use of researcher developed structured or semi-structured questions, an innovative approach to conducting participatory research with young children using emoji was developed. A full description of the method and the place of emoji alongside a growing suite of visual research methods used for participatory research with young children is reported in (Fane et al. 2018). A brief description of the method and study protocol are included here.

Visual research methods have a strong link with technology, with new technologies contributing to, and informing our knowledge about social worlds and actors (Cipriani and Del Re 2012). Emerging technologies have the potential to produce 'new, innovative, reflexive, and theoretically informed' research (Pink 2003, p. 191), through their

ability to accommodate different audiences and purposes. Semiotic theory, or the study of signs, acknowledges that symbols are visual sign systems through which reality is represented and meaning is made. Contemporary sign symbols found in electronic and digital mediums may be relatively new, but their role and use in conveying knowledge are indeed the oldest form of literacy (Chandler 2007). Emoji are a type of graphic symbol, originating from Japan, which express concepts and ideas pervasively used in mobile communication and social media (Novak et al. 2015, Danesi 2016). Due to the pervasive use of emoji in marketing and promotion of products and services (Leung and Chan 2017), even very young children are likely to be familiar with emoji. Additionally, the increased focus on multiliteracies and technology within curriculum and designs for learning in early childhood education (Marsh 2005) supports the use of emoji as a research method for engaging young children in how they understand and make meaning of their world.

In this study, 18 emoji (see online supplementary material) were adapted for use with young children by printing, enlarging them to 10 cm by 10 cm, and laminating them so they could be easily manipulated. Triplicates of each emoji were used within focus groups to mitigate potential sharing issues and facilitate children's engagement with their emoji of choice. The lead researcher began each focus group by giving child participants five different emoji representing feelings through facial expressions. Children were first asked to identify the feeling or emotion being portrayed by the five faces. Next, children were asked to pick one of the emoji, and tell a story about why someone might feel that way. The idea of storytelling was used to give children opportunities to share a personal feeling without having to identify themselves as the person feeling the emotion, or to be able to try out or express new ideas. Next, each focus group was given 13 other emoji pictures, chosen to represent common objects, environments, activities, or iconography that young children would be familiar with. Once child participants had the opportunity to explore the new emoji, they were asked to pick one and tell a story about it. Each child's response was engaged with by the researcher throughout the interview and repeated back to ensure it was correctly understood. Clarifying questions were used as needed. Focus groups were completed once all child participants had finished sharing their ideas and stories.

3.3 Analysis

A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development, developed by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), was employed to analyse the data. This approach combines the data-driven inductive approach of Boyatzis (1998), with a deductive a priori template analytic technique pioneered by Crabtree and Miller (1999). Through this approach, data generated from focus group transcripts were analysed in relation to an a priori codebook developed from relevant literature and research. This research study began with a systematic review of the literature on child health and wellbeing during the transition to school. The review was Australian in focus, but also included relevant international literature Fane et al. (2016). A key finding of this systematic review was the sheer volume of instruments and assessment tools, (87 in total), that covered at least one aspect of early childhood health and wellbeing. A second key finding was that most of the instruments, surveys, and frameworks uncovered in the systematic review used social indicators, or domains to

assess child health and/or wellbeing. The third key finding was that all of the instruments, surveys, and domains and social indicators for young children's wellbeing (under eight years of age) uncovered in the systematic review were created by adults (adult centric) and did not include children's voices or understandings of wellbeing.

As there has yet to be research done on the creation of a comprehensive suite of child indicators for young children that have included young children's voices, adult identified social indicators of child wellbeing uncovered in the systematic review were identified for the development of the a priori codebook. The a priori code book was developed from five relevant frameworks/instruments/conceptualisations which identify or use social indicators for assessing child wellbeing. They are briefly described below.

The first is a Report Card on the wellbeing of young Australians by the Australia Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) (2013). The purpose of this report card was to offer a set of base line indicators, guided by "what wellbeing looks like" for children and youth in Australia which could be used to provide a snapshot of child and youth wellbeing (ARACY 2013, p. 2). The second is a report on the first nationally representative longitudinal study of child development by the Australian Institute of Family Studies entitled Growing Up in Australia (AIFS 2014). The purpose of this study was to provide data to enable a comprehensive understanding of children's development and research-based information on child and family wellbeing. The report identifies key indicators and domains of child wellbeing which they found to be associated with positive child development outcomes. The third is the Early Development Instrument (EDI), which was developed for national use in Australia as the Australia Early Development Census (Guhn et al. 2001; Goldfeld et al. 2009). This instrument is comprised of five child wellbeing indicators and is used nationally every three years in Australia to capture a snapshot on the early development of all Australian children entering school. The fourth is a report by UNICEF on an overview of child wellbeing in rich countries (2007). The report identifies six dimension of child wellbeing which can be used to monitor child wellbeing, compare child wellbeing between populations, and promote the creation of policies to improve the life of children. The fifth and final framework/instrument/conceptualisation that formed the a priori codebook was the Child and Youth Wellbeing Index (Land et al. 2007). This index is comprised of seven quality-of-life domains and designed to measure and assess changes in child and youth wellbeing over time. These five frameworks/instruments/conceptualisations identified in the systematic review were chosen to capture a snapshot of what indicators have been identified by adults as important for measuring child wellbegin. Table 1 lists each framework/instrument/conceptualisation and the social indicators they employ to express child wellbeing.

After identifying key adult conceptualised social indicators in current and recent use for measuring child wellbeing (as reported in Table 1), these indicators of child wellbeing underwent a process of review, sorting, and further abstraction. This process resulted in the creation of six codes which represent the current state of the literature of social indicator use for young children's wellbeing and formed an a priori codebook used for data analysis following the hybrid approach (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). This process is reported in Table 2. This codebook became the starting point for an a priori thematic analysis of the data which would then be revised and expanded upon for use with raw data collected from the child focus groups.

Table 1 Child wellbeing frameworks and domains of child wellbeing identified through the systematic review of child health and wellbeing during the transition to school literature

Source	Domains of wellbeing used:
1) Report Card: The Wellbeing of young Australians (Australian Reasearch Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) 2013)	Feeling loved and safe; being healthy; opportunities for learning; material basics; and community participation
2) Australian Institute of Family Studies – Growing up in Australia Longitudinal study (Australian Institue of Family Studies (AIFS) 2014	children's construction and use of time; social and emotional wellbeing; participation in positive activities; and the attainment and development of skills"
3) Early Development Instrument (EDI) / Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) (Guhn et al. 2001; Goldfeld et al. 2009).	Physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge
4) UNICEF – Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries (UNICEF 2007)	Material well-being; health and safety; education; peer and family relationships; behaviours and risks; and young people's own subjective sense of well-being
5) CWI – Child and Youth Well-being Index (Land et al. 2007)	Family economic wellbeing; health; safety/behavioural concerns; educational attainment (productive activity); community connectedness (participation in schooling or work institutions); social relationships (with family and peers); and emotional/spiritual wellbeing

During the process of data analysis, the creation of the a priori codebook served as a data management tool for organizing segments of similar or related text to assist in interpretation. Transcripts were summarised separately by outlining key points and ideas that emerged. Next, codes from the codebook were applied to the raw data to identify meaningful units of text. This coding process was done manually by organising segments of the transcripts under the six codes identified a priori using the guidance of the code labels, definitions, and descriptions. Segments of data that fit within an existing code were organised in a table under the corresponding code heading. Segments of data that did not fit within an existing code were placed in an undefined section of the table and labelled with a descriptive code.

After the initial coding of the raw data, the next stage was to connect the codes by looking across the 13 coded transcripts to find similarities and differences between separate groups of data that emerged from the initial coding. The final stage of analysis involved further clustering of the themes that were previously identified from the coded text. Previously identified themes proceeded to an interpretive phase where additional themes were then clustered, identified, and delineated. Once the final coding had taken place, the process of member checking was used to enhance the rigour of the analysis. Children at each of the eight childcare centres were involved in a member checking process through the use of a story book (created by the lead researcher) that explained key themes identified in the data. After the story book was read, participants were asked if their ideas were understood correctly or if anything was missing. Children from all eight childcare centres corroborated the themes, supporting the legitimacy of the analysis process.

Table 2 Key domains of child wellbeing identified from child wellbeing frameworks (see Table 1), used to create an a priori codebook for data analysis

1) (ARACY 2013)	Loved and safe	Being healthy	Opportunities for learning	Material basics	Community participation	
2) (AIFS 2014)	Social and emotional wellbeing		Development of skills Construction and use of time		Participation in positive activities	
3) (Guhn et al. 2001)	Emotional maturity	Physical health and wellbeing	Language and cognitive skills		Social competence	Emotional maturity; communication skills
4) (UNICEF 2007)	Subjective wellbeing, behaviours and risks	Health and safety	Education	Material wellbeing		Peer and family relationships
5) (Land et al. 2007)	Emotional & spiritual wellbeing. Safety & behavioural concerns	Health	Educational attainment	Family economic well-being	Community connectedness	Social relationships
Domains delineated for the a priori codebook used for analysis of data	1) Feeling Happy, Loved & Safe	2) Being Physically Healthy	3) Opportunities for Learning	4) Material Wellbeing	5) Social Participation	6) Relationships

4 Findings

Analysis of the data revealed that children's accounts accorded with the six adult derived wellbeing indicators, increasing confidence in the current wellbeing measures being applied to children. Additionally, children's accounts also uncovered a substantive amount of data segments that did not accord with the adult derived indicators. Key themes emerged during the initial and subsequent coding rounds from the undefined data segments. These were initially coded under the headings play, outdoor play, agency, and control. As themes were corroborated and legitimised in the final stage of the analysis process, two additional child-identified indicators were delineated: opportunities for play, and children's agency. Table 3 reports on the number of children's accounts and focus groups that accorded with each indicator. A full data table which includes the themes delineated by children for each indicator and data excerpts illustrating the ways children described their experiences and understandings of wellbeing in their own words is included in the online Supplementary Material. Of key importance in relation to the study design is that children's accounts accorded with all adult derived social indicators, despite the researcher purposefully not using wellbeing indicator language, or other words associated with adult conceptualisations of child wellbeing.

Table 3 Number of children and focus group identifying wellbeing indicators

Wellbeing indicators	Children identifying domain	Focus groups identifying domain
Feeling happy, loved, and safe (adult derived)	25	9
Being Physically Healthy (adult derived)	9	6
Opportunities for Learning (adult derived)	6	3
Material Wellbeing (adult derived)	11	7
Social Participation (adult derived)	11	5
Relationships (adult derived)	28	12
Opportunities for play (child-initiated)	32	13
Children's Agency (child-initiated)	15	7

This strongly suggests that the adult derived indicators are meaningful and applicable to children's lived experiences and wellbeing.

The indicators derived from the adult conceptualised frameworks and indicator sets that formed the a priori codebook have been widely validated, substantively theorised, and profoundly explored within the child wellbeing literature (see for example Mishra et al. 2018; Cho 2015; Heshmati et al. 2008; Casas 2011; Lippman et al. 2011; Pollard and Lee 2003). In addition, O'Hare and Gutierrez (2012) conducted a comprehensive composite index of child wellbeing which identified 19 key studies combining social indicators or domains of wellbeing into indices. Their review demonstrated that there is a wealth of theoretical and empirical research evidencing that child wellbeing can be measured at a population level through these indicators. O'Hare and Gutierrez (2012) argue that given the substantive evidence and literature on the efficacy of adult derived indicators, what is needed now is research on children's voices in relation to their own wellbeing. Due to the wealth of literature surrounding the validation and applicability of adult derived indicators, which were further validated through children's accounts, the findings of this study suggest that the theorisation and validation of adult derived indicators have been fully developed and do not require further exploration in relation to this study. As such, this section will report and discuss the novel findings of this research, which are the two child-identified indicators that have not been previously explored using a social indicators approach to child wellbeing: opportunities for play and children's agency.

4.1 Children's Accounts of Play

Analysis of the data revealed that play was a central concept to young children and their wellbeing. Opportunities for play was the only wellbeing indicator (both adult

generated or child identified) evidenced across all thirteen child focus groups and was present in more children's accounts than any other indicator. Additionally, play generated by far the greatest amount of discussion between participants.

The concept of play in disciplines such as education and health frequently position play as a vehicle for child development and learning (Goncu and Gaskins 2007). Because of this grounding, play is frequently described and understood within education and health discourses as an individual developmental phenomenon, through which children ostensibly progress in systematic ways (Brooker et al. 2014). In fact, play, learning and development have become so intricately connected in early childhood discourses that they are commonly described as partners in the early years (Grindheim and Ødegaard 2013). However, this conceptualisation of play "appears to serve adult needs rather than the needs of children" (Sutton-Smith 2009, p. 41). Wood (2014) developed the conceptual model of the play-pedagogy interface to further explore the nexus between play as a voluntary, pleasurable, and personal expression and play as a learning opportunity. Wood describes the interface as having three distinct modes of play: Mode A – child initiated (often referred to as free play); Mode B – adult guided (play-based learning), and Mode C – technicist/policy driven (play as a form of benchmarking/assessment) (p. 147). We draw on the play-pedagogy interface here to explore the children's understandings and experience of play.

Analysis of the data revealed that children's accounts of play frequently included child-initiated (Mode A) play and adult or teacher-guided (Mode B) play. The most frequent was child-initiated, where children described the ways they like to play. Below, Walter shares a story of a time he lost his dog, inspired by the paw print emoji. His account centres on the ways he and his brother like to play, and how their play led them to their missing dog.

Focus Group 1
Researcher: Walter, what did you pick?
Walter: Doggy tracks
Researcher: Doggy tracks. And why did you pick that one?
Walter: My dog got lost and I was in my bedroom with my little brother Neddy, he's about three now because he had his birthday,
Researcher: What did you do?
Walter: We were making a wall in my bedroom and after that I went outside to have a little run outside and get my energy out and I found the tracks, and they were doggy tracks.
Researcher: Doggy tracks. Where did they go?
Walter: They lead up to the fence. Ned comes out and he followed the doggy tracks and he bumped into me and then we both, we both like lion and tigers, Ned was the tiger and I was the lion. I climbed up the fence and then we went into our neighbour's garden and then mummy and daddy had to climb over the fence and daddy had to get his ladder and go into the neighbour's garden to get my dog.

Gregory's story also features the centrality of child-initiated play to children. After choosing the phone/tablet emoji, he talks about the ways he likes to use a phone to play. While Gregory and many other children's accounts expressed pleasure in playing with technology, it is clear from the way Gregory describes his play that playing imaginary games on an obsolete phone also constitutes engaging play.

Focus Group 10
Researcher: Gregory would you like to tell me a story about the pictures you picked?
Gregory: A phone
Researcher: A phone. And have you used a phone before?
Gregory: Ah, yeah. I have a phone in my locker
Researcher: In your locker and what do you do with it?
Gregory: I can play games on it but it's not real, it's just old and it can't work anymore.
Researcher: You like to pretend you're playing games on the phone?
Gregory: Yeah

Children's accounts of child-initiated play also included instances of learning and adult/teacher-guided play across many of the focus groups. Here, adult/teacher-guided play overlaps between the child-identified indicator of 'opportunities for play' and the adult derived indicator of 'opportunities for learning'. Despite these descriptions of play being highly mediated by socio-cultural norms, rules, and adult developed activities; children's accounts of this type of play are described in ways that indicate that they found this play enjoyable or engaging. Chase and Aidan's accounts of learning to play soccer both illustrate their experiences of participating in an adult developed/guided activity and how they enjoy or take pride in their ability to participate, even when explicit adult-guided learning is involved.

Focus Group 7
Researcher: Wow, lots of great ideas. Would anyone like to tell me a story about any of these pictures [emojis 6-18]
Chase: Jennifer? [name of the lead researcher]
Researcher: Yes Chase?
Chase: [holding the soccer ball emoji] Actually in soccer you're not allowed to touch this ball.
Researcher: You're not allowed to touch the ball at all?
Multiple voices: No! Feet!
Researcher: Oh, so you're allowed to touch the ball with your feet?
Chase: Yes, but not hands
Researcher: No hands?
Carter: I did!
Researcher: Interesting, there are a lot of rules to soccer, aren't there?
Chase: I did! I remember on the team!

Focus Group 1
Researcher: I'm going to put some new emojis out now [lays out emojis 6-18 in the middle of the circle] Would you like to pick a picture and tell me a story about it?
Multiple voices: [murmurs of agreement, children are busy looking at and touching the emojis]
Researcher: Would anyone like to tell me about the picture they have picked? Does anyone have a story they would like to tell me about the emoji you picked? Or how it might make you feel?

Aiden: What about soccer?!?
Researcher: Well, can you tell me a story about soccer?
Aiden: Umm, cause they have goals and I like that type of sport.
Researcher: You like soccer? Thanks Aiden. Can you tell me how you might feel when you're playing sport?
Aiden: Um very good.
Researcher: Very good. What do you like about it?
Aiden: Cause you tackle and try and get the ball off people

One child's account also included elements of Mode C play, where Eden identified a book she has had read to her that is "for children's learning". However, her account of this book did not use the word play, nor did she speak about 'liking' the book or being proud of knowledge or skills she had acquired from the book that children's accounts of Mode A and B play included. Rather, she was sharing a connection she made between an emoji and a learning experience. No children's accounts identified Mode C play as 'play' in their words, affirming that while this type of play may be useful for adults in tracking child's development and attainment of curricular goals, children may not recognise this as play, or not experience it in the same way as other modes of play.

> **Focus Group 12**
> **Researcher:** Eden, would you like to tell me about the picture you picked?
> **Eden:** A house
> **Researcher:** A house. Why did you pick that one?
> **Eden:** Cause it's from a Doctor Seuss book called Hop on Pop
> **Researcher:** Oh, it looks like a house from the Dr Seuss book Hop on Pop?
> **Eden:** Yeah
> **Researcher:** Neat. Have you read that book?
> **Eden:** Yeah
> **Researcher:** What do you like about that book?
> **Eden:** It's cause it's for children's learning

Children's accounts of play (as reported above) evidenced all three Modes delineated in the play-pedagogy interface model (Wood 2014). Mode A play was the most frequent type of play included in children's accounts. Interestingly, Mode A play and Mode B play were highly entwined in many children's accounts, for examples, Aidan and Chase's description of soccer play. Aidan's account of his soccer play features Mode A play, where his enjoyment of soccer is the focus of his story. Chase's account on the other hand, features Mode B play, where learning the rules and playing soccer in the way adults have explained it is of key importance to him. However, Mode C play, was described by young children as distinct from Mode A and Mode B play and was thus coded under the Opportunities for Learning indicator. These excerpts evidence the highly nuanced ways children experience play and learning. While the concepts of play and learning were interrelated in many young children's accounts, there were also many instances were children's accounts of play did not make any mention of learning. Given that children's play is generally understood as "spontaneous, pleasurable, rewarding, and voluntary" (Burghardt, 1999 as cited in Nijhof et al. 2018, pp. 422), rather than a function of their learning or development, suggests that the exclusion of play as a

wellbeing indicator distinct from learning may impact on the ability of a framework or instrument to meaningfully capture children's experiences of wellbeing.

4.2 Children's Accounts of Agency

Analysis of the data demonstrated that agency was an important concept to young children. Excerpts from focus groups demonstrate that young children enact agency in a variety of different ways, yet their enactments of agency remain highly relational to the adults around them. This finding is in line with Abebe's (2019) assertion that children negotiate and renegotiate their agency in relation to different contexts and their relationships with different adults within those contexts. In focus group 6 (see below), Gemma and Harry talk about what they would do if they became separated from their parents in a shop. Gemma shares how she was able to find her mother on her own by looking for her. When Harry shares the opinion that she should ask an adult for help, Gemma explains that she didn't do that. Not because she didn't need to, or did not want adult help, but because she was able to find her mum before she had the chance to ask for help. Harry enacts agency differently in his story, by sharing how he would approach a trusted adult to ask for help in finding his parents. Both accounts illustrate how Gemma and Harry did not view adult support or assistance as diminishing to their agency, rather adult help is framed as a supporting mechanism.

Focus Group 6
Gemma: I got, I got lost at the shop, but I didn't worry about it, I looked around to see if I could find my mummy and daddy and I did find mummy.
Harry: You should ask and an adult for help
Gemma: I didn't get to ask it cause lots of people were in the way at the shopping
Harry: Um, you should ask the shopping man and you can say, um 'where's my mum dad gone', and then he will say 'it's gone that way'
Researcher: So you could ask a grown up you could trust for help?
Harry: Yep
Gemma: I didn't do that
Researcher: You were able to find your mum and dad all on your own?
Gemma: Yeah

Parents and adults as a key source of support for children when enacting agency was also a topic of conversation in focus group 8, where several children joined into a conversation about what to do if someone were to hurt them.

Focus Group 8
Arlo: But if someone...if someone hurts me, I should tell my mum if someone hurts me and she will hurt them
Researcher: Does you mum say that? Are there other things we do if someone hurts us?
Arlo: Um, you can say stop I don't like it.
Theo: And you could say sorry
Researcher: Oh, if you hurt someone you could say sorry?

Theo: Yes
Arlo: You can ask you mum or dad to help you
Alison: Or a teacher

The children's conversation, resulting from a question posed by the researcher, demonstrates how adult support is integral to children's understanding of agency in relation to their own safety. This conversation also evidences that even young children are highly aware of several strategies they can use to keep themselves safe, and how they would use their agency to decide which one to choose. This enactment of agency fits within James's (2009) conceptualisation of children's agency as one that is bound within a relational social order.

However, not all of children's accounts of their experiences in hierarchical relationships were framed in positive terms. For example, child participants frequently used examples of where something was 'unfair' within a parent/child exchange to 'tell a story' about feeling disappointed, angry, cross, or being interrupted. Interestingly, two children in two different focus groups (at two different ECEC services) both told a story about not being given the chocolate they were promised by their parents as a way of explaining the feelings of disappointed and angry.

Focus Group 3
Researcher: Can anyone tell me what feeling this could be? [straightmouth emoji]
Ruby: Disappointed
Researcher: Disappointed? That's a really interesting idea, Ruby. When might someone feel disappointed?
Ruby: Hmmmmm
Lachlan: We do not know
Researcher: Is that a tricky question? I think Ruby might have an idea. What makes you feel disappointed?
Ruby: When mummy says I can have some chocolate and she doesn't give it to me?

Focus Group 11
Researcher: Philip can you tell me what feeling you chose? And why someone might feel like that?
Philip: Um, an angry face about.... his mum or dad didn't give him chocolate when he ate all his lunch or fruit. Now he's feeling angry.
Researcher: He ate all his lunch and all his fruit like he was supposed to but he, then his mum or dad didn't give him chocolate after, so he was angry?
Philip: Yes

In these accounts, however, it was not the fact that limits are placed on their chocolate consumption that children spoke negatively about. Rather, it was that they had negotiated with their parents about when they could have chocolate, and their parents did not follow through with the agreement.

The findings of this study were similar to a study conducted by Bjerke (2011) who found that children and young people think that they should be allowed to take part in decisions about "what and when to eat" (p. 96) within boundaries set by parents. In

these accounts we can also see how children see themselves as both beings and becomings in that they are competent social actors who can participate in negotiations (beings), and that parents setting limits is a normalised part of their experiences as children (becomings). Mayall (2002) argues that this act of negotiation is further evidence of children's agency, stating that children are more than just social actors who might do something, rather they are agents who "negotiate with others with the effects that the interaction makes a difference to a relationship, decision, social assumptions, or constraint" (p, 21).

In addition to sharing examples of situations which negatively impact their feelings of agency and control, some children also told stories where their actions and enactment of agency is what Valentine (2011) describes as agency that would generally be perceived by adults as against children's 'best interests'.

> **Focus Group 13**
> **Researcher:** What about this one, can anyone tell me what this is a picture of?
> **Multiple voices**: A house!
> **Researcher**: A house. How might you be feeling if you were in your house?
> **Multiple voices**: Happy
> **Sean**: To run away
> **Researcher**: You might want to run away. Why might you want to run away?
> **Sean**: I'm cross with my family

> **Focus Group 2**
> **Researcher:** Jonah, did you have a story you'd like to tell me about the emoji you chose?
> **Jonah**: And I'm playing a video game, and someone called and then I smashed my phone on
> the ground
> **Researcher**: How did you feel if your phone was smashed on the ground?
> **Jonah**: Happy
> **Researcher:** You'd be happy that you broke your phone?
> **Jonah**: Yes, so no one would ring you again
> **Researcher**: Oh so no one would interrupt you playing your game?
> **Jonah:** Yes

In these accounts, Sean and Jonah talk about taking action (running away from home or breaking their belongings) when feeling unhappy with their family and constraints placed on their time. This diversity in children's enactment (or desired enactment) of their agency corresponds to Bordonaro and Payne's (2012) assertion that the continued lack of conceptual clarity in the childhood agency literature, and understandings of child agency as 'fixed' and 'exaggerated' promote the expectation that children should show agency in 'expected forms'. Esser et al. (2016) agree that this lack of conceptual clarity, makes it difficult to allow room for any form of children's agency that runs counter to the adult perspectives and conceptualisations.

Additionally, Sean and Jonah's accounts can be seen as examples of how children imagine they would exercise agency if they were not constrained by social ordering, or within familial relationships, and that these two children may have told these stories

knowing that these statements will not negatively impact their wellbeing as they are unlikely to enact them. These statements may also be a way for children to enact agency within the research process, by sharing stories that they think might surprise the researcher or disrupt the research process.

Analysis of children's accounts and enactment of agency in suggests that Hoggett's (2001) notion of agency which recognises "the multiplicity of contexts that individuals inhabit and the constraints and value orders which structure different contexts" (p. 6), is a valuable starting point for investigating the ways in which young children experience agency in their day to day lives. This finding fits with Abebe's (2019) claim that children's agency is not a universal experience, rather one that is inherently dynamic, situational, and contextual to each individual. The stories and experiences children shared also align with the claim made by Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2013), that children's agency cannot be understood as simply an assessment of children's capacity "to choose to do things" (p. 363). Rather, discussion and theorisation of children's agency needs to engage with questions about how the spatial, political, and materials factors shape the 'choices' children confront, and the settings and relationships they inhabit and are a part of.

5 Discussion

Children's accounts of their experiences and understandings of play and agency speak not only to the importance of these indicators, but how current adult conceptualisations of play and agency across a variety of literature are not necessarily reflective of young children's understandings. As such, this study offers insight in relation to previous calls for the inclusion of "new" domains of child wellbeing (Ben-Arieh 2012) that locate young children's perspectives within current social, temporal, and cultural conceptualisations of child wellbeing (Fattore et al. 2019). Here we offer a discussion of the findings in relation to the child indicators literature and wider childhood discourse to contextualise the findings.

This study is the first to offer an empirical investigation into young children's experiences and understandings of play from a child indicators perspective. In many ways, the exclusion of play from child indicators research is surprising given the centrality of leisure in adult conceptualisations of wellbeing (Andrews and Withey 2012; Diener 2000; Spiers and Walker 2008). Play has been frequently situated within theories of human development from a lifespan perspective, which suggest that there is a relationship between play in childhood and leisure in adulthood, and that this relationship is dynamic and multi-directional (Freysinger 2015). While there is contention in the literature on the level of comparability between play in childhood and leisure in adulthood, they share many similar dimensions such as: voluntariness, freedom of choice, personal expression, and pleasure (Freysinger 2015), supporting the assertion that play is an important aspect of child wellbeing. Additionally, according to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to leisure, play and culture (United Nations 1989) and including play within our understandings of child wellbeing helps to advocate for this right for all children.

While play had not been previously investigated from a child indicators' perspective, there have been some empirical studies looking at the role of play in relation to child

wellbeing. Addabbo et al. (2014), investigated the concepts of 'play' and 'the senses' in relation to six-to-eight-year old children's wellbeing using a previously collected data set from a National Italian 'Daily Life' Survey. The authors found these two areas to be of significant value to investigating child wellbeing and suggests that further research within a more complex framework including other child wellbeing indicators, was warranted. A study by Moore and Lynch (2018) also investigated the role of play in relation to six-to-eight year old children's wellbeing and found that play is intrinsically connected to children's wellbeing and that should be prioritised in the measurement and conceptualisation of wellbeing at a national and policy level. The findings of the present study add to this literature by evidencing that play is also a central concept for preschool aged children's wellbeing, and that its addition to a more complex wellbeing framework (the a priori codebook used for analysis) offers a more nuanced understanding of child wellbeing.

Children's accounts also demonstrated that agency was an important concept to young children. While agency has long been recognised as an integral part of wellbeing for adults, the discourses and contestations on the conceptual framing of agency taking place in the 1980's and 1990's paid little to no attention to how or if the concept of agency applied to children (Esser et al. 2016). The New Sociology of childhood movement is largely responsible for asserting that agency is an integral concept to the study of children and childhood (James and James 2012), and there continues to be calls for further critique of simplistic understandings of children's agency and the development of a theory of agency that includes children and their enactment of agency within complex process and structures (Valentine 2011; Skattebol et al. 2017).

The ways in which children spoke about their agency (or lack thereof) aligned with findings from a study by Fattore et al. (2009), which used a child-centred approach to investigate older children's understandings and experiences of wellbeing. Their study found that older children, aged 8–15 years, identified the opportunity to enact agency and exert influence as important to their wellbeing, even though their understandings and views of agency were different from those of adults. When older children voiced their desire to have some control and be able to exert influence, participants discussed agency within the boundaries and possibilities set by others, such as parents. When these boundaries were perceived as fair and mutually negotiated, children's accounts suggested they provided guidance and security.

Young children's accounts in this study echo Fattore et al.'s (2009) findings by evidencing that young children frequently frame their agency in relation to adults in their lives, especially their parents. As Esser et al. (2016) contests, liberal or rational conceptualisations of agency have excluded children because children and childhood operate within generational power structures, resulting in children being structurally disadvantaged. The findings in this study, however, demonstrate that young children do enact agency within generational relationships, and that the ability to be a social actor who makes choices and impacts the world around them is important to them. As such, these findings are similar to the findings of Fattore et al. (2009) where older children discussed their agency within the boundaries set by adults, such as their parents or teachers. For the young children in this study, when adults set boundaries that were perceived as fair and mutually negotiated, children's accounts suggested they provided guidance and security, positively impacting on their agency. Analysis of the data demonstrated that young children's experiences and understandings of agency are

nuanced and highly relational, temporal, and responsive to environmental and structural contexts. These findings accord with calls for the continued theoretical interrogation of over simplified and binary views of childhood agency (Esser et al. 2016; Durham 2011). As such, the findings of the present study extend the literature by demonstrating that the concept of agency is important to the wellbeing of even young children.

While this study offers insights into you children's experiences and understandings of wellbeing, the sample size and homogeneity of the sample are limitations of the data. While the study represents a diverse sample of preschool aged children in Metropolitan Australia, given the highly contextualised nature of childhood, preschool aged children in other contexts may experience and understand wellbeing in different ways. Further research is needed to understand how children outside of western developed nations understand and conceptualise their wellbeing. Additionally, further research of how marginalised voices within western developed nations, such as those of Indigenous children, would greatly support a more nuanced and inclusive view of children's understandings and conceptualisations of their own wellbeing. Another limitation that is present in any participatory research with children is that despite the co-constructed nature of the research process, analysis of the data was done by adults who employ conceptual frameworks that differ from those of children. We have attempted to mitigate this challenge through the process of using visual research methods and member checking, yet we acknowledge that cautions about adults' ability to understand and interpret children's perspectives remain.

6 Conclusion

This paper adds to current knowledge in two ways. The first is through reporting and investigating the understandings and experiences of wellbeing held by a diverse sample of preschool aged children, a group largely excluded from wellbeing research. The second contribution is that young children's perspectives of wellbeing are compared to current child wellbeing indicator frameworks. The purpose of this analysis is to explore whether the measures currently in use for assessing preschool aged children's wellbeing accord or differ from young children's perspectives.

The findings suggest that the social indicators currently in widespread use for measuring and assessing child wellbeing are applicable to children. However, the accounts of young children suggest that there are additional indicators that warrant further investigations: opportunities for play and children's agency. The preliminary investigation of these two-child identified indicators have worked to contextualise these concepts within the greater fields of wellbeing, childhood, and early child education research and expand upon the ways that these concepts are understood and experienced by young children.

This study contributes to the growing body of recent literature that evidences young children's capacity as contributors to our knowledge about child wellbeing, and that the inclusion of their voices offers important contributions to the state of the literature. Yet, wellbeing research *with* young children, including this study, has been relatively small scale. Within this participatory research study we have attempted to position young children's experiences and understandings of wellbeing in relation to large scale, population-based measures. However, further research is needed to determine the scalability of including young children's voices in population-based measures.

The perspectives of the young children included in this study offer novel contributions to current conceptualisations and operationalisation of child wellbeing. We argue that the inclusion of young children's voices and perspectives is not only necessary for ensuring children's rights, but also to support the development of policy and practices in relation to young children that are more meaningful, holistic, and sensitive to the lived experiences of children. Previous Australian research using participatory methods to highlight children's accounts of the barriers to physical activity (MacDougall et al. 2004) is an example where the inclusion of children's perspectives can be an effective tool in changing state level policy and informing interventions and programs. As such, we assert that young children's contributions to our understandings and conceptualisations of child wellbeing can act as a mechanism for deepening our understanding of the applicability and validity of child wellbeing indicators in the assessment of preschool aged child wellbeing. Further research is needed to better understand these child-identified indicators, especially during pivotal times of child wellbeing assessment such as the transition to formal schooling.

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Appendix 8 – Systematic Search PRISMA Diagrams

PRISMA Flow Diagram – PROQUEST (initial search)

Keywords - ('early childhood') AND education AND (health OR well-being) AND ('transition to school') AND (childcare OR 'integrated centres')
Narrowed by, peer reviewed, publication date range of 1998-2014

Identification

Records identified through database searching
(n = **7623**)

Screening

Records after duplicates removed
(n = **7623**)

Records screened
(n = **4000**)

Records excluded
(n = **3858**):
Dissimilar contexts – 131
Primary Health Care – 477
School Readiness – 146
Unrelated childcare/child devel. – 234
Professional learning = 158
Older child/youth/post sec. – 650
Parental education – 307
Adult health – 319
Health promotion/interventions – 229
Special education – 251
Global health – 363
Unrelated policy discourse – 210
Medical research - 250
Historical unrelated research - 98
Other – 35

Eligibility

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility
(n = **142**)

Included

Studies included
(n = **27**)
Child health and wellbeing – 4
Preschool to school transition – 8
Indicators/measurement of H&W – 3
Policy and practice – 4
Service Integration - 9

Full-text articles excluded, with reasons
(n = **115**)
Unrelated to health & wellbeing – 5
Unrelated to school transition – 42
Clinical focus – 9
Parental training/intervention – 6
Teacher/Educator/Practitioner focus - 10
School readiness focus – 10
Intervention focus – 13
Unrelated context and/or policy focus - 20

PRISMA Flow Diagram – PROQUEST (secondary search)

Keywords - (('preschool to kindergarten transition') AND (health OR well-being))
Narrowed by, peer reviewed, after 1998

Identification

Records identified through database searching
(n = **1873**)

Screening

Records after duplicates removed
(n = **1873** so far)

Records screened
(n = **1873**) all?

Records excluded
(n = **1606**) so far:
Parenting focus – 75
Outside 'transition to school' – 228
Clinical focus – 254
School readiness/academics – 178
Unrelated child dev. – 162
Special education focus – 263
Health intervention focus – 121
Unrelated context or policy focus – 122
Professional dev. focus – 57
Adult health – 22
Unrelated child/family health – 109
Other - 15

Eligibility

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility
(n = **267**)

Included

Studies included
(n = **49**)
Child Wellbeing - 5
Policy – 5
Indicators/measurement H&W – 6
Preschool to school transition – 21
Service integration - 12

Full-text articles excluded, with reasons
(n = **205**)
Duplicates from previous search – 167
School readiness/academic focused – 6
Outside 'transition to school' – 11
Health intervention focused – 5
Unrelated context/setting – 4
Teaching materials -1
Unrelated policy discussion – 2
Teacher focused - 1

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PRISMA Flow Diagram – INFORMIT (initial search)

Keywords - ("'transition to school'") AND health OR wellbeing AND ("'early childhood education'")
Narrowed by, peer reviewed, date range 1998-2015

Identification

Records identified through database searching
(n = **253**)

Records after duplicates removed
(n = **102**)

Screening

Records screened
(n = **151**)

Records excluded
(n = **119**) so far:
Outside 'transition to school' – 43
Health prevention/intervention – 14
Adult health – 2
Parental focus – 7
Unrelated policy/context – 21
Professional development – 12
Unrelated childcare/development – 21
Readiness/academics – 3
Special education focus - 2
Other - 2

Eligibility

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility
(n = **24**)

Full-text articles excluded, with reasons
(n = **15**)
Duplicates from previous searches – 4
Intervention focused – 2
Unrelated context – 2
Outdated reports – 2
Outside 'transition to school' – 3
Parent information - 2

Included

Studies included
(n = **9**)
'Transition to school' – 3
Child wellbeing – 4
Indicators/measurement – 1
Policy - 1

PRISMA Flow Diagram – INFORMIT (secondary search)
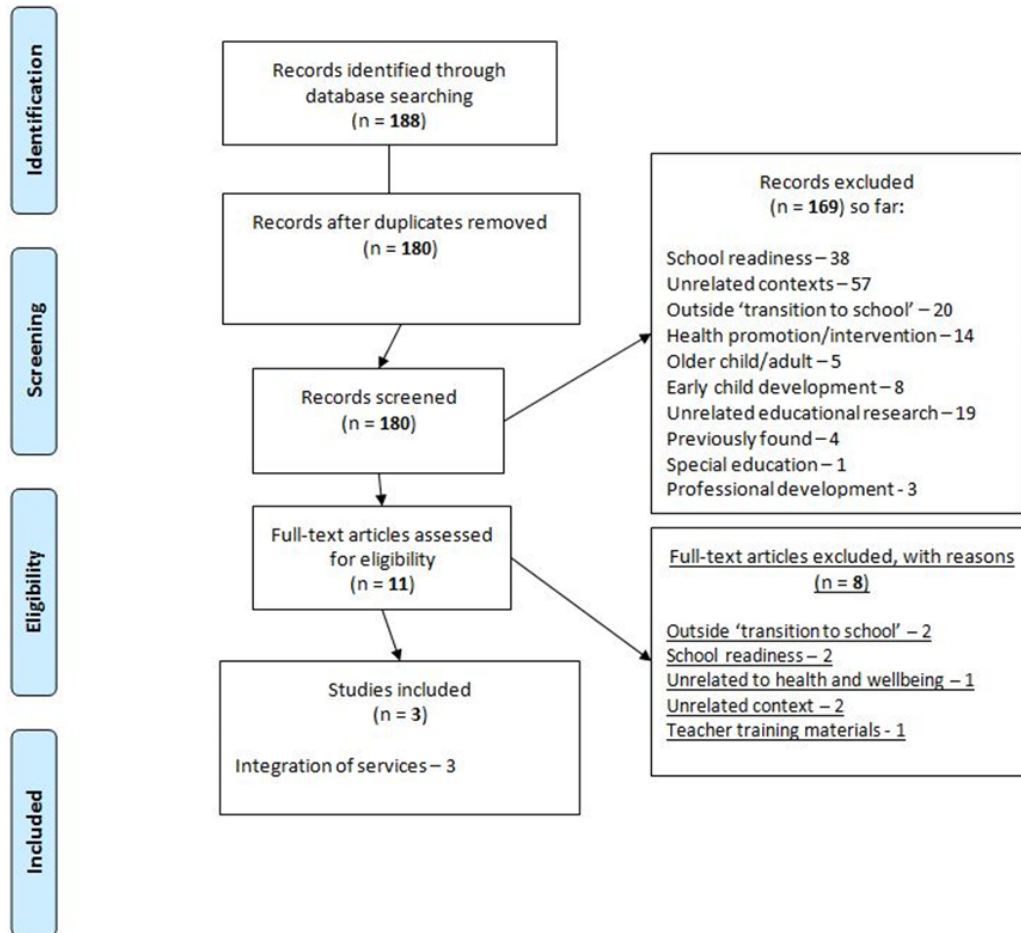
Keywords - ("'integrated early childhood'") AND ('child* centre') AND ('transition to school') OR ('early childhood') AND Australia)
Narrowed by, peer reviewed, date range 1998-2015

Identification

Records identified through database searching
(n = 68)

Records after duplicates removed
(n = 41)

Screening

Records after previously found/included removed
(n = 31)

Records screened
(n = 31)

Records excluded
(n = 24) so far:

Dissimilar contexts – 1
Unrelated to integrated centres – 18
School readiness - 5

Eligibility

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility
(n = 7)

Full-text articles excluded, with reasons
(n = 3)

Unrelated to integrated centres - 3

Included

Studies included
(n = 4)

'Transition to school' – 3
Service Integration - 1

PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram – ERIC

Keywords - (kindergarten and health and early childhood)
Narrowed by, peer reviewed, date range 1998-2015

Identification

Records identified through
database searching
(n = **188**)

Records after duplicates removed
(n = **180**)

Screening

Records screened
(n = **180**)

Records excluded
(n = **169**) so far:

School readiness – 38
Unrelated contexts – 57
Outside 'transition to school' – 20
Health promotion/intervention – 14
Older child/adult – 5
Early child development – 8
Unrelated educational research – 19
Previously found – 4
Special education – 1
Professional development - 3

Eligibility

Full-text articles assessed
for eligibility
(n = **11**)

Full-text articles excluded, with reasons
(n = **8**)

Outside 'transition to school' – 2
School readiness – 2
Unrelated to health and wellbeing – 1
Unrelated context – 2
Teacher training materials - 1

Included

Studies included
(n = **3**)

Integration of services – 3

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PRISMA Flow Diagram – WEB OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Keywords - ('transition to school') AND TOPIC: ('early childhood') AND TOPIC: (health)
Narrowed by, peer reviewed, publication date range of 1998-2014

Identification

Records identified through database searching
(n = 63)

Screening

Records after duplicates removed
(n = 63)

Records screened
(n = 63)

Records excluded
(n = **63**):
Unrelated to 'transition to school' - 2
Primary Health Care – 5
School Readiness – 2
Unrelated childcare/child devel. – 6
Older child/youth – 26
Adult health – 5
Health promotion/interventions – 8
Medical research - 8
Previously found - 1

Eligibility

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility
(n = 0)

Full-text articles excluded, with reasons
(n =0)

Included

Studies included
(n = 0)

Appendix 9 – Data Extraction Table

Details *Author/Year *Title *Country *Paper type (grading) *Assigned grade *keywords	Purpose/Aims *Purpose of the research * What is the research aiming to learn, inform, or challenge	Sample/Methods *Who is being researched? *Sample size *Methods used	Frameworks *Conceptual or theoretical frameworks informing the research	Instruments *Instruments or measurement tools employed	Key Findings *Key findings according to author(s) *Key findings for the systematic review *Calls for further research	Critical Analysis *Strengths and weaknesses of the paper *Underlying assumptions/positions employed by author(s) *Discrepancies within and in relation to the literature
*Ben-Arieh (2012) * *How do we measure and monitor the "state of our children"? Revisiting the topic in honour of Sheila B. Kamerman* *Israel *Quantitative study (B) *Keywords: child development, child health, wellbeing, social indicators	*The purpose of the study was to re-examine the field of child indicators and "state of the child" reports around the globe during the first decade of the 21st century. *The study aims to investigate how this developing field of child well-being indicators and status reports has fared over the last decade	*Sample: 249 reports published between 2000 and 2010 that met the study criteria *Method – empirical exploration of the data collected through a systematic search including title screens, content screens, data coding, and the isolation of descriptive (2) and characteristic (9) variables.	*atheoretical	*no instruments used	*The number of reports has increased significantly * findings show that the quantity of "state of the child" reports has continued to increase in recent years, and the current trend leads us to believe that the field is still growing, although it might be close to reaching its peak at least in some regions	*Strengths: extensive search of the literature, documents a growing interest childhood wellbeing *Weaknesses: some possible weighting issues with how reports were included *An example of how social indicator research seems to be largely divorced from theory
*Giallo, Kienhuis, et al. (2008) * *A psychometric Evaluation of the Parent Self-efficacy in Managing the Transition to School Scale* *Australia (VIC) *Quantitative study (B) *Keywords: 'transition to school', parents, evaluation, self-efficacy, parent wellbeing	* The purpose of the study was to test the psychometric properties of a new measure, The Parent Self-efficacy in Managing the Transition to School Scale (PSMTSS) in a large scale sample. *4 identified aims in relation to construct validity and internal consistency and the investigation of relationship between parental efficacy and children's reported outcomes to school adjustment	*Sample: mothers participating in a school-based program to support their child transitioning to primary school (922 completed the questionnaire) *Methods: sample was assessed for representativeness using the ABS. Items rated on a 6-point Likert scale *exploratory methods of analysis used.	*The PSMTSS scale was created by drawing upon the parental self-efficacy theories and literature	*Parent Self-efficacy in Managing the Transition to School Scale (PSMTSS) – (9 item scale) * Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC) *Likert Scale * Children's Adjustment to School Scale – Parent Report * School Entrant Health Questionnaire	*Findings revealed that parents who were more efficacious about their ability to manage the transition period reported fewer worries or concerns about their ability to cope and their children's adjustment than parents who were less efficacious.	*Strengths: used a variety of measure to test for validity * Weaknesses – there may be some parental reliability concerns. *Limited to a parents view without taking into account how the child efficacy in relation to the reported outcomes. An example of the lack of research about children's experiences in transition.

Details	Purpose/Aims	Sample/Methods	Frameworks	Instruments	Key Findings	Critical Analysis
*Hymel, Lemare, et al.(2011) * *The Early Development Instrument: An Examination of Convergent and Discriminant Validity* *Canada *Quantitative study (A) *Keywords: *EDI, early childhood	*The purpose was to further the investigation of validity and applicability of the EDI in Canada and internationally. * The aim was to examine the convergent and discriminant validity of the EDI, with interest in associations with direct, child-based assessments.	*Sample: 267 kindergarten children evaluated on the EDI by 27 teachers in 16 schools (3 districts) in British Columbia, Canada *Methods: the results of the EDI were compared with the results of 4 other comparison measures of readiness. Analysis included correlational comparisons, between overall scores and domain and subscale scores. *multiple regression analysis was conducted, predicting EDI overall scores from the four comparison measure total scores	*atheoretical	*EDI * Early Screening Instrument-Kindergarten—Revised (ESI-K) * School Readiness Composite (SRC) of the Bracken Basic Concepts Scale-Revised * Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) * Group for the Study of Interpersonal Development (GSID) Relationship Questionnaire	*Taken together, results of the present study provide correlational evidence that supports the convergent validity of the overall EDI. However, the correlational evidence for the convergent and discriminant validity of the EDI domain scores, when related to corresponding domains of direct, child-based school readiness assessments, is less compelling. *Mixed evidence for the convergent validity of the EDI in the Physical Health/Well-being domain score	*Strengths: well-structured study which used a variety of comparisons to test EDI reliability *Weaknesses: validity was sought by comparing individual reliability of the child being assessed, despite the fact that the EDI is a population measure, not an individual one, begging the question, how applicable is individual reliability of the EDI? *claims to view school readiness as a broader issue, however, reverts to traditional views of measuring a child's ability to be 'ready for school', such as academic measures.
*Rous, B., Myers, C. T (2007) **Strategies for Supporting Transitions of Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families* *USA *Quantitative study (B) *Keywords: *special ed., parents, families, 'transition to school'	*the purpose was to identify transition practices that have been implemented effectively for children, families, staff, administrators, and communities. *the aim was to use focus group methods to identify strategies believed to be effective in supporting children's and families' transitions from early intervention to preschool, and preschool to kindergarten	*Sample: 43 participants. 33 were practitioners, administrators, trainers, or facilitators and 10 were family members of a child with a disability *Methods: Focus groups were run with 2-10 participants. Data analysed using QSRNVivo. *inductive approach used for analysis	*largely atheoretical, references some transition models and strategies generically, but does not name or give specific reference to models or theories of transition, or any other theoretical models.	*no instruments used	*study provides support for transition activities, specifically ones, ones that support an integration of services and care providers in the transition process and for the creation of a conceptual framework on transition *the majority of the participants (OTs, PT, speech paths) reported that they had never received any specialized training regarding early childhood transition	*Strengths: engaged a variety of respondents *Weaknesses: data that came from transcripts was ignored unless it referred specifically to one of the questions (for coding purposes) this may have lost fruitful and interesting data pertinent to the discussion of transition

Details	Purpose/Aims	Sample/Methods	Frameworks	Instruments	Key Findings	Critical Analysis
*Early, Pianta, et al (2001) * *Transition Practices: Findings from a national Survey of Kindergarten Teachers* *USA *Quantitative study (B) *keywords: 'transition to school', teachers, transition practices	*The purpose was to further explore the school, teacher, and classroom characteristics that are linked to optimal transition practices *aims to builds on and expand from an earlier cited study by Pianta (1999) in making between-group comparisons regarding the timing and intensity of successful transition practices.	*Sample: 3,945 kindergarten teachers (first year of school) who responded to a mailed survey request (random sample of teachers from a national database) *Method: Questionnaire developed from earlier work on the National Transition Study. Response rate was analysed for representativeness. Transition practices were aggregated, and *t* test correlations were conducted testing the relations between practice use, types of practices, and teacher characteristics.	*atheoretical	*no instruments used	*most transition practices occur after the beginning of the school year, which, as preschool has been identified as an important components of school transition indicated that on average transition practices are far from optimal. *the present data helps us understand some specific reasons for the heavy reliance on non-optimal practices, such as those aimed at the entire group or that that occur after the beginning of school.	*Strengths: *a large sample of teachers, focuses on an expanded view of 'school readiness' *Weaknesses: closed answer questionnaires are limited in the data they can retrieve, no mention of school demographics, representativeness of the sample *study works on the assumption that communication and co-construction of transition practices between schools and families it inherently beneficial
*La Paro et al. (2003) * *Preschool to kindergarten transition activities: Involvement and satisfaction of families and teachers* *USA *Quantitative study (B) *Keywords: 'transition to school', families, teachers,	*The purpose was to report the findings of a two year intervention project aimed at supporting an fostering a successful transition to school for children and families *The aim of the study was to investigate the barriers reported by families and teachers in regards to transition, and which practices were most successful in supporting the transition to school	*Sample: 86 children from 2 preschool programs, their families, and their new teachers, 10 preschool teachers in 10 different classrooms, and 8 family workers who were assigned to work with the 86 families Methods: Parent interviews, teacher questionnaires & interviews w/ family workers *risk indexes were calculated for variable such as low income, single parents, and parental mental health	*the study claims that the intervention was based on theoretical models of transition (mentions Bronfenbrenner) but not made explicit. *the study outlined in the paper is atheoretical	*Centre of Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) (results reported on mother's only)	When families and teachers participate in these types of transition activities, they report that they are helpful. Overall, these results suggest that transition activities can be fostered and can attract widespread participation. These findings provide support for the work of schools and communities to continue their efforts to build effective transition mechanisms	*Strengths: engages multiple stakeholders in their views on transition, good sample size *Weaknesses: little mention of how data was analysed, unclear whether the information from the focus group was analysed and synthesised using qualitative or quantitative measures

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Details	Purpose/Aims	Sample/Methods	Frameworks	Instruments	Key Findings	Critical Analysis
*Wildenger & McIntyre(2012) * *Investigating the Relation between Kindergarten Preparation and Child Socio-Behavioural School Outcomes* *USA *Quantitative study (A) *Keywords: 'transition to school', socio-behavioural outcomes, school	*The purpose was to investigate the relation between kindergarten preparation variables and children's socio-behavioural outcomes in kindergarten *The aim was to investigate the relation between kindergarten preparation (encompassing pre-kindergarten programming and caregiver involvement in transition practices) and socio-behavioural child outcomes for typically developing children entering kindergarten in the US.	*Sample: 86 general education students, their parents, and teachers (15). *Methods: a within-subjects correlational design with data collection occurring at two time points during the school year. SPSS was used to conduct all analyses. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse demographic variables. Bivariate correlations were used to analyse relations between kindergarten preparation variables and child outcome variables. Hierarchical regression analyses were used to predict kindergarten socio-behavioural outcomes	* largely atheoretical – some mention of theoretical concepts such as ecological model and dynamic linkages	*revised FEIT (72 items, 5 domains) *Problem Behaviour Scale of the Social Skills Rating System—Elementary Parent version (17-item scale) *Social Skills Rating System—Elementary Teacher version (30 item scale) *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (28 item scale)	* Notably, kindergarten preparation variables significantly explained unique variance above and beyond the contributions of previously entered variables *Conversely, parent involvement in transition activities was not uniquely predictive of socio-behavioural kindergarten outcomes *Results of this study indicated that pre-kindergarten teachers' greater use of transition practices uniquely predicted positive child socio-behavioural outcomes in kindergarten.	* Strengths: used a variety of different instruments, gave examples of the transition practices that the questions were in response to, took into account a wider understanding of readiness and transition *Weaknesses: data was collected on students, not from students, parent's reported on the transition activities in which they were involved, but the study did not include questions about ones that they did not, or chose not to participate in.
*Wildenger et. Al (2008) * *Children's Daily Routines During Kindergarten Transition* *USA *Quantitative study (A) *Keywords: *children, routines, 'transition to school', families	*The purpose was to investigate the routines of families entering transition to school to help support ECE and families in 'seamless' transitions *The study has two aims,* to explore whether children transitioning to kindergarten had regular routines, and explore the extent to which children's routines would change upon transitioning to kindergarten, indicating a disruption in family routines	*Sample: 132 parents or caregivers of children previously enrolled in ECE programs and transitioning to school Methods: Families completed the survey approximately 2 weeks prior to the beginning of school year. Paired sample t-tests and Chi-square analyses were used to explore whether the timing of children's routines differed by select demographic variables	* atheoretical – focused on practice, and what educators can learn from the routines and transition on families and children	*no instruments used	*Children's routines are likely to change considerably upon entering kindergarten. *Results suggested that although most children transitioning to kindergarten have regular routines, a significant portion of children may lack predictable, organized schedules during transition	*Strengths: the study considers variables outside the 'usual' definition of 'school readiness' and suggests ways in which schools can become more 'ready' for students families during transition *Weaknesses: accuracy of parent reporting may be an issue *Are consistent home routines a valid measure of transition success?

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*Janus et al. (2011) * *Validity and Psychometric Properties of the Early Development Instrument in Canada, Australia, United States, and Jamaica* *Canada/International *Quantitative study (A) *Keywords: EDI, child development	*the purpose is to examine the validity of the EDI through examining the EDI's psychometric properties in four English-speaking countries (Canada, Australia, United States and Jamaica) * The study aims to extend the above studies in further exploration of the psychometric properties of the EDI and thus progresses the steps towards validating the EDI as a tool to measure children's developmental health at school entry.	*Sample: Data collected from the EDI in four English-speaking countries: Canada (175,000) Australia (30,000) the US (1,200) and Jamaica (156) *Methods: confirmatory factor analyses were run within the structural equation modelling (SEM) framework. To take into account the categorical indicator items in each of the domains, Mplus was used which includes a robust weighted least squares estimator	*largely atheoretical, some inclusion of theory in regards to child development the theoretical underpinnings of approaches to cross-cultural adaptations	*EDI *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)	*The results of this paper indicate that the EDI demonstrates similar psychometric properties in a number of countries, thus building the evidence for the instrument to be added to the limited array of internationally comparable child social indicators * It is argued that future studies would also benefit from including more detailed background information on the students, so that the EDI domain scores could be investigated against potential predictors	*Strengths: international comparisons *Weaknesses: sample sizes are vastly different and not at all indicative of overall country population *data from the US was not analysed using the second instrument (PPVT) so why it was included is somewhat questionable *Makes an interesting point about the utility of making the EDI a more individual rather than community level instrument, which is contrary to other studies in the literature
*Janus & Duku (2010) * *The School entry Gap: Socioeconomic, Family, and Health Factors Associated with Children's School Readiness to Learn* *Canada *Quantitative study (B) *Keywords: SES status, health, 'school readiness'	*The purpose is to explore factors of literacy development in 5 areas of risk: socioeconomic status, family structure, child health, parent health, and parent involvement *Aims to identify the factors contributing to children's vulnerability in readiness for school learning as measured with the EDI	*The data was collected from the Community Component of the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth *The final sample for the study was selected by choosing children who had valid data for all analyses. *Methods: comparisons were made by gender and age at completion using cross tabulations (Pearson chi squares) and analyses of variance, respectively. Multivariate analysis of variance was also used	*largely atheoretical – some mention of developmental science basis	*EDI	* Child's suboptimal health, male gender, and coming from a family with low income contribute most strongly to the vulnerability at school entry *the results of the study provide additional and much-needed evidence on the instrument's sensitivity at the individual level, thus paving the way for its use in interpreting children's school readiness in the context of their lives and the communities in which they live	*Strengths: large sample size, compares to different measures of school readiness with a health and wellbeing component *Weaknesses: still a narrowly focused on a version of readiness, not an overly representative sample in terms of SES status of Canadian children

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*McIntyre & Eckert (2007) *Transition to Kindergarten: Family Experiences and Involvement *USA *Quantitative study (A) *Keywords: 'transition to school', families	*The purpose is to investigate the degree to which parents are involved in kindergarten preparation in exploration of the implications of growing parental involvement during transition to school *3 specific aims: describe transition-related activities from the perspective of families, describe family concerns and issues pertaining to their children's transition to kindergarten, and explore environmental variables that may be related to family involvement in transition planning and services	*Participants were 132 parents/caregivers of children previously enrolled in early childhood education programs and transitioning to kindergarten in an urban school district (17% response rate), the majority were mothers (89.9%) *Methods: a 57 item survey (FEITT) was sent to potential participants. Returned surveys were analysed to determine the results of the survey which is expressed through percentages of parent's answers to survey questions	*atheoretical – speaks to the work of the study as addressing a gap in empirical studies of families experiences in transition	*Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT)	*Findings suggest that parents would like more information about their child's transition, including information about kindergarten academic and behavioural expectations, as well as the future kindergarten placement and teacher.	*Strengths: focuses on parents understanding and experiences with transition, offers a potentially useful instrument *Weaknesses: does not describe the transition practices currently in use that parents would have experienced, small amount of respondents from initial invitation *argues that an integrated transition team may best facilitate successful transition, but gives no evidence for this claim
*Rimm-Kauffman & Pianta (2010) *Family-School Communication in preschool and Kindergarten in the Context of a Relationship-Enhancing Intervention *USA *Quantitative study (B) *Keywords: family-school communication, relationships, 'transition to school'	* The purpose is to describe and examine family-school communication in early childhood settings *the aim was to investigate how family factors and families experiences family-school communication predict and impact the frequency of family-school communication in preschool and kindergarten	*Seventy-five child participants (32 female and 43 male) were included in the present study aged 48 to 59 months *Methods: data is from 3 sources 1) family-school communication logs, 2) interviews of the families, and 3) a teacher questionnaire of problem behaviours. Paired t-tests and Hartley FMax tests were used. Three ordinary least square regression analyses were also computed on the data	*The study cited literature which referenced the conceptual framework of the importance of relationships (e.g., teachers and children, children and their peers) in supporting children's experience as they make the transition from preschool to kindergarten	No instruments used	*Study reported counter intuitive findings: contrary to expectations, few family factors and experiences predicted frequency of family-school communication *Families experience a great decrease in communication between preschool and kindergarten, an interventions designed to ease the transition to kindergarten needs to either ameliorate the decrease or acknowledge its existence to prepare families.	*Strengths: conducted alongside an intervention aimed at improving transition – targeted focus *Weaknesses: unsure of the weight family-school contact should have on understanding children's transition to school experience, teacher questionnaire was based on 'problem behaviour' (not a holistic view of transition) *frequency of family-school contact isn't necessarily an indicator of supportive or helpful communication.

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*Giallo, et al. (2010) * *Making the transition to primary schools: an evaluation of a transition program for parents* *Australia *Quantitative study (B) *Keywords: 'transition to school, parents, parenting program	*The purpose is to provide information and resources about how to best help children prepare for and manage the transition to school *the study aims to assess the effectiveness of a parenting program to support children's transition to school and evaluate the program's ability to improve children's academic and social adjustment to school	*Sample: 576 parents from 21 Victorian primary schools (11 public/10 catholic) *Methods: Randomized control study where parents complete 3 surveys during the course of transition. Missing values option in SPSS and K.S Lilliefors' tests of normality used to control data and check possible skewing of variables. Single-factor, between-subjects multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) were conducted to compare the intervention and control conditions. Descriptive statistics used	*The study itself is atheoretical, however the parenting program which was being evaluated was guided by two frameworks: the Ecological Dynamic Model of Transition and the CONSORT framework.	*The ABS Socio-economic Indexes for Areas * The Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage * Parent Self-efficacy in Managing the Transition to School Scale PSMTSS) * Parenting Sense of Competence Scale PSOCS * Parents' Involvement in Home-based and School-based Activities * Children's Adjustment to School Scale – Parent and Teacher Report * Social, emotional, behavioural functioning items from the School Entrant Health Questionnaire SEHQ	*The results demonstrated that participation in the transition to school parent program had a positive effect on parental self-efficacy to help their children make the transition to school * There were no significant differences between the intervention and control conditions on parent and teacher ratings of children's happiness to go to school, academic adjustment, social adjustment and school readiness	*Strengths: randomised control study with controls for school size, participant numbers, and SES status *Weaknesses: the current study did not account for the contribution that existing school transition practices made to children's adjustment, data was collected from teachers but not reported in the paper.
*Brinkman, S (2012) * *The validation and use of a population measure of early childhood development in Australia: The Australian Early Development Index* *Australia *Mixed Methods study (A) *Keywords: EDI, AEDI, early childhood	*The purpose was an investigation into the validity and use of the AEDI to inform childhood development policy *Study outlined 2 aims: to investigate the construct, concurrent and predictive validity of the AEDI, and to investigate the applicability of population wide AEDI data to policy	*Sample: data compiled from 4 separate data collections: 3700 children in WA, subsample of 270 children from a national cohort study, multiregional study of 35,530 children across Aus., and the first national census of Aus. children (264,203). *Methods: mixed methods-variety of analytic approaches used: correlational, sensitivity and specificity analysis logistical regression, and descriptive analysis.	*no specific frameworks are listed	*AEDI	*The AEDI was found to have good construct validity and performed better than other popular/traditional measures of child development *AEDI a god predictor of standardised tests in years 3, 5 &7 *suggests that the AEDI will provide a valid evidence base for early childhood policies to understand and support child wellbeing	*Strengths: extremely comprehensive study of the AEDI (use and validity) *Weaknesses: while its findings suggest the utility of the AEDI for identifying measures that identify resilience, it is unclear how the data collected from the AEDI can support childhood wellbeing in meaningful ways. *Narrow definition of childhood wellbeing

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*Janus et al. (2008) * *In transition: Experiences of Parents of Children with Special Needs at School Entry* *Canada *Mixed Methods study (B) *Keywords: special ed., 'transition to school', parents	*The purpose is to further understand the experience of parents of children with special needs during transition to school, and how services supporting children with special needs work (or don't work) together to support transition. *The aim of the study was twofold, to assess differences in parental perception of the quality of care and the impact of disability on their lives and identify the links in services experienced by parents during the transition to school	*Sample: 38 families with a child with a diagnosed disability were included, 20 with a school aged child, and 20 with a pre-school aged child (boys outnumbered girls 4:1) *Methods: descriptive statistics and mean comparisons were calculated for the scale scores of VABS, IOF and MPOC-20 for post-transition and pre-transition groups. *Interviews were conducted with parents to collect qualitative data on the child's current or anticipated transition to school	atheoretical – study attempts to address the lack (as suggested by the authors) of empirical evidence on parental involvement and advocacy	* The Impact on Family (IOF) scale * Measure of Processes of Care (MPOC-20) * The Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales	*The study expected to find that parents would consider the transition to school a stressful process. Only some of our expectations were confirmed. As hypothesised, parents of children already in school reported less positive processes of care than those whose children were in the pre-transition stage. However, parents of children in the pre-transition stage consistently reported higher disability impact on the family, in particular in the personal strain area and social/family life	*Strengths: the mixed method approach used offers diverse data, investigation into how the linking or lack thereof of services affects parents during transition Weaknesses: *the title is misleading; data is collected from different children at difference points in their transition process. *The study is really more of a comparative student of the feelings and experiences of families with children with special needs before and after transition
* Sayers, Coutts, et al. (2007) * *Building Better Communities for Children: Community Implementation and Evaluation of the Australian Early Development Index* *Australia *Mixed Methods study (A) *Keywords: EDI, AEDI, evaluation	*The purpose is to describe the processes used to adapt the EDI for Australia and the subsequent evaluation of the AEDI *The aim is to outline the community implementation of the AEDI in Australia and the results of the ensuing three-year process and impact evaluation of the instrument	*Sample: evaluation reports completed by local AEDI Coordinators, teachers who completed the AEDI, and school principals – 1,558 total respondents. *Methods: A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used including surveys and interviews. AEDI data was cleaned, analysed, mapped, and validated for consistency.	*atheoretical	*AEDI	*The key findings from the evaluation are that communities can successfully implement the AEDI, understand and disseminate the results. In communities that implemented the AEDI, the implementation process and results promoted community mobilisation around early childhood and facilitated strategic planning and action	*Strengths: detailed description of implementation *Weaknesses: reasons stated for the need of adaptation from EDI to AEDI not logical * focus on measurement of current practices rather than if what is being measured is appropriate *Suggests that the AEDI gives an accurate description of child-wellbeing from a community level

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*Kaehne. &. Catheral (2013) * *User involvement in service integration and carers' views of co-locating children's services* *UK (Wales) *Mixed methods study (A) *Keywords: service integration, co-location, children, families	*The purpose was to investigate whether carers of children with learning disabilities had any knowledge of organisational changes that occurred as a result of co-locating services *The aim is to report the findings of a study of two learning disabilities services in Wales that undertook co-location in a children development centre	Sample: 49 respondents for the survey, 3 for the in-depth interviews. Methods: Qualitative – for the interviews descriptive analysis was used. Findings are evidenced by verbatim quotes. Quantitative - survey returns were inputted into a survey capture application and a simple descriptive analysis of the returns was carried out. We conducted some minor univariate and bi-variate response analysis.	*atheoretical - however, it was stated that authors were working against the widely held or assumed assumption that integration in of its self is an inherently positive thing.	*No instruments used	*Carer responses mainly reflected national debates, such as service cuts, rather than the local context. Whilst there was significant support for co-location in general, parental views differed considerably on the merits of service changes depending on the needs of their own child. Carers in both locations were mainly unaware of any changes, unless they were personally involved.	*Strengths: overall – a good sample size was achieved, detailed background and current research about collocated and integrated services *Weaknesses: though labelled mixed methods, only 3 participants were included in the qualitative data collection, making it very difficult to generalise or compare to the quant data * Overall, the study provides evidence against the belief that integration is inherently positive.
*Corter, Patel, et al. (2008) * *The Early Development Instrument as an Evaluation and Improvement Tool for School-Based, Integrated Services for Young Children and Parents: The Toronto First Duty Project* *Canada *Mixed Methods study (A) *Keywords: EDI, evaluation, integrated, child development	*The purpose is to describes how the EDI was used in the evaluation and improvement of this innovative and complex program across a Toronto school district and focuses on the potential utility of the EDI as both a formative and a summative evaluation tool * the aim is to evaluate the intervention using EDI scores at the beginning of implementation and during full implementation of the program and in comparison to matched community sites	*Sample: for the quasi-experimental study, 122 intervention receiving schools were compared against 182 comparison schools. For the case study, information was collected across 5 intervention sites. *Methods: Quasi-experimental - variable matching was used to identify percentile scores used to create an index to predict school performance. Case study - Mixed methods used, site notes and observations were analysed.	*not explicitly theoretical – but states that there is a strong conceptual argument for integrated services in the literature on the basis of a social-ecological analysis of how complex social context affects child development and parenting.	*EDI * Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised (ECERS-R)	This study provides summative evidence linking the introduction of an innovative program of integrated early childhood services at school sites to improved EDI scores in social and emotional domains several years later. The evidence also supports a complementary methodological point about the EDI as an evaluation tool	*Strengths: rigorous study on integrated centres; a variety of methodological approaches used *Weaknesses: unclear about the amount of sites used in the first two data collection methods *no full description of what their version of an integrated site entails *Significant changes were not seen in Physical health and well-being Physical development though authors note that this is not a target in programming at the intervention sites.

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*Irvine & Farrell (2013) *_Are We There Yet? Early Years Reform in Queensland: Stakeholder Perspectives on the Introduction of Funded Preschool Programs in Long Day Care Services_ *Australia *Qualitative study (C) *Keywords: early years, reform, public policy	*The purpose is to report on the research undertaken to generate sector feedback on one element of the reform agenda, the implementation of universal preschool in Queensland. * The study aimed to determine the efficacy of the new policy in supporting the provision of 'approved preschool programs' within long day care services	*Sample: Online survey set to 128 centres. Interview conducted with 14 stakeholders from 7 peak ECEC organizations. Two teleconferences with operators, directors and teachers (24) and OECEC staff (32). *Methods: Situated case study design. Data analysis generated descriptive statistics and emerging themes.	*atheoretical	*No instruments used	*The study provides evidence of the efficacy of a collaborative approach to policy implementation that includes early and ongoing information sharing between government and the sector, two-way communication and a commitment to early review enabling stakeholders to get on with the job of implementation	*Strengths: detailed review of early childhood policies and reform in Australia *Weaknesses: within the findings, does not specify who the respondents are (i.e. educators, directors, others in the field)
*Stephenson, E. (2012) *_An investigation into young children's perspectives of their wellbeing during transition from preschool to school_ *Australia *Qualitative study (A) *Keywords: wellbeing, children, child perspective, 'transition to school'	*The purpose was to give voice to the children's experiences of wellbeing during transition to school *The aim of the study was to gain a better understanding of the wellbeing of children during their transition from preschool to school through the jigsaw method	*Sample – 9 children transition from early childhood education and care to school. *Methods: jigsaw method (designed by author) an arts based method that involved the creation of 3 puzzle piece made by the child at three different times during transition to school. The child then reflects on their work, and data from this reflection is then analysed by the researcher	*social constructivist frameworks *phenomenology	*No instruments used	*The findings of this study showed that each child had a unique 'wellbeing profile' which was not static but responsive to change *The main findings that came from the study dealt with how individual children responded to the same context in different ways. It highlighted 3 areas that were significant to the transition process and children's wellbeing at this time, these were: the individuality of the child; the context into which transition was occurring; and the interaction between these two.	*Strengths: investigated children's perspectives of wellbeing (which is almost non-existent in the literature) *Weaknesses: all children were from the same preschool/school – so possibly a low level of generalizability *The jigsaw method holds potential for addressing the evident lack of child voice in child wellbeing research.

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*Desimone et al. (2004) * *Comprehensive school reform: an implementation study of preschool programs in elementary schools* *USA *Qualitative study (A) *Keywords: integration, 'transition to school', co-location	*The purpose is to address the gap in research on preschool programs in elementary schools. *The study aims to address this gap by examining the implementation of one type of school based preschool program from the perspective of preschool and kindergarten teachers, as well as parents of transitioning children	*Sample: 10 schools in 5 states, 20 preschool teachers, 22 kindergarten teachers, and 53 parents. *Methods: a 3 year multi-site study with data collected through focus groups. All participants were asked the same set of questions, transcripts were analysed and coded for significant themes.	*the program implemented was based on the 21st century school reform model. Theoretical underpinnings for this model are not given	*No instruments used	* Findings suggest that support from the school principal and school districts were fundamental to the success of the program *Outlines some key areas of contention during integration: 1)boundaries and integration 2)space shortages and 3)salary inequities	*Strengths: data collected from three different 'groups', significant themes are well explained using quotes from the data *Weaknesses: no child's perspective given, overly focused on a narrow view of school readiness. *Some key issues highlighted in regards to integration echo other studies included in review.
*Nichols & Zannettino(2008) * *Making interpretive knowledge focal: developing an inter-disciplinary dialogue on research into integrated early childhood services* *Australia *Qualitative study (C) *Keywords: integration, co-location, interagency	*The purpose is to present a close look at the early stages of collaboration between two members of an inter-disciplinary in integrated early childhood services. It investigates the inter-disciplinary research, and seeks to add to the discussion of what interdisciplinary research might/can offer *The aim was to prompt discussion about the ways in which our fields of practice and theoretical resources impacted on interdisciplinary research.	*Sample: the two researchers are the two participants in the study from two different adult education classes on early childhood education *Methods: Data includes field notes and interview transcripts of participants in the early childhood courses. Both researchers used different methods for analysing the data relative to their discipline backgrounds	*Petrie's work of 'cognitive maps' (1976) was applied as a framework at some point in the research process (while not at the beginning, the authors show that there original strategies were very closely in line with this framework).	*No instrument used	*Integrated early childhood services can benefit from an interdisciplinary research approach for two reasons. First, such services are a complex phenomenon which cannot be understood from a single disciplinary perspective	*Strengths: highlights the challenges of working in interdisciplinary teams which is extremely salient for integrated services, the sole research study found on Integrated Centres in South Australia *Weaknesses: little methodological detail (such as how the researcher/participants analysed their data, little use of the data in the paper *Despite the title, the study had little to do with integrated services, focusing mainly on interdisciplinary research *highlights the lack of research done on integration in early childhood

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*Dockett & Perry, (2004) * *Starting School: Perspectives of Australia Children, Parents and Educators* *Australia *Qualitative study (B) *Keywords: 'transition to school', parents, families, teachers	*The purpose is to describe to describe the most important issues for children, parents and educators as children start school in New South Wales, Australia *The study aims to investigates the perceptions, expectations and experiences of adults and children in the transition to school	*Sample: approximately 300 parents, 300 educators, and 300 children during the children's transition to school in 15 locations across NSW *Methods: questionnaire distributed through the use of stratified purposeful sampling (578 completed) Focus group interviews were conducted with parents, teachers and children. Grounded theory used to analyse data	*Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach to describe - ways children influence the contexts in which they live, and the ways those contexts also impact on experiences	*No instruments used	*By far the majority of responses for children under the category of disposition related to friends, and the importance of having or making friends at school. The main response categories for parents were adjustment and educational environment. For teachers, the main response categories were adjustment and disposition. These findings are consistent with the earlier pilot study results	*Strengths: Large sample size, data collected from different groups (children, parents, and teachers), child voice is included. *Weaknesses: while the study touches on aspects which other reviewed studies included under the term 'wellbeing' there is no recognition of wellbeing or its importance in this study.
*Wong et al. (2012) *Early Childhood professionals and inter-profession work in integrated early childhood services in Australia *Australia *Qualitative study (B) *Keywords: integrated, interagency, early years	*The purpose is to uncover early childhood professionals (ECPs)experiences in working in integrated settings (IS), and their perspectives on the factors that contribute to success in highly integrated settings *The aim is to investigate the ideas about factors that ECPs considered to enhance and inhibit successful integrated provision in IS	*Sample: attempted to survey all ECPs working in IS in Australia (111 services) *response rate was 22% *of the 25 respondents, 19 were directors and 16 had a diploma or above in ECE *Methods: Case study design (10 in total). Questionnaire developed which included open-ended items. Data was analysed to identify themes	*uses theories of relational agency and distributed expertise for investigating interagency. *challenges the assumption that integration is inherently better *calls attention to what they call 'silenced pedagogy' in early childhood	*No instruments used	*There was considerable congruence for participants in regards to factors contributing to successful interprofessional working and integrated service provision and those factors reported in the existing literature. Particularly noticeable in the current study, however, was the early childhood practitioners' optimism about their place in integrated services *Nevertheless, the potential for marginalisation of early childhood professionals within inter-professional teams was raised	*Strengths: challenges the assumption that integrated centres are inherently positive *Weaknesses: very low response rate, possible bias – as those that opted to respond may have done so because they were successful examples of IS, no mention of how data was analysed * offers evidence of an emerging critique of the arguably uncritical support for integrated services.

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*Goldfeld et al. (2009) * *The Process and Policy Challenges of Adapting and Implementing the Early Development Instrument in Australia. Early Education and Development* *Australia *Review/synthesis – general literature review (C) *Keywords: EDI, 'Rasch model', policy	*The purpose is to identify the processes that resulted in gaining community, policy, and political acceptance for implementing a measure of EDI. *Its aim is to outline some of the process and policy challenges associated with the implementation of the EDI in Australia	*Sample: Reports, meetings, literature, and data in regards to the use of the EDI between 2002 – 2009 are reviewed. *Methods: No specific methods are mentioned other than those used in the studies being reviewed, such as the Rasch model	*atheoretical – a review of discussion, planning, and research	*No instruments used	*The current interest in early childhood in Australia presents an opportunity for academics and advocates for children to consider the programs and policies needed for government investment over the long term *The AEDI is also proving its worth as more than merely a measure; it is a process that appears to be adding significant value and assistance to communities trying to improve outcomes for children	*Strengths: comprehensive overview of the challenges posed to the implementation of the AEDI *Weaknesses: no mention of methods used for the compilation of the review, or the process in which the authors analysed the data included
*Denham, S. A. (2006) * *Social-Emotional Competence as Support for School Readiness: What Is It and How Do We Assess It?* *USA (VA) * Review/synthesis – overview (C) *Keywords: socio-emotional, school readiness, 'transition to school'	*The purpose is to identify and present a battery of preschool social–emotional outcome measures, which meet aforementioned "assessment best practice" criteria. *the aim is to assess the included instruments and spur further study of these measures, including piloting current versions of selected assessment tools, large-scale administration and revision of each, psychometric evaluation, initial norming, and examination of the measures' abilities to demonstrate program effectiveness	*Not clearly explained - reviews and studies about social-emotional competence	*Rose-Krasnor (1997) prism model for social and emotional competence theory	*Instruments reviewed: *Denham's Affective Knowledge Test * Minnesota Preschool Affect Checklist (MPAC) * Denham's Puppet Causes Task * Ambivalent Emotions Task Emotion Matters II Direct Assessment (EMII-DA) * Emotion Matters II Assessor's Report (EMII-AR)	*in sum we have found one or more assessment measures for each aspect of social–emotional competence in relation to school readiness. The authors encourage teachers, parents, and others to view these measures together and decide what combination can best be tailored for the needs of the children in their care and the programs they are implementing to maximizing child emotional and social competence	*Strengths: investigates the strengths, weakness, and important considerations for a variety of socio-emotional measurement instruments *Weaknesses: states in the conclusion that these measures can help students 'maximise their social-emotional competence' yet makes no mention of how the learning from these assessment measures can actually do this – where is the link between indicators and practice? What is measured? By who? And for what end?

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* Elliot, A. (2006) *Early Childhood Education: Pathways to quality and equity for all children *Australia * Review/synthesis –state of the art review (C)	*The purpose is to highlight the strong impact of the historic care–education divide on current policy and practice, and the importance of early childhood experiences on later outcomes. *It aims to raise new issues and questions – ones for which there may be no clear position or answers	*Sample: current policies , as well as data from the Longitudinal study of Australian children, the ABS, and other Australian research on young children *Methods: methods are not clearly outlined	*atheoretical	*no instruments used	*the review urges an end to the care–education distinctions enshrined in funding and policy frameworks. It argues that while developing holistic early childhood services will be expensive and difficult, care and education are inseparable and bringing them together will afford long-term social and economic benefits for Australia and its children	*Strengths: covers a large breadth of research, policies, and data on young children *Weaknesses: concerned only with birth - 5 (despite birth -8 being internationally recognised as early childhood), speaks to the need of unsegregated education and care, yet divides early childhood in half (causing segregation) *Highlights the lack of a national data set on early childhood education in Australia (similar to other included studies)
*Janus et al. (2007) *Starting Kindergarten: Transition Issues for Children with Special Needs *Canada * Review/synthesis –mixed methods review (B) *Keywords: special ed., parents, interagency, 'transition to school'	*The purpose is to present the investigation of the major issues in transition to kindergarten for children with special needs *The aim focuses on the following questions: What are the major issues in transition to kindergarten for children with special needs, as identified in the literature? What is the perception of Canadian parents and professionals on transition?	*peer-reviewed literature (1997-2007), government websites, parent surveys, and interviews with professionals (collected by Statistics Canada) *Methods: in three parts - 1)systematic review of the literature 2)quantitative study of parents of children with special needs satisfaction with transition 3)qualitative study of the perceptions of professionals on the barriers of transition for special needs children	*atheoretical	*no instruments used	*Findings indicate that Canadian parents of children with special needs did not appear to encounter as many challenges as may have been expected. Moreover, it was found that although the issue of the education of children with special needs made up a large proportion of literature published in relevant journals, the transition to kindergarten of children with special needs was not a very frequent subject of research.	*Strengths: the three pronged approach to the review gave a very good overview of the state of transition for children with special needs *Weaknesses: an uncritical stance employed in their call for the further integrated services.

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*Wong & Press (2012) *Integrated services in Australian early childhood education and care: What can we learn from the past *Australia * Review/synthesis – historical review (B) *Keywords: 'service integration', policy, integration, early childhood	*The purpose is to highlight the historical iterations of Integrated Services in Australia due to contemporary interest *The aim is to outline the value of historical research into early childhood services and its 'moments of discontinuity'	*literature and archival records detailing three points in the 20th century where integrated services were introduced *Methods – uses a historical research methodology, the identification and description of 'moments' in the past where 'something new emerges'	*outlines the value of historical research and finding 'moments of discontinuity'	*no instruments used	*The authors argue that attention to the history of integrated services is essential as current initiatives echo those of the past, which were not sustained. It is hoped that reflecting on the history of integrated services will inform the creation of sustainable, supported, and continued integrated services use.	*Strengths: a novel investigation of integrated, offers a holistic definition of integrated services *one of the few studies that takes a critical stance towards calls for service integration, and offers evidence for this critique
*Curtis & Simons (2008) * Pathways to Ready Schools *USA *Review/synthesis -mixed methods review (C) *Keywords: *families, school, education, care, early years	*the purpose was to develop a definition of, and pathways towards ready schools as part of the SPARK initiative. *The aim is to describe how the team defined ready schools through the development of the pathways to ready schools and ends with specific recommendations as to how social workers can support and implement the learning described in the pathways	*Sample: existing educational models from the professional literature in the fields of early care and education and elementary education were identified in order to develop a protocol *Methods: preliminary criteria for a 'ready school' was developed. A 20-question interview based on the preliminary ready schools criteria. An interview was conducted via telephone with school principals for the purpose of selecting four schools for onsite learning. The resulting scores were used as a guide for selecting the schools for visiting	*three models to support the concept of a 'ready school' were selected: 1) Bogard and Takanishi (2005), a research-based approach for pre-K through grade 3 alignment of learning experiences 2) Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003), an approach to transitions from early care and education to public schools guided by five principles 3) The School Development Program, developed by Comer (2004)	*The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's Ready School Assessment (RSA)	*The study asserts that evidence is good, if not always spectacular, that 'ready schools' are successful schools. All four either outperformed the average school in their states or produced comparable numbers in terms of reading and math proficiency *The authors argue the following assumption: a ready school is where children succeed. Any local, culturally relevant, holistic definition of success begins with children progressing in school and achieving the knowledge and skills that are necessary and valuable to the functioning of a modern economy.	*Strengths: uses theoretical models to support calls for practice *Weaknesses: no methodology on how the lit review was structured (no defined scope) *narrowly defined view of readiness *focuses on ready schools, yet still talks about children having to be ready for schools to make the work of educators and other professionals easier – conflicting viewpoint and conceptualisations through the paper

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Schmeid & Donovan (2011) *Commonalities and challenges: A review of Australian state and territory maternity and child health policies* *Australia *Review/synthesis – overview (C) *Keywords: 'child health', policy, maternal health	*The purpose of this study was to review and synthesize current Australian service policy frameworks for maternity and child health services to identify the degree of commonality across jurisdictions *Specifically, the review aimed to 1)determine the values and principles that underpin contemporary frameworks, 2)identify the commonalities in health service programs and interventions, 3) describe (if available) the role of each of the universal service providers within the policy Frameworks	*Sample: key jurisdictional maternity and child health service policy documents were sourced through websites, informal consultation via email with relevant government policy makers and a formal request for policy documents *Methods: This descriptive study used content analysis to identify the commonalities and differences in the policy goals, principles, priorities, services and roles of universal health service providers in maternity and child health services in each jurisdiction	*a range of theoretical perspectives including child development and attachment theories. social determinants of health and socio-ecological models of health and well-being where stated to inform the policies, however the review did not state a framework or theoretical underpinning other than the one used in the methodology	*no instruments used	*The findings indicate that current Australian state and territory policies are in line with international research and policy directions. The congruence of the policies across the country suggests the time is right to consider the introduction of a national framework for universal maternal and child health services	*Strengths: a strong review of the various policy similarities and difference across Australia, and their implications on maternal and child health *Weaknesses: focused on intervention and deficit models of health – no discussion of other ways of understanding health from a policy standpoint, many terms used interchangeably without explanation as to why
*Bonhan-Baker & Little (2004) *The Transition to Kindergarten: A Review of Current Research and Promising Practices to Involve Families* *USA *Review/synthesis –general literature review (C) *Keywords: 'transition to school', families, parents	*The purpose is to give an overview of the concept of transition and its importance to school success. It then examines transition practices that focus on families, considering both practices and key players in implementation. *It's aim is to highlight examples of promising transition practices that involve families and present a framework for the development of school and program transition teams that value family involvement.	*Sample: no defined sample *Methods: no methods outlined	*ecological and dynamic model of transition cited	*no instruments used	*From our review of promising transition practices, we conclude that family involvement should be an integral part of transition policies and programs that are developed. The research on the benefits of involving families in their children's education indicates that families are a critical partner in providing continuity as children move between systems of care and education	*Strengths: gives examples of specific programs doing transition well *Weaknesses: no methodology given for the review. Unclear of the scope and breadth of the literature analysed

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*Nichols & Jurvansuu (2008) *Partnership in Integrated Early Childhood Services: an analysis of policy framings in education and human services* *Australia * Review/synthesis – policy analysis /mixed methods review (A) *Keywords: 'service integration', health, education, parents	*the purpose is to conduct a policy analysis on the first year of integrated children's centres operation in South Australia in two domains: education and human services (incorporating health) *The aim is to argue that the terms within which policies frame partnership, families and services should be the subject of debate and also dialogue involving those practitioners whose role it is to make integration work on the ground	*Sample: 15 policy texts, 7 in education, and 8 in Human services(4 of which were health) in the form of government documents that aim to direct the action taken in services *Methods: policy texts were read with regards to specific research questions chosen by the researchers. As each policy was analysed, a grid was cumulatively constructed in which responses to each of these questions were recorded. Once the grid was complete, certain patterns of difference became visible	* policy theories: 1) notion of a policy landscape which is multilayered 2) concept of policies as discursive texts	*no instruments used	*This analysis found different policy framings of partnership operating in the two domains. Additionally, the policy landscape is layered with old and new constructions of the relationship between families and services *This suggests that workers from the education sector on the one hand, and the human services sector on the other, develop professional practices informed by different policy framings of partnership making service integration challenging.	*Strengths: very detailed outlined of what was studied and why, socially critical lens *Weaknesses: somewhat outdated now, as the policy analysis was from 1996-2004 *an example of a critical stance to integrated services
*Wong & Sumsion (2013) *Integrated early years services: a thematic literature review.* *Australia * Review/synthesis – thematic review (B) *Keywords: integrated services, early years, co-location, interagency	*The purpose is to take stock of what is known about IEYS. With the intent of informing such endeavours, this paper reports findings from a thematic review of research literature about IEYS *A specific aim of the review is to identify whether there is a need for further research, and if so, to identify useful foci for future studies	*Sample: literature on integrated services in early years spanning from the years 1995–2012 (197 papers) *Methods: Literature for inclusion in the review was identified through a combination of Wilson's five search strategies with keywords. Papers were screened for relevance. Selected papers were read in full and thematically analysed	*largely atheoretical, however, makes reference to a socially critical stance.	*no instruments used	*It is clear that IEYS are complex. Need for sustained, theoretically rich and robust investigations. Areas for further research are: 1) the capacity of IEYS to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged families. 2)the ways in which power relationships play out between professionals, and between families, children and professionals, in IEYS. 3) the cost benefits of IEYS. 4)The most effective way to prepare professionals to work in IEYS	*Strengths: a detailed analysis of the included papers, socially critical stance *Weaknesses: there were a number of documents found pertaining to integrated services in this current review that the authors did not find/did not include which, arguably, should have been included

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* Edmunds et al. (2002) * *Assessing Emotional and Social Competence in Primary School and Early Years Settings: A Review of Approaches, Issues and Instruments* *UK (England) *Review/synthesis – systematic review (C) *Keywords: social, emotional-competence, instrument, measurement, early years	*the purpose is to identify literature relating to emotional competence assessment and to identify instruments in three different but related contexts:- early identification, profiling and monitoring and undertake a qualitative study, to identify current concerns relating to the assessment and measurement of these concepts *Additionally the study aimed to identify views relating to emotional competence assessment among those working in this context in England	* Sample: published literature in electronic databases from 1990 to 2002 and networks were searched to locate all published, unpublished and under development instruments relating to social and emotional competence in children ages 3-11 *Methods: instruments identified were evaluated on the basis of their content, method of application and evidence relating to their reliability and validity and appropriateness for early identification, profiling and monitoring of emotional or social competence *a questionnaire was also mailed to anyone who replied to the authors call for information on measurement tools	*two theoretical frameworks mentioned: emotional literacy and social competence	*58 instruments in total published instruments: * Group A: CBCL; HCSBS; SSBS; CTRS-28; SSRS *Group B: ITSEA; PIPPS; PBCL; FOCAL; ICS; SDQ; SAT; BERS; EIPBAS *Group C: Bully-Victim Scales; DISCO; Social Ability Measure PSWQ-C; SPIA-C; CBRS; Dominic-R *Group D: Child development project unpublished instruments *Group E: ASBI; EBD; EBS; DECA; Boxall Profile; Fast Track Program. *Group F: Early Years Profile; STEPS; LIC-YC; EBDS; PASS; EDI; CISS; Reintegration Readiness Scale; Enable Project *Group G: Record of Assessment for Emotional Literacy Checklist; 'Taking Care Project; EQ-i:-YV(S); POMS *Group H: Cogs; Optimistic Child Scale. *Group I: SCoT; AcE Project; Feelings and Empathy Questionnaire; ELLI; JELLI; ELA; 'What I think about my school' scale; Sefton Council instrument. Pre-School Transfer Form	*Much activity and interest in the assessment of emotional and social Competence was found. Most of the instruments included in the review focused on social competence, but several were identified which assess aspects of emotional competence and are potentially suitable for use in the three contexts: screening, profiling and monitoring. *The instruments most relevant to emotional competence assessment were applicable to school settings rather than early years.	*Strengths: a detailed and systematic review of instruments for measuring emotional competence *Weaknesses: there is no clear reason stated for why such a review was conducted, or for whom the intended audience would be *raises an interesting question which is the extent to which children or school settings should be the focus of emotional competence assessment

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*Atkinson et al. (2005) * Multi-agency working: Models, challenges, and key factors for success *UK *Report (C) *Keywords: education, health, interagency, joint working, social services	*This purpose is to investigate models of multi-agency activity and examine the challenges and the key factors for their success *The aim is to relay the findings from a study of multi-agency working involving professionals from the Education, Social Services and Health sectors of local authorities	*Sample: The data was drawn from a sample of 30 multi-agency initiatives investigated in two studies which were chosen to reflect a range of target group focuses and different agency involvement in differing contexts *Method: the following is a report on the findings of two previous studies which looked at 30 multi-agency initiatives	*lists 4 models of multi-agency work identified in the literature and then contrasts this with the 5 models identified by the study being reported: decision making groups, consultation and training, centre-based delivery, coordinated delivery, and operational-team delivery	*no instruments used	*The study highlighted once again the complexity and also potential of 'joining up' services. New models of joint working, rarely evident in the literature, were identified and issues relating to the inhibiting and facilitating factors were extended beyond previous discussion. *8 key challenge areas and 7 key factors for success are identified.	*Strengths: discusses previous and new models for multi-agency working in depth *Weaknesses: no background information about the study included, very few references to the literature or how these findings are situated *identifies that successful interagency working is not just about resources, but also requires attitudinal shifts for all parties - something not often addressed in other papers calling for multi-agency/integrated working
*The Centre for Community Child Health (2008) * *Rethinking the transition to school: Linking schools and early years' service Policy Brief - Translating early childhood research evidence to inform policy and practice* *Australia (VIC) *Report (C) *Keywords: 'transition to school', integration, early years	*the purpose of this Policy Briefs is to stimulate informed debate about issues that affect children's health and wellbeing by drawing on current research and international best practice *This brief aims to summarise the research evidence regarding transition to school, including strategies which aim to make it a smooth and successful process for children and their families	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*atheoretical –gives examples of studies which have investigated alternate models to transition	*no instruments used	*findings suggest the need for: the development and evaluation of comprehensive child and family service systems that integrate early years programs and schools and ways of ensuring greater alignment between early childhood and school curricula.	*Strengths: synthesizes transition research and current initiatives in Australia *Weaknesses: doesn't delve into the reasons children may struggle with transition outside of 'school' factors, or what successful transition looks like *takes a deficit approach to school, focusing on what is not happening, rather than a strengths based approach

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*Eldridge et al. (2011) *Headline indicators for children's health, development and wellbeing 2011 *Australia *Report (B) *Keywords: health, wellbeing, social indicators, children, families, care, education	*the purpose is to provide the latest available information on how Australia's children, aged 0–12 years, are faring according to 19 priority areas *it aims to report data for the priority areas in which it is available and highlight areas that have yet to be assessed or are unsuitable for assessment	*Sample: data collected from - AIHW and collaborating units data sources, Child Dental Health Survey, ABS data sources, Australian Childhood Immunisation Register, Australian Early Development Index, National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy Report, National Report on Schooling in Australia— Attendance at primary school, Early Childhood Education and Care National Minimum Data Set *Methods: data was analysed through statistical comparisons such as crude rates, rate ratios, and confidence intervals	*advocates for the use of Children's Headline Indicators to address wider social and environmental factors that are consistent with a theoretical framework grounded in an ecological model of human development developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979; 1995)	*no instruments used	Australian children are generally faring well according to the 12 Children's Headline Indicators that have available data. There is, however, considerable variation in results between states and territories, and between certain population groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and those living in remote or socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. It is clear, therefore, that there is scope for further gains across these indicators.	*Strengths: provides an excellent synthesis of measuring wellbeing in Australia, holistic definition of wellbeing *Weaknesses: the report is overly optimistic in places, for example, stating that Australia is in the bottom third for infant mortality, yet "this suggests there are room for improvements" is what is stated underneath – which would certainly be an understatement considering Australia's OECD ranking in several aspects *highlights the need for a national data sources (echoed in the literature)
* AMA Task Force on Indigenous Health *2013 * The Healthy Early Years - Getting The Right Start in Life Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health report Card 2012-2013 *Report (C) *Keywords: Indigenous health, early years	* The purpose and aim of the report are to call for further effective investments in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is to help parents break current cycles by supporting evidence-based measures to prevent and protect against adversity and chronic stressors in the early years of life	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*atheoretical -however works from a developmental science point of view	*no instruments used	* Families and children need a coordinated, culturally inclusive service where comprehensive programs of support are available, and which can facilitate follow-up from the welfare and education sectors. *There is a need to shift away from tertiary interventions that focus on 'rescue' and deal with consequences	*Strengths: synthesises current research on Aboriginal health *Weaknesses: bio-medical and risk oriented point of view that does not acknowledge why health disparities exist *Despite the report's findings of the "need to shift away from rescue interventions" the report focuses on risk and 'poor parenting'

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*Sims (2011) * *Early childhood and education services for Indigenous children prior to starting school* *Australia *Report (C) *Keywords: Aboriginal health, education, children, families, early years,	*the purpose is to examine the issues at play and what can be done to work towards closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal children in the early years and specifically school entry *the aim is to elucidate what is known to work and what is known not to work in closing the gap in relation to Aboriginal children's health and school outcomes	*Sample: data discussed in this report comes from the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children-Key Summary Report from Wave 1 (FaHCSIA 2009) *Methods: not applicable	*atheoretical – is based on the assertion that current programs and policies for Aboriginal children and families are from a non-aboriginal perspective, and that this must change for the gap to be closed	*no instruments used	*the report argues the need to strengthen universal maternal, child and family health services, provide support for vulnerable children, and engage parents and the community in understanding the importance of early childhood development. This includes improving early childhood infrastructure, strengthening the workforce across ECD and family support services, and build better information from a solid evidence base	*Strengths: takes into account power issues which contribute to health and education disparities *Weaknesses: makes no connection to schools or school practices and how Aboriginal students could be best supported in transition *calls to attention the assumption that 'best practice' based on non-Indigenous children is also best practice for Indigenous children – this is a theme also highlighted in other included studies
*Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services Division (2003) * *Children's' health: Parents' perceptions - Parents' views on the health and wellbeing of Victorian preparatory grade children (SEHQ) 2000 report* *Australia *Report (C) *Keywords: parents, school nurses, school health, health, wellbeing, early years	*The purpose is to report the rich source of baseline population data on Victorian children aged five to seven years at a local, regional and state level collected from the SEHQ screening tool (one of the largest databases of parent perceptions of child health and wellbeing in Australia) *it aims to inform the work of school health nurses through understanding parental conceptions of health and wellbeing during transition to school	*Sample: the findings from 57, 474 SEHQs completed by parents during the year 2000 for children entering preparatory grade in Victoria *Methods: demographic variables are used to partition the parent responses into population subgroups and reported under the categorical headings used by the SEHQ	*atheoretical	*reports on data collected by the School Entrant Health Questionnaire (SEHQ)	*The information collected from the SEHQ gives key decision makers valuable information from parents about the main health issues that may have an impact on children's capacity to learn at school. *The data also has the capacity to inform planning and resource allocation decisions across a range programs within each of the nine Department of Human Services regions	Strengths: large data set, widespread use of the measurement tool which is being reported (indicating usefulness of the report) *Weaknesses: responses are meant to primarily inform school health nurses (as well as policy), however, have limited to no connection to groups such as ECEs (outside of early intervention) or teachers. Seems very odd considering the cohort being studied *the SEQH continues to have some validity issues unanswered

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* Sayers et al. (2012) * *Starting school: A pivotal life transition for children and families. Family Matters* *Australia *Report (B) *Keywords: 'transition to school', families	*The purpose was to focus on transitions to school from the perspective of measuring and understanding the process and impact of the transition to school for children and their families including disadvantaged groups. *the aim is to report on several past and current initiatives in finding further useful outcomes and indicators for measuring transition to school	*Sample: data reported was collected through the AEDI and the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) *Methods: The report highlights several research initiatives and case studies researching in the area of transition. 1) the Outcomes and Indicators of a Positive Start to School: Development of Framework and Tools research project 2) the Transition Initiative by the Victoria Early Years Learning and Development Framework 3) the Linking Schools and early years project.	*atheoretical – however the authors mention that ecological framework of development was drawn upon to develop the Outcomes and Indicators of a Positive Start to School: Development of Framework	*Discusses the psychometric analysis of the Outcomes and Indicators of a Positive Start to School: Development of Framework and Tools research project	* Providing data at a local level on how specific measures of children's transition to school and the outcomes of the transition process from the perspectives of children, parents, early childhood educators and schools can support the capacity of communities to better plan the transition to school	*Strengths: drew on a wide variety of current initiatives *Weaknesses: it is not clear how the data was synthesised across the three research initiatives reported *contrary to other studies, while acknowledging the utility of the AEDI in some measures, the AEDI results are not currently a useful measure of the transition to school process from the child, family, early childhood service and school perspective, and that this should be addressed through the development of further outcomes and indicators
*Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2013) *Report Card - The wellbeing of young Australians* *Australia *Report (C) *Keywords: wellbeing, children, youth, health	*the purpose is to This provides a set of baseline indicators for each key result areas – indicator of 'what wellbeing looks like' for children and youth *It aims to provide a point-in-time snapshot of child and youth wellbeing in Australia, including how Aboriginal (Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander) young people are faring)	*Sample: draws on various data sets covering children and youth aged 0 - 24 *Methods: Comparative data in this report is constructed by using the most recent reputable source for the most appropriate age cohort * The five Key Result Areas (KRAs) being reported were identified by children, youth and families. The themes associated with each KRA form a basis for the indicators included.	* presents a framework for understanding the health and wellbeing of young Australians called the idea of a 'goodlife'	*no instruments used	*the Report Card tells us we have improved in some parameters; however, in only 26% of the indicators was Australia in the top third of the OECD countries. This means for more than 74% of them, we were in the middle or below. The 30% of indicators where we are in the bottom third, compared with other countries, are ones that are of considerable concern, as they have lifelong impacts	*Strengths: provides an international comparison on the health of young Australians *Weaknesses: *despite being titled well-being; it is more so an examination of some areas of health which as a whole are being called wellbeing

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*Australian Institute of Family Studies (2014) *Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children - Annual statistical report 2013 *Australia (VIC) *Report (C) *Keywords: children, early years, child development, family functioning, environment, wellbeing	*The purpose of the study is to present the first nationally representative study of child development in Australia. *it aims to report data on children growing up in Australian from the longitudinal study of Australian children to enable a comprehensive understanding of children's development within Australia's current social, economic and cultural environment	*Sample: approx.: 10,000 children (nationally representative) in two separate cohorts of children: the B ("baby") cohort, who were aged 0–1 years and the K ("kindergarten") cohort, who were aged 4–5 years. Data was also collected from parents, teacher, care givers, and interviewers *Methods: an accelerated cross-sequential design. Data collected in 4 waves, so the data includes children aged 0-11 years. Data was collected through interviews, questionnaires, child measurements and assessments and administrative/outcome data. Descriptive statistical analysis was used	*atheoretical	*Reports on data from the following instruments: * Academic Rating Scales (ARS) * Competence scale—Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA) * Problems scale—Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA) * General Self-Concept * Matrix Reasoning Test * National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) * Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) * Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) * School Readiness Score ("Who Am I")	*The report presents findings on the following aspects of family functioning: fathers' involvement after separation, care of children during school holidays, children's perceptions of parental employment, and children's health behaviour. The report also investigates several aspects of children's development, including academic engagement, social and emotional wellbeing, and temperament. There is no final discussion or findings section, a discussion of the findings of each section are found at the end of each chapter	*Strengths: very large sample – highly representative, detailed use of descriptive statistics *Weaknesses: patriarchally oriented, despite stating possible concerns about how children are being overly influenced by gendered norms, no concluding discussion or findings section *Narrow definition of wellness (time use)
* Mustard (2008) * Investing in the Early Years: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do *Australia *Report (C) *Keywords: early years, child care, development	*the purpose is to outline new understandings of early brain development and ideas and changes that can be made to support the early years of children's life *it aims to share a series of recommendations for early years policies and practices	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*not explicitly theoretical – however underpinned by recent research on brain development that suggests that the early years (including in utero) is a critical and sensitive time for the development of neurons and neural pathways	*no instruments used	*Recommendation for more involvement in gathering reliable and comprehensive data on early child development and learning, and continuing establishment of universal early child development and parenting centres linked to local primary schools	*Strengths: Comprehensive overview of early years policy and practice in South Australia Weaknesses: lack of consistency in definition of early childhood (age range), uncritical about the call for further service integration

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*Eastman et al. (2011) * *Linking School and Early Years Project Evaluation: Data collection Round 2* *Australia *Report (C) *Keywords: partnerships, parents, families, schools	*The purpose is to report on the Linking Schools and Early Years Project (LSEY), which is being led by the Centre for Community Child Health * The aim of the project is to ensure that all children enter the formal education system ready to engage and be successful in school and that schools are prepared for all children	*Sample: 32 participants affiliated with the program were interviewed (teachers, ECEs, principals, health care workers) *Methods: four questionnaire instruments being used for the evaluation: one each for parents, schools, early education and care services, and child and family services * Analysis involved the revision of codes to capture themes of interviews and questionnaires. Triangulation of coding by 3 different researchers used.	*not explicitly theoretical – however themes regarding the importance of partnership, especially with parents, was apparent in the study design	*no instruments used	*The study reports that the LSEY project sites saw increased use of services, positive changes in transition practices, and increased partnership with families. *Findings are reported individually for each impact evaluation question individually, but no overall findings re reported.	*Strengths: Comprehensive reporting of data, aligned with policy and regional initiatives *Weaknesses: difficult to decipher key findings, unclear the contribution this makes to the literature, as little to no connections are made from outside the project
*Thompson et al (2010) * *Partnerships in early childhood program: Final Evaluation Report* *Australia *Report (C) *Keywords: partnerships, relationships, families, parents	*the purpose is to report on the Partnerships in Early Childhood (PIEC) program which aims to foster children's social-emotional development through a relationships approach to intervention. *it aims to summarises the findings from the impact evaluation and the process evaluation with particular interest in the measurement of children's wellbeing	*Sample: Parents (130) and staff (no number given) from 14 children's centres *Methods: a process evaluation was conducted in six sites which involved quantitative data gathered from interviews with key personnel. Interviews focused on the development and implementation of the program.	*not explicitly theoretical – study design appeared to be centred on themes of attachment and relationships as key components of successful early years services	*Reports on the process evaluation which used the following instruments: *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) *The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) *Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) *Pianta Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) *The Leiden Inventory for the Child's Wellbeing in Day Care (LICW-D)	*Overall the evaluation findings show that positive changes relating to the Invest to Grow Priority Areas of 'early learning and care' and 'supporting families and parents' have occurred, particularly, the relationships between children and staff and children and parents; the social-emotional development of children; and to some degree, community connectedness	*Strengths: thorough report of the entire project, well linked to the current interest in early childhood in Australia *Weaknesses: lack of detail on participants, lack of theoretical underpinning of the project as a whole

Details	Purpose/Aims	Sample/Methods	Frameworks	Instruments	Key Findings	Critical Analysis
*Guhn & Janus (2007) * *The Early Development Instrument: Translating School Readiness Assessment Into Community Actions and Policy Planning* *Canada * Commentary/Editorial (C) *Keywords: social indicators, child development, school readiness, EDI	*Purpose: Introduction to a special edition of a journal on the EDI (several of which are included in this systematic review) *Aims: to sketch out recent trends in school readiness research that call for a contextual and whole-child assessment of school readiness and provide an overview and discussion of current investigations into the EDI	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*largely atheoretical – however does echo the brain science perspectives of Shonkoff and Mustard, and defines the EDI as a tool for measuring 'Readiness to learn' which refers to the state of the child's neurosystem being ready to develop various skills and neuropathways based on the experience it receives	*no instruments used	* Rather than findings, the paper introduces salient themes important to the discussion of the assessment of school readiness such as: international collaborations of large-scale research projects, the usage and validity of the EDI, and issues pertaining to population-level interpretation, program evaluation, and policy implications for the use of the EDI	*Strengths: a good overview of the state of the field and interests of researchers, brings together a variety of related research *Weaknesses: a bio-medical perspective rather than a socially critical perspective despite the call for contextual and 'whole child' focus
*Jones & Sumner (2009) **Does mixed methods research matter to understanding childhood well-being?* *UK * Commentary/Editorial (C) *Keywords: wellbeing, child methodology	*Purpose: to explore the particular challenges and opportunities surrounding mixed methods approaches to childhood well-being *Aim(s): to argue the need for researchers of childhood well-being to adopt mixed methods in the study of childhood wellbeing	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*largely atheoretical – brief mention of Dynamic Life Stage, and children's evolving capacities and discussion of the difference between a 'wellbeing lens' and a 'poverty lens'	*no instruments used	*the multi-dimensionality of childhood well-being suggests the importance of a cross-disciplinary, mixed methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative social sciences with insights from natural sciences	*Strengths: gives examples of studies of specific examples to elucidate claims, socially critical *Weaknesses: talks about children not having a voice, yet does not suggest that research could be a tool through which to give children a voice
*Dockett et al. (2006) **Successful Transition to School for Australian Aboriginal Children* *Australia * Commentary/Editorial (C) *Keywords: Aboriginal, child, 'transition to school'	*Purpose: to call attention to the need to create supportive strategies to support Aboriginal people with the education system *Aim(s): to describe successful programs and strategies that support the transition to school identified by the Starting School Research project	*Sample: Aboriginal Australian's, in particular children and families transition to school who were part of the Starting School research project *Methods: not applicable	atheoretical – however the work acknowledges (despite not stating it explicitly) that power relations and the 'whiteness' of the Australia education system serves to disadvantage and exclude Aboriginal children and families.	*no instruments used	*successful transition for Aboriginal children requires that the competencies and identities they come to school with are valued, and that schools and teachers recognizes the assets Aboriginal children come to school with.	*Strengths: identifies the key aspects that support transition for Aboriginal children *Weaknesses: little back ground information on the starting school research project was provided

Details	Purpose/Aims	Sample/Methods	Frameworks	Instruments	Key Findings	Critical Analysis
* Laverick (2008) * *Starting School: Welcoming Young Children and Families into Early School Experiences* *USA *.Commentary/Editorial (C) *Keywords: transition, school, families, parents	*Purpose: to provide discussion around transition and strategies for assisting children who are beginning their school careers are shared. *Aim(s): to give an overview of developmental characteristics of kindergartners, explore transition experiences and discuss policies and practices that build relationships	*Sample: young children and their families transition to school *Methods: not applicable	*briefly uses Piaget and Erickson briefly as context to understand children's thought processes and/or experiences as they go through transitions, and how a child's development may be disrupted during these times if they do not receive the necessary support	*no instruments used	*Initial impressions, including misconceptions that are characteristic of children preparing to start school, can set the tone for later attitudes toward school. Recognizing the developmental characteristics of children can assist in easing transition	*Strengths: provides significant detail of current transition practices in different contexts, cites a variety of literature pertaining to transition *Weaknesses: fluidity issues in the article, international perspectives seem more of an ad on than part of the paper.
*Anderson Moore et al.(2003) * *The Uses (and Misuses) of Social Indicators: Implications for Public Policy* *USA *Commentary/Editorial (C) *Keywords: social indicators, public policy, wellbeing, children, families	*Purpose: to raise awareness and encourage further discussion about a research method that can be helpful to policy makers and others concerned with improving the well-being of children and their families *Aim(s): to help clarify issues with social indicators and their purposes.	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*made mention of the logic model, created for social indicator use and program development/evaluation and provide a link, however, the web link given was no longer current	*no instruments used	*social indicators can be valuable tools for policy makers, practitioners, the media, and the general public. These statistical markers can be used to describe the circumstances of our society, to monitor how well we are doing, to set goals that reflect societal values, to increase accountability for policies and programs, and to inform practices	*Strengths: gives a very detailed understanding of social indicators use and how they have been used to inform research and policy *Weaknesses: possibly dated information, cited links not current/accessible
*Dockett (2008) * *The Importance of Transition in the Early Years Learning Framework* *Australia * Commentary/Editorial (C) *Keywords: *EYLF, curriculum, policy, early years	Purpose: to elucidate how the EYLF framework promotes the importance of transition *Aim(s): to explore the 'Guidelines for Effective Transition to School Programs '	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*Guidelines for Effective Transition to School Programs framework	*no instruments used	*The development of the EYLF provides opportunities to enhance children's transition to school. It provides a focal point for children, families, educators and communities to consider what is important, how prior-to-school experiences can be built upon and enhanced, and how schools can be responsive to students.	*Strengths: connects transition to current Australian curriculum documents and its place as an area of interest for Australian early years policy *Weaknesses: uncritical, glosses over many barriers to transition

Details	Purpose/Aims	Sample/Methods	Frameworks	Instruments	Key Findings	Critical Analysis
*Walter & Petr 2000 * *A Template for Family-Centred Interagency Collaboration* *USA *Commentary/Editorial (C) *Keywords: interagency, collaboration, early years, family-centred	*Purpose: to assert that successful interagency collaborations require commitment to a shared value base as the core dimension of joint efforts *Aim(s): compares and contrasts the differences between family-centred values and interagency collaboration	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*creation of an 'interagency continuum' model 'shared values as the core dimensions of interagency collaboration' model *referenced systems theory	*no instruments used	*The success of interagency collaboration in improving outcomes for children and their families may well depend on those collaborative efforts being anchored to a shared vision about the absolute, paramount importance of the family as a social institution	*Strengths: offers several frameworks and practical guides for service integration *Weaknesses: dated – possible limited relevance to current study, provides little evidence for the use of the model the introduce, or how it was constructed
*Ure (2008) * *A New Era for the Profession: The national agenda for reform or early childhood education* *Australia *Commentary/Editorial (C) *Keywords: early years, policy, national reform agenda	*Purpose: to describes the impact and key points of the national reform agenda on early childhood professionals *Aim(s): to argue that argument that the national reform agenda provides an opportunity to move early childhood services forward and providing a much needed framework to review evidence about what matters for young children	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*atheoretical – but states that as Australia's early years policies have developed in an ad hoc fashion, the national reform agenda is now the time to use and build on frameworks to resource and value children and those working in the sector	*no instruments used	*the author argues that the National Reform agenda, developed in response to the growing body of research evidence linking the quality of children's early life experiences to indicators of health, social wellbeing, and economic viability in adult years, will hopefully put an end to the silos that have developed around difference services	*Strengths: succinct and informative background information about the national reform agenda and its intentions *Weaknesses: no possible limitations or criticisms mentioned of the reform agenda
*Ben-Arieh& Frones (2007) *Indicators of Children's Well Being: Theory, Types and usage* *International *Commentary/Editorial (C) *Keywords: child development, social indicators, wellbeing	*Purpose: to introduce a special edition on the child wellbeing indicators *Aim(s): engage in the range of literature involving child social indicator research such as: empirical evidence, theories and models, challenges, and validity and usages	*Sample: not applicable *Methods: not applicable	*largely atheoretical - asserts that child social indicators can help to bridge data and theory; through providing fertile ground for a dialectic between theory and empiricism	*no instruments used	*That the special edition will serve as a foundation for the continued study of indicators of children's well-being. If this in turn contributes to the well-being of children around the world, then our efforts and work will have been worthwhile	*Strengths: offers significant background into the field of child social indicators research, lead author is a leader in the field *Weaknesses: the articles included in the special issues are of little relevance to the proposed study

Appendix 10 – Child Health and Wellbeing Instruments

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY FOCUS: 17 instruments

- Social Skills Rating System
- Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale (PIPPS)
- Group for the study of Interpersonal Development (GSID) Relationship Questionnaire
- Infant and Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment (ITSEA)
- FOCAL
- Interpersonal Competence Scale (ICS)
- Social Ability Measure
- *Devereux Early Childhood Assessment Program Instrument (DECA)
- Emotional and Behavioural Development Scales (EBDS)
- Record of Assessment for Emotionals Literacy Checklist
- 'How I see myself'
- Emotional Quotient Invetory - child/youth (EQ-i-YV(SS))
- Process-Oriented Monitering System (POMS)
- Optimistic Child Scale
- Social Competence Test (SCoT)
- Sefton Council Instrument
- Competence Scale - Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA)

BEHAVIOUR FOCUS: 18 instruments

- Problem Behaviour Scale of the Social Skills Rating System
- Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales
- Minnesota Prescholl Affect Checklist (MPAC)
- Child Behaviour Checklists
- Home and Community Social Behaviour Scales (SSBS)
- School Social Behaviour Scales (SSBS)
- Conners Rating Scale (CRS)
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- The Emotional Instabiliuty, Prosocial Behavious and Agression Scales (EIPBAS)
- Behavioural and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS)
- Bully-Victim Scales
- Harter Self Perception Profile
- Child Behavious Rating Scale (CBRS)
- Fast Track Program
- Enable Projet
- 'Taking Care' Project
- Problems Scale - Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA)
- Preschool Behaviour Checklist (PBCL)

TEACHER/EDUCATOR FOCUS: 13 instruments

- Children's Adjustment to School Scale - Teacher Report
- Child Development Project
- Adaptive Social Behavious Inventory (ASBI)
- Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) Caregiver-Teacher Report Form
- Boxall Profile
- The Early Years profile
- Short Term Education and Pupil Supports (STEPS)
- Emotional Literacy Audit (LEA)
- Cogs
- Self-Esteem Indicator
- Feeling and Empathy Questionnaire
- General Self-Concept Scale
- The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)
- Self-Esteem Indicator

ACADEMIC SKILL FOCUS: 14 instruments

- Early Screening Instrument- Kindergarten (ESI-K)
- School Readiness Composite (SRC) fot eh Bracken Basic Concepts Scale (revised)
- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)
- Denham's Affective Knowledge Test
- The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation's Ready School Assessment (RSA)
- Learning Involvement Scale (LIS-YC)
- Coping in School Scale
- Reintegration Readiness Scale
- Effective Lifelong Learning Invetory - Junior Scale (JELLI)
- Academic Rating Scales (ARS)
- Matrix Reasoning Test
- School Readiness Score ("Who Am I")
- McCarthy Scales of Children's Abilities

HEALTH ASSESSMENT/DIAGNOSIS FOCUS: 10 instruments

- School Entrant Health Questionnaire
- Denham's Puppet Causes Task
- Ambivalent Emotions Task Emotional matters II Direct Assessment (EMII-DA)
- Emotion Matters II Assessor's Report (EMII-AR)
- Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders (DISCO)
- Social Phobia and Anxeity Inventory for HCildren (SPAI-C)
- The Penn State Worry Questionnaire for Children(PSWQ-C)
- Accounting Early for Life Long Learning AcE Project
- Dominic-R: A Pictoral Interview
- Seperation and Anxiery Test (SAT)

PARENT /FAMILY FOCUS: 8 instruments

- Parent Self-Efficacy in Managing the Transition to School Scale (PSMTSS)
- Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC)
- Likert Scale
- Children's Adjustment to School Scale - Parent Report
- Parents' Involvement in Home-Based and School-Based Activities report
- Impact of the Family Scale (IOF)
- Measure of Processes of Care (MPOC-20)
- Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS)

TRANSITION FOCUS: 4 instruments

- EDI/AEDI/AEDC
- Family Experiences and Involvement in Transition (FEIT-revised)
- Preschool Transfer Form - Somerset
- Outcomes and Indicators of a Positive Start to School

EDUCATION AND CARE ENVIRONMENT FOCUS: 3 instruments

- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - revised (ECERS-R)
- The Leiden Inventory for the Child's Wellbeing in Day Care (LICW-D)
- 'What I think about my school'

Appendix 11 – Storybook created for member checking Stage 1 data

The storybook read to children was a 13 page A3 sized booklet. The pages have been made smaller to fit Appendix 10.

Sometimes I Feel
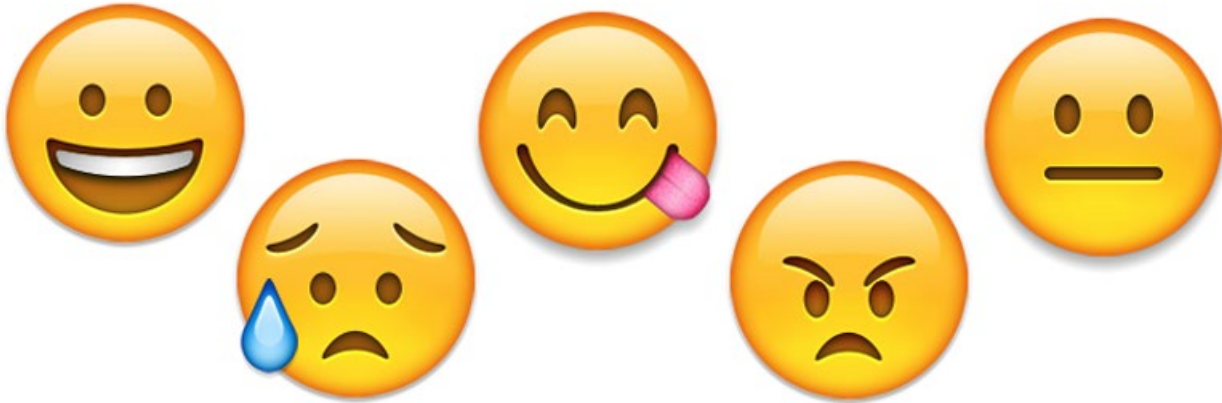
A book by 78 children, aged three-to-five years, in across eight early learning and care centres in Adelaide, SA

Lead Researcher – Jennifer Fane | Flinders UNIVERSITY

Happy
Smiling
Funny
Good

I might feel this way when

I have friends to play with

I feel loved

I have places to play

I am with my family

Sad
Crying

I might feel this way when

I am hurt

I feel alone

I am sick

**Happy
Silly
Funny
Cheeky**

I might feel this way when

I am at a party

I am playing a game

I am outside

Angry
Grumpy
Bad
Cross
Miserable

I might feel this way when

Someone breaks my things

I don't get a turn

Someone is mad at me

Surprised
Worried
Frustrated
Lonely
Disappointed

Sleepy
Choosing
Weird
Shy
Bored

I might feel this way when

I don't know what to do?

I am not allowed to do something

If something if bothering me

Can you think of other ways you might feel?

About this research project:

This researched project sought to further our understanding of child wellbeing by investigating how young children themselves understand and express their own wellbeing.

Emojis (such as the ones included in this book) were used in focus group sessions with 3-to-5 year old children to give young children the opportunity to explain and share their understanding of wellbeing in their own words. The words and ideas in this book come from the 78 children who participated in this research project across eight diverse early learning and care centres in Adelaide, South Australia.

This book has now been read back to over 100 children at the same eight early learning and care centres in an attempt to ensure that it does accurately express young children's wellbeing in their own words. Children across all centres expressed agreement that this book did contain their ideas and feelings about wellbeing, and they enjoyed making connections between the ideas on the page and their own experiences.

This book has been made available to the eight early learning and care centres and all of the children and families who attend them as a way of saying thank you to all who have participated, and honouring the incredibly important ideas and understandings the children have shared. Talking about feelings and emotions can be a way of support your child's wellbeing and resiliency. Your child may be interested in reading the book again with you, and explaining how they feel using the ideas or pictures on the pages.

Questions?

Requests for further information or questions about the research project are welcomed. The lead researcher for can be contacted as per the details below.

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